

take charge of both parties. After much discussion it was agreed that the day of departure should be the 19th. About the same time an adjutant came and declared that the supreme authorities wanted a detailed report on the roads in Sinkiang — the very roads that they themselves had obstinately barred to us!

We were afraid that the next dodge to delay us would be to postpone the farewell banquet, without which no-one could possibly start. But on the 17th came the red card bearing the names of all the guests. One confirmed one's acceptance of the invitation by signing one's name.

The menu was Russian; neither food nor wine was stinted. It was a good quality in SHENG TUPAN that he neither drank nor smoked; and he left his guests alone. Some queer speeches were made. The host spoke first.

»This simple dinner,» he said, »has been arranged by the Government to say farewell and welcome again to our guests of honour — first and foremost to Dr SVEN HEDIN, who has been in Sinkiang many times to study its geography, natural history and archaeology. He has now returned here and found a lot of very old things. In addition to his geographical researches, Dr HEDIN has this time also studied communications, which may be of great importance to Sinkiang and China. . . . I am very sorry that the seriousness of the times prevented us from giving him more vigorous help and better treatment than he has actually received.»

The Tupan thanked the Chuguchaq consul for his splendid help in the civil war. In his reply, however, the latter disclaimed all honour, assuring us that the victories gained over MA CHUNG-YING had been won solely by the gallant Chinese generals.

The young Torgut prince spoke in Mongolian. He thanked the Russians for the help given by their troops, who had saved the province from conquest by Big Horse. Of course this ought not to have been said, but the little prince had no sense of the sacredness of political secrets, and continued to skate on thin ice in the most unruffled manner.