

## IX. I N U R U M C H I

Our first day in Urumchi was a long one. It had rained all night, and it continued pouring throughout the day. The Governor-General had informed us through an adjutant that he wished to see us at dinner. We waited patiently for the invitation, while the hours dragged on, and the rain splashed monotonously on the paving-stone of the courtyard overlooked by our room. At 8 p. m. we sent a message to his yamen. SHENG TUPAN sent a message in reply — that we should be received at eight o'clock next morning.

We were there at 8.15. An adjutant told us to return at 5 p. m. We asked tactfully whether in the meantime we might visit the Soviet Russian Consul-General and the Danish postal commissioner. Yes, certainly we might.

We therefore drove straight to the Soviet Consulate-General. The Consul-General, GAREGIN ABRAMOVICH APRESOV, received us immediately. He made a favourable impression; his manner was open, genial and cheery. I told him the object of our mission, and he thought it sensible of the Nanking Government to make motor-roads to Sinkiang. There was no obstacle to our proposed visits to Kulja and Chuguchaq, but he advised us to go there within a week, or we should be prevented by the height of the Manas River.

When I asked whether we could buy petrol and oil in Urumchi, he replied that only the Tupan himself could grant permission for this, and advised me to speak to him about it. Our adventures in Korla and its environs interested him very much, and he congratulated us on having escaped from MA CHUNG-YING's troops with our lives. But Mr APRESOV, like all the Russians with whom we spoke later, cherished an unconcealed admiration for Big Horse, for his courage, daring and vigour.

It was of great importance for us to be on good terms with the Consul. It lay in his power, if he chose, and if he suspected us of secret intentions contrary to Russian interests in the province, to have us arrested and detained for an indefinite time.

To be just, we were bound to admit that the Consul-General had every reason to suspect us. Both the previous emissaries of Nanking, General HUANG MU-SUNG