

On the morning of the 17th GEORG bought 300 gallons of paraffin, paying for it with 130 silver dollars. Big Horse insisted that he himself should pay the sum — in his now worthless notes — and GEORG took the amount, but without swindling the merchant. Big Horse asked for and kept one of our large thirty-gallon drums of petrol.

Just before the start the drivers received a visit from a senior officer, who handed over to them black and white lambskin coats as presents for Dr HUMMEL and me, as well as one for each of the three drivers. Big Horse again sent me his kind regards, and begged my pardon for having taken our cars. He hoped I understood that he had been compelled to do so, as it had been a matter of life or death for him to get away in time. Lastly, they were given a passport entitling them to travel through MA CHUNG-YING's dominions and bearing his stamp.

In the afternoon they drove out of Kucha with light hearts. On the road outside the oasis they met thousands of refugees — men with or without rifles; women, many of them carrying rifles; children riding on donkeys; wounded borne on stretchers; carts carrying luggage; riders, pedestrians — a confused swarm of people, all making their way westward, and all in fear of being overtaken by the advance-guard of the northern army.

At the village Erh-pa-t'ai, 30 km west of Bugur, a back axle on EFFE's car broke, and they were obliged to camp.

On the morning of the 18th GEORG had to drive ahead to Yangi-hissar, as the tools needed for repairs were with T'SERAT's lorry. He was attacked on the way by a mob of Tungan soldiers, who jumped up onto the lorry and were about to rob him of what little he had with him. He produced MA's passport, and they actually went away.

Arriving at Yangi-hissar at about midday, he called on the commander of the 3rd Brigade and was very amiably received. He soon found T'SERAT, who had been robbed by soldiers and was pale and nervous. GEORG requested that the commander should give orders that no-one was to molest T'SERAT, and the general promised at once to protect him.

When GEORG returned to EFFE and JOMCHA with the tools, they worked on the back axle the whole night and next day, putting in a spare axle.

On the evening of the 20th the three drove on eastward. At Bugur they met the commander of the 3rd Brigade again. This worthy was furiously angry because the mayor, our friend JEMALLEDDIN HAJI, had cleared out and locked the doors of his yamen. The soldiers forced the doors open. They ordered food, wine and tea to be produced, and invited the drivers to a feast. The officers and men of the 3rd Brigade had really neither time nor inclination for little jollifications of this kind. But they pretended to enjoy them »in order that MA CHUNG-YING should not lose face«.