

He rang up the Foreign Minister, CH'EN TEH-LI, and spoke to him in a tone of command, as if to a subordinate:

»Dr HEDIN is here, all ready to start. I hear he is being detained till a special pass has been issued. No pass is needed in this case. I ask you to give him permission to start now, on the telephone, through me. . . So he's perfectly free to start? »

CH'EN TEH-LI had agreed to everything. Then Mr APRESOV showed us another kindness that I shall never forget. He suddenly exclaimed:

»Why don't you take VLADIMIR IVANOVICH (SAPOJNIKOV) with you? He's a surgeon, and would be useful if any operation had to be performed on the spot! »

»Are you serious? Isn't he tied down by his patients here? »

»I'll give him leave for as long as you need him. His wife's a doctor too, and can do his work while he's away. Go to him and ask him to get ready at once! »

In a few words I explained the position to YEW, who immediately proposed to give up his place in the car to the Russian doctor, well knowing that all available space would be needed for our kit.

We hastened to the hospital, which was close by. Dr SAPOJNIKOV had never been in the country south of Urumchi, and was delighted at the Consul-General's decision. He would be ready in an hour.

I drove home and packed my things. After a hasty dinner I returned to the hospital to collect the doctor, and so we set out.

We left five gallons of petrol at the village of Davan-ch'eng for our return journey. That night we slept in the yard of a miserable caravanserai that had been totally destroyed by the war. This was camp No. 100.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

The next morning, July 3rd, TSERAT and I were woken up just after four by Dr SAPOJNIKOV, who apparently thought we had got dust enough in our lungs. We drove down to Toqsun along the well-known road and made our way through the narrow bazaar to the mayor's house. The mayor himself, KAZIM BEG, was a frank, intelligent young man, who received us hospitably in his garden in the shade of acacia and mulberry trees.

While the teacups were being laid out I asked with some trepidation if KAZIM BEG had heard anything of a Swedish doctor who was ill. No, he had heard nothing. Splendid! So there was still hope that HUMMEL was alive. News of a death can make its way through the most desolate wildernesses.

It was a quarter to eight. Hot morning winds were already blowing through the dense foliage. We had not yet begun to sip our tea when a servant laid a European visiting-card on the table before KAZIM BEG. I took it up and read