

But we had no choice. It was only a matter of some 500 km, about half of it on a good road.

In my letter to those remaining at the base camp I had hinted in veiled language that they ought to cherish no illusions and that they might have to wait a long time. But that we should do all that was humanly possible to obtain at Urumchi the oil the motor-lorries needed — six *puds*. YEW, TSERAT and I meant to take this by car to Korla and Konche, and thence down the river by boat to base camp No. 70. The petrol we needed would at the same time be sent to Qara-shahr or Korla.

The road over the reedy plains around Qara-shahr had, since we last saw it on March 4th, been turned into a morass by the deep wheel-tracks left by the fleeing Tungans, who had swept through like a deluge to Korla and gone on to Kucha, closely followed by the northern army in pursuit.

### THE QARA-SHAHR TORGUT PRINCE

It was nearly half-past six when the magnificent groves of Lombardy poplars at Qara-shahr lifted their green tops ahead of us on the banks of the Khaidu-gol.

Safely over on the left bank, we drove straight to the young prince of the Torgut Mongols, CHÖNGSHIN MENTSUK KAMPO, who, apart from his high rank as a lama, was commandant of Qara-shahr and a general in the army. He asked us about the object of our journey, and said he had sent my letter about the oil to the supreme authority at Urumchi, but had so far had no reply.

I reminded him of the great kindness his uncle SENGTSEN GEGEN had shown our previous expedition, and especially his courtesy to the King of Sweden in presenting him with a complete temple-yurt, handed over to His Majesty by HENNING HASLUND. As a mark of his gratitude the king had presented the prince with his portrait and a Swedish order.

SENGTSEN GEGEN's young successor declared that he knew all about this and that our king's gifts were now in his care. But he broke off this conversation about his uncle abruptly and began to speak of the object of our journey instead. It was evident that he did not relish talking about his kinsman. As I have mentioned on p. 204 of Part II, there was a very ugly story behind the Qara-shahr Torguts' change of ruler.

The Qara-shahr Torguts, however, did not rise in protest and rebellion against CHIN SHU-JEN's cowardly murder of their revered chief. They kept quiet; and in the course of time CHÖNGSHIN MENTSUK KAMPO, about twenty years old, became their khan. We talked at length about my friend the TASHI LAMA. On the occasion of our visit to this exalted high-priest at Beli-miao I had asked if I might have a letter written to the holy man of the Torguts at Qara-shahr. He had gladly