

ful intrigues that in Urumchi and now on our arrival in Nanking had been spun against us from a certain quarter. I made it quite clear that I should demand full satisfaction for all the insulting accusations that had been levelled at me, and asked him to speak with the Chinese members of the expedition. The Minister assured me that neither the Ministry of Railways nor any other department in the government had anything to do with these matters, and that they could be cleared up with the greatest ease. I insisted, however, that I could not withdraw my demand for a public apology from the Minister of Education, who was obviously at the back of the whole business. The Minister said that complete rehabilitation would be given through the press, and that I might be perfectly easy in my mind. He said also that the Ministry of Railways intended to invite the members of the expedition to a dinner.

My next meeting was with the Director of the Department of Finances in the Ministry of Railways, who desired to hear about the roads to Sinkiang. I exposed my views. The main thing was that Sinkiang should be connected with China proper by suitable roads. The first step to be taken, the quickest and cheapest, would be the laying down of two motor-roads, one northern road from Peking through Mongolia, over the Edsen-gol to Hami and Urumchi, and a southern route from Sian via Lanchow and through the towns of Kansu to Anhsi and Hami. Extensions should be laid to Kulja, Kashgar and Khotan. The only really effective solution of the problem, of course, was the building of a railroad from Sian to Kashgar, with branch lines to other important districts.

On this, as on other occasions, my audience listened with interest, but did not seem to be enthusiastic. In their view, railways were more important than motor-roads. I agreed with them in this, but pointed out that a railroad of this enormous length would take many years to build, and would cost hundreds of millions of dollars. In the meantime, the motor-roads would be a useful makeshift. Highways of one kind or another might acquire unheard-of importance in the future; and if China did not take a serious interest in the matter of communications with Sinkiang she would, in the event of war, inevitably lose the province. Effective roads to Sinkiang would also be of the greatest commercial importance in the competition with Russian and English trade.

I spoke also of the importance for China of the old Silk Road in ancient times, and how it had crossed the whole of Asia like an artery. The Chinese of our days ought to be no less capable in the art of opening routes than were their forefathers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The government circles in Nanking admitted the justice of my points of view, but nothing was done. When, two years later, the Japanese began their conquests in North China and along the coast, the importance of the routes to the west and the north-west through the interior of Asia increased greatly. Road-laying seems then to have been begun on the routes from Ili and Chuguchaq to Urumchi, and possibly also on the route from Urumchi via Hami and Anhsi to Lanchow. The help sent from Siberia to Chungking China required a trafficable artery. The Japanese invasion also gave rise to a Chinese migration westwards, that was in a high degree dependant on practicable road communications.