

bought one of our lorries for 2,500 dollars; but he refused to pay the sum till the lorry was in his hands. The lorry, meantime, was at the Qum-darya, and could not be fetched without oil and petrol.

CALUMNY AND INTRIGUE

In obedience to our instructions, we had carried out no excavations on the way to Sinkiang. But when BERGMAN, CHEN and I found a dozen graves some thousands of years old on the banks of the Qum-darya we excavated them and took away the objects we found therein. Our intention was to hand these over to the proper authority in Nanking, after having taken note of anything that could throw any light on the old Silk Road.

The marking out of new routes for motor-traffic through Central Asia was in itself, as I have already pointed out, an undertaking that was closely connected with archaeology. For one could be sure that a motor-road from Sian to Kashgar would follow the old Silk Road for nine-tenths of the distance.

On August 26th I received a telegram from the Minister for Railways, despatched on July 7th, that led straight to the culminating point of the drama. It ran:

»I have received from the Minister for Education a letter containing the following report wired by HUANG WEN-PI:

'Dr SVEN HEDIN is digging for archaeological treasures without permission at Lop-nor and on the river Tarim. This is contrary to the law and the Minister's instructions. Please point out to the Minister for Railways that his department must be held responsible for this misconduct. I have been asked by the Minister for Education to investigate the affair and inform him of the result. Dr SVEN HEDIN and the members of his expedition have not permission to dig for archaeological treasures, which was definitely stated in the instructions previously given.' As I have been asked to investigate the matter, I must say — if the report is correct — that your action is certainly not justified and that you must stop the excavations at once. If you have found anything, every item must be handed over to the representative of the Minister for Education, Mr HUANG WEN-PI. I await your immediate reply.»

When I had read the telegram through again carefully, I was in no doubt as to the attitude I should take up towards the Minister for Railways. I told YEW that I could not remain in the service of the Ministry for one day longer, but intended to send in my resignation at once. YEW was in despair, and would not hear of it. KUNG was equally alarmed. He declared that the expedition could be saved only by my name and my foreign nationality, and that if I resigned all its members would be arrested for an indefinite period.