

way. Distances are marked with little, truncated clay pyramids called *p'ao-t'ai*, of the same kind as on some of the trunk roads in Eastern Turkistan. After every five li or so one sees one of these watch-towers, picturesque in its simplicity — a silent witness from a past in which this ancient Imperial Highway had a far greater importance than now-a-days. The watch-towers are usually surrounded by a yard, rectangular like themselves, and enclosed by a low clay wall. Outside this wall, ranged quite close to one another in a row, stand five smaller pyramids on the side of the watch-tower facing the road. Each tower has on its front a small inscribed tablet. Here was one with the ideograms *Pei-yü-tun*, »Reserved Defence Tower«.

In one place we noticed an evident attempt at improvement of the road. All the stones had been moved to the side, where they formed two parallel ridges; and inside these was a suggestion of narrow, shallow ditches.

At 1.30 p. m. we reached the river *Pei-ta-ho*, divided into one large arm and several smaller ones. It is one of the two sources of the *Edsen-gol*. *TSERAT* did not dare to cross the bridge over the larger arm; he drove his lorry into the stream just below the bridge and got stuck in the sand. *GEORG* drove »Edsel« across the gravel bottom still lower down, and then towed out *TSERAT*. At another bridge some twenty carts were waiting. Here our cars got over without mishap.

At the north gate of *Suchow* we were stopped by soldiers. One of them took our cards, and hurried off as usual to announce us at the mayor's *yamen*. He soon returned with permission for us to drive through the gate. We went straight to the mayor, but finding him out, we went on to the commandant, General *MA PU-KANG*, one of the »Big Horses« of *Kansu*. He received us with the greatest civility and invited us to lunch next day. We had better luck with the mayor, *WEI YUNG-CHI*, on the way home, and found him a particularly well-bred, pleasant and reliable man. He invited us to dinner that same evening, and told us many stories about the conditions in his town.

General *MA PU-KANG* received us politely when we went to his lunch-party the following day; but he took no part in the festivity himself, as he had to spend almost the whole of Friday in the mosque, being an orthodox Mohammedan.

We heard in *Suchow* that the military leaders in *Kansu* — the five »Big Horses« — were decidedly against the building of a railway from *Sian* via *Lanchow* and *Suchow* to *Sinkiang*; for this would of course strengthen the power of *Nanking* in *Kansu* and render their own illusory. It was owing to protests by the *Kansu* generals that the completion of the railway from *T'ung-kuan* to *Sian* had been so long delayed.

At *Suchow* we had an important plan to prepare. We had already investigated and mapped the northern motor-road; and the second, the Imperial Highway, we were studying at the moment. Between the two a road ran along the *Edsen-gol* to *Suchow*, and we wished to find out how far also this line of communication was suitable for motor-traffic.