

ACROSS THE GOBI DESERT

BY
SVEN HEDIN

WITH 114 ILLUSTRATIONS
AND THREE MAPS



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by

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PREFACE

A GAIN in Asia after a forced interval of many years. And this time not alone, for the task that I have set before me for this expedition, the greatest of my life, encroaches to so great an extent on the most diverse spheres of knowledge, that it was natural that for the various departments we should take along with us younger specialists.

The expedition was to work with all the equipment of modern investigation, so I developed the plan of flying over those places in the desert that were inaccessible. In this I hoped that Germany would lend assistance. I appealed to Professor Hugo Junkers, by whom I met with the most lively interest. Later the Deutsche Luft Hansa declared themselves prepared to further our relations with the German flying circles. So we were accompanied by eight more Germans, all of whom were experienced in both the theoretical and practical sides of flying.

But in Urumchi we met with a serious check : the powerful governor of the province of Sin-kiang, Yang Tsêng-hsin, prohibited flying over his territory. Thereupon first of all the German fliers returned home, and in June I too left for Europe, above all in order to secure further means for continuing the expedition during succeeding years, and I sought the assistance of the Swedish State.

How the Chinese scholars and students came to the expedition is told in detail in the book. Here for the present I will only say how valuable and indispensable to me their co-operation became from month to month.

* * * * *

The first part of the great journey in Asia lies behind us, the march from Paotow to Urumchi across the Gobi Desert during the winter of 1927-8. Now I go on board the ship

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that is to take me back to my comrades, who throughout these summer months have not allowed their scientific labours to cease. New tasks call me.

I have hesitated whether, so early as this, I ought to have published anything on the journey, for, at the moment, I have no time to gather together into a book my voluminous notes recorded day by day. So I have left this entirely to my publishers, as well as the choice of illustrations from the many hundreds of photographs taken by our diligent German photographer, Paul Lieberenz, who has also taken the film of this journey: "With Sven Hedin across the Deserts of Asia."

* * * * *

I cannot conclude without paying my debt of thanks to all who have helped me to realize my long-cherished desire to return to Asia, and moreover at the head of so large an expedition.

In this, especially the Germans. Never shall I forget the chivalrous conduct and the spirit of accommodation with which I was met on the part of the Germans. This occasion seems to me like a fairy-story and a dream, and will always be numbered among my dearest and most cherished memories. The co-operation with the leading figures of the Luft Hansa has at all times been marked by sincere trust and the utmost cordiality.

In as short a space as possible I must also express my warm thanks to the Swedish Minister, Oskar Ewerlöf, and Baron Carl Leijonhufvud, both of whom rendered me invaluable services during my stay in Peking and, later, during my journey; to Professor J. G. Andersson, who was my untiring adviser, and, moreover, drew with full hands out of the rich store of his Chinese experiences; to the head of the Geological Survey of China, Dr. Wong, Professor Dr. A. Grabau, and the great American explorer, Roy Chapman Andrews, for the goodwill and help that they accorded me; and finally, the "Opposition" in Peking, the Chinese scholars who, from being my opponents, became my friends and co-workers.

I also express my sincere and cordial thanks to every individual member of my staff, in which every man did his

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duty, all friction was banished, and nothing but good fellowship held sway. With such men as my Swedes, Germans, and Chinese, one can in the course of time open up to scientific study vast territories in Central Asia. The earnest and friendly co-operation between Europeans and Chinese was a source of real joy to me, and I held it to my advantage to have come into such close contact with representatives of the greatest and, in many respects, most interesting people of the earth.

With especial thanks do I remember my good old friend Fred Löwenadler, who as long ago as 1912 placed at my disposal a very generous contribution towards my "next journey."

An expression of thanks to my servants will presumably never reach them. Most excellent services were rendered us by the three archæological collectors, Chuang, Pai, and Chin. The Chinese and Mongols who were in our service all carried out their duties faithfully, and exceptions were rare.

Finally, I remember with sadness the faithful camels that without complaining carried us and our loads across the endless spaces, so many of which are lying for ever on the long, weary road across the Gobi Desert.

SVEN HEDIN.

STOCKHOLM, *August 7th*, 1928.

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