

a temperature of -21° C., and the next day the whole countryside was white with snow. This delay had one advantage: we avoided meeting the marching troops. When we resumed our journey on December 23rd, the soldiers had already passed.

The walls of the little town of Pu-lung-chi (Bulungir) were in ruins; and there was a gaping hole where the town gate should have been. The town itself was square, and mostly wilderness.

We pitched camp No. 143 by an old watch-tower in a region bearing the name of Ch'i-tao-kou. The temperature fell to -22° C., and on the morning of Christmas Eve we woke to a white mantle of hoar-frost.

We bumped up and down over canal banks, where low-built cars were in continual danger of getting caught and hung up. Every time this happened we had to get the spades out, and the whole convoy was delayed.

We drove through a simple town gate into the winding streets of the large village of San-tao-kou, where some of our servants stopped to make Christmas purchases in the shops of the bazaar. There was no great difference between these open booths with stands, poles supporting projecting roofs, the houses and walls of sun-dried brick, the dirty streets, and their counterparts in the Turki towns and villages of Sinkiang. It was the same simple architecture, the same dirt and poverty, and the same starving wretches with hands stretched out for alms. Everywhere we saw ruined houses and walls. We were told that the district had formerly been much more intensively cultivated, but the population had decreased year by year through emigration, famine and misgovernment. The worst of all the evils afflicting Kansu was the squeezing of the people by conscienceless generals for the upkeep of their armies. And these armies were used solely to fight other generals in perpetual civil strife. Horrible wars have swept over Kansu in recent times, and the poor remains of the population are tormented by their rulers.

Ahead of us appeared a dark strip of vegetation, clearly indicating the proximity of the river Su-lo-ho, which flows past the little town of Yü-men. And presently we reached the left bank of the river. The motor-lorry with the tents on board had gone ahead, so camp was all but ready by the time we reached the spot. We preferred to spend Christmas Eve in the open air outside the town wall. The bed of the Su-lo-ho was about 30 m wide, and it had been eroded to a depth of 4 m. The water in it was about 0.6 m deep.

CHRISTMAS 1934

Our Christmas camp was pleasant, with its view over the river, the town gate, and the gardens on the opposite bank.

The Christmas of 1933, when HUMMEL and BERGMAN had still been with us, had been celebrated in great style. But on this second Christmas of my motor-expedition the only Swedes I had were GEORG and EFFE.