

»You don't mean it! What's happened? »

»Why, the twenty-seven Russian motor-lorries that came here with goods a few days ago are going back empty to Chuguchaq, and we've got permission to go with them.»

I was delighted at this news for the sake of the two kindly Danes; but how empty life would be for YEW and me when they had left this miserable hole, where men of honour were the greatest rarity!

### PECULIAR CONDITIONS IN URUMCHI

When I first visited the capital of Sinkiang, in the spring of 1928, one had got 2½ Urumchi paper taels for a silver dollar. If one wanted to buy silver dollars, one had to pay 3½ taels. On June 16th, 1934, 240 Urumchi taels were to be had for a dollar! But on June 18th, only 140 taels were to be had — because the printing-press had got out of order! The paper tael would now continue to rise in value, as long as the printing-press remained idle. That day TSERAT wanted to do some repairs to the small car; but he could not, because all the workmen at the garage were busy on the printing-press!

As a rule this press turned out 700,000 taels (or *liang*, in Turki *sär*) daily. For the festivities in April twenty millions had been printed. In 1928 there were only one-tael notes, so that a sum of a thousand taels made a pretty fat bundle. Now, however, 5,000 and 10,000 tael notes were being printed, which further accelerated the fall in the exchange. People who had been saving these notes suddenly found themselves ruined.

The Consul-General told us that KIERKEGAARD and EGTORP had left at 1 a. m. SHENG had vainly tried to induce them to stay a few days longer, in order that he might have the opportunity of giving them a big farewell banquet. He had also ordered some works of art to be made as gifts for Mrs KIERKEGAARD. But KIERKEGAARD had replied by telephone that the great man's dinner and gifts had no attraction whatever for him; and he had got away at last with Mr APRESOV's help.

I never succeeded in finding out what SHENG gained by this peculiar form of paralysing hospitality. All foreigners who for any reason came to Sinkiang were detained month after month against their will. Old inhabitants of Urumchi who wanted to go to Peking waited vainly for their passports. The atmosphere was unpleasant; one had a feeling of insecurity. On the 18th YEW wrote to SHENG to ask him when he would see us, as we wanted to get our business settled. Above all we wanted to know when we could get petrol and oil, and when we could travel down to the Qum-darya to fetch the expedition.