

»What is it?» I asked.

»We can see cars, two tents, and several men,» they answered.

There was no longer any doubt — this was the new headquarters not far from Yardang-bulaq. The river at this point runs straight N. N. E. for a long way; and our fellows could be seen more and more plainly, waiting for us to arrive. Caps were waved in the air, and we could hear them cheering.

We had a big coffee party in the tent of the three Swedes, over which flew the Swedish flag. They told us of their toilsome journey along the foot of the Quruq-tagh, whose ridges were visible in the north. This was our camp No. 70.

PLAN FOR MOTOR EXPLORATION

I had a long talk with YEW, KUNG and EFFE about a plan we had already discussed at Korla, and of which BERGMAN and I had often spoken in Peking. CHEN and I were to go on down the Qum-darya to Lop-nor, while HUMMEL completed his zoological and botanical collections along the river. But what were the others to do in the meantime? Well, I had proposed to our road experts, YEW and KUNG, that they should use the two months we had been permitted to spend in the Lop country for a tour of exploration from our headquarters, via Altmish-bulaq, to the Su-lo-ho and Tun-huang in Kansu. Two thousand years before, there had been a road from Tun-huang to Korla via Lop-nor, Lou-lan and the Qum-darya. Thousands of camels had gone that way for nearly five centuries, till about 330 A. D., when the river and lake moved to the south, Lou-lan was abandoned and this part of the old Silk Road fell into disuse.

Now, both river and lake had returned to their old historic beds, and the time had come to revive the old Silk Road. In my first memorandum to the Nanking Government I had pointed out the importance of strengthening the links between China proper and Sinkiang, the largest and at the same time the most remote of the possessions of the Republic, by creating a new traffic artery from Kansu to Eastern Turkistan.

HÖRNER and CHEN, in the course of their daring advance from Tun-huang to Lop-nor, Lou-lan and the delta of the Qum-darya in the winter of 1930—31, had found that the road they had followed through the desert was not suitable for motor-traffic. My intention now was to find a parallel road to the north, within the mountain regions of the Pei-shan and the Quruq-tagh, or at their foot.

The men were ready to start on April 27th. EFFE's truck stood loaded and waiting. The small car was to be used for reconnaissance work. Besides EFFE, both TSERAT and JOMCHA went along. They took with them the Russian soldier NIKOLAI and my old guide ABDURAHIM, the camel-hunter from Shindi, who had turned up at our headquarters. With the two servants, SAN WA-TZE and LIU CHIA, the exploring