

Minister of Finance; he wore European clothes and spoke Russian fluently. Other guests included the staff of the consulate, KIERKEGAARD and EGTORP, and several Chinese dignitaries, all with ladies. At three o'clock SHENG TUPAN appeared with his wife — punctuality is not a Chinese virtue.

Our hosts were Armenians from Baku. Mr APRESOV had served for five years in Persia, as consul at Resht and Meshed and as Chargé d'Affaires in Teheran, where he used to play chess with SHAH RIZA PAHLEVI. He had also lived in Tashkent. He had been transferred to Urumchi in November 1933. He now told us that when, four months previously, the news of our arrival in Hami, Turfan and Korla had reached SHENG TUPAN's ears, he had been annoyed, surprised, and most suspicious. But the Consul-General had reassured him, and told him of my previous journeys in the province.

It was a tremendous banquet, lasting for seven and a half hours. The last act — further refreshments in the drawing-room — began at twilight.

This day was a great success for us, as YEW put it, thanks to Mr APRESOV's hospitality. The powerful Governor-General had clearly realized that we could not be treated as spies.

After a lecture that I gave in the hall of the Russian Club the following day we discussed the petrol and oil question. Our plan of travelling to Bakhty and buying there broke down, because everything in the way of transport animals and ox-carts had disappeared during the war. Mr APRESOV proposed that he should telegraph to the Russian Consul at Kulja, telling him to send what we needed over the T'ien-shan to Korla, 600 km in twenty days. This plan, too, came to nothing. But SHENG had promised us petrol; we trusted him, and the days passed.

YEW and I willingly accepted KIERKEGAARD's kind invitation to move into his house with our goods and chattels — a minimum that we had brought with us. The house, built by the General Post Office at Shanghai, was a one-storey bungalow.

Our new host, with whom we lived regally, entertained us with vivid accounts of the sanguinary events that had taken place in the town before our arrival. It was evident that we, too, could not consider our persons secure. The Chinese army that had been defeated in Manchuria in 1932—33, and driven over the Siberian frontier by the Japanese, had been disarmed by the Russians and transported to Sinkiang. Some twenty of its officers had one day been imprisoned in Urumchi and shot for conspiracy against the existing régime.

On the evening of June 17th an official from the foreign department came to me with a request from SHENG TUPAN that I write a memorandum on how best to develop the production and communications of the province. I was occupied with this work the next afternoon when KIERKEGAARD burst in radiant, shouting: »EGTORP and I are leaving to-night!«