

He had seen our passports and found everything in perfect order. To all our requests he replied promptly and clearly. He would himself send petrol and oil via Aqsu to the expedition on the Qum-darya. We could not go back to the Tarim for three months, by which time he would have cleared the country of robbers. It was his chief aim to improve and develop the province of Sinkiang, neglected and benighted as it had been; and he was glad of the help we were to give him in this task. If we needed any spare parts for our cars, we could get them from scrapped cars at the garage. And we could have as much money as we liked; it was printed to order by his own press.

One could hardly have desired a more kindly reception by the highest official in a province that was about to break off all connections with the motherland — especially when the two earlier emissaries had been so curtly turned away.

### OLD ACQUAINTANCES

At the garage we met our friend IVANOV. There was not a drop of petrol, but he was awaiting 50 tons from Manas, and when this arrived we should get what we wanted. This sounded promising, but actually not a word was ever heard about this petrol from Manas.

We called on another friend from 1928, ANTONOV, who had at that time been a modest business man. He was now a general and head of the contingent of Russian *émigrés* who had stormed the yamen and driven out the incapable CHIN SHU-JEN in April, 1933. ANTONOV was acting Russian commander-in-chief while BEKTEEV was operating in the field against the Tungans.

We met two more friends, Father HILBRENNER, of the Societas Verbi Divini, and Dr PEDASHENKO.

Rumours were buzzing in the air like bees over summer meadows. It was said, for instance, that a relative of MA CHUNG-YING's was on the way from Anhsi to Hami with strong forces, to invade the province afresh.

We were visited by GEORG's brother, GUSTAF SÖDERBOM. His position in Urumchi was if possible more dubious than our own. He had arrived by car from Peking a couple of years before — for the second time — in the hope of being able to open a traffic route between Kuei-hua and Urumchi. His efforts, however, had been unsuccessful. He had got into difficulties, and was now unable to leave the province.

### OUR POSITION IMPROVES

At one o'clock on June 11th we were invited to dinner with the Consul-General and Madame APRESOV. In their drawing-room we found some twenty guests, among them Mr CH'EN TEH-LI, who was at the same time Foreign Minister and