

We decided, finally, to send the Minister for Railways an objective reply to start with. This was to be despatched by telegraph the same day. We described how we had found the graves, pointing out that they could at any moment be wiped out by wind and weather, and above all by the shifting waters of Lake Lop-nor.

»As these graves,» we wrote, »were calculated to throw some light on China's past, we did not feel that we could pass them by, but opened them and took away what we found in them, to be handed over to you . . . Your telegram has greatly astonished us. The representative of the Minister for Education did not take part in our trip to Lop-nor. How can he, with no witnesses, and with no knowledge of where we have been and what we have done, accuse us of digging for archaeological treasures? The objects we have found we shall hand over to you personally in Nanking, as we may need them to prove what kind of 'treasures' we have dug up.»

The telegram was signed by myself and the Chinese members of the expedition and sent to SHENG TUPAN to be censored. It came back after two days with a notification that it was too long. We made a résumé of the main points, which was telegraphed.

On August 29th I sent the following express telegram to the Minister for Railways:

»I have received and considered your telegram of July 7th. It astonished me, as it is based on false statements. The fact that Your Excellency gives credence to lies and makes accusations against me in the telegram in question has seriously undermined my prestige and injured my honour. As I do not intend to expose myself to any further insults of this kind, I herewith submit my resignation and inform you that I am preparing to start for Sweden as soon as I have obtained permission to leave the province.»

Not till this telegram had been sent off did I hear of another that had been sent to the Minister for Railways at the same time as my own and signed only by the Chinese members. Later on I received a copy of it. It was very flattering to me, stating, amongst other things, that the expedition would be completely broken up if I left it.

SHENG TUPAN did not return the two telegrams to us until September 2nd. They had evidently entertained him, for on my telegram of resignation he had written »will be sent off at once» with his own hand under his red seal, and on the message of the Chinese »will be sent off without the least delay».

The reply to my telegram came on September 5th, quicker than ever before:

»Your wire dated August 29th duly received. The inspection work for the Sui-yüan — Sinkiang highway, extending if possible to Kashgar, is very important. Your knowledge and experience are well known and cover a wide field. Your name is well known over the world. You took up your work with great