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Principal Contents

	PAGE
✓ ASIA AND THE WEST LORD BUTLER	244
✓ RUSSIA AND CHINA IN CENTRAL ASIA GEOFFREY WHEELER	254
THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL CHANGE IN INDONESIA MICHAEL LEIFER	264
THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF JAPANESE INDUSTRY REGINALD CUDLIPP	273
THE LAST DAYS OF "BUKHARA THE GREAT" <i>Review Article</i> VIOLET CONOLLY	281
BOOK REVIEWS	284
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1967	322

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CONTENTS

OFFICERS AND COUNCIL	- - - - -	240
NOTICES	- - - - -	241
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	- - - - -	242
INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED	- - - - -	243
ASIA AND THE WEST	- - - - -	244
Lord Butler		
X RUSSIA AND CHINA IN CENTRAL ASIA	- - - - -	254
Geoffrey Wheeler		
THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL CHANGE IN INDONESIA	- - - - -	264
Michael Leifer		
THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF JAPANESE INDUSTRY	- - - - -	273
Reginald Cudlipp		
THE LAST DAYS OF "BUKHARA THE GREAT"	- - - - -	281
<i>Review Article</i>		
Violet Conolly		
BOOK REVIEWS	- - - - -	284
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1967	- - - - -	322
OBITUARY (Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Edward Ellington, G.C.B., C.M.G., C.B.E.)	- - - - -	327

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tory and the frontier was aligned as far as the Uch Bel Pass, some fifty miles to the south-east of Lake Kara-Kul'. Until 1963 successive Chinese governments, while they have never accepted the frontier as far as this point, have refrained from formal objection to it. The remaining 150 miles of frontier between the two states has always been shown on Chinese maps as "undetermined". Indeed, the present alignment of this part of the frontier is the result of the agreement of 1895 between Russia, Britain and Afghanistan, in which China did not participate; it has never been determined by bi-lateral treaty between Russia and China. Under an agreement of 1963, however, the forty miles of frontier between China and Afghanistan has now been aligned.

After the evacuation of the Ili district, Russian commercial and to some extent political influence in Sinkiang remained strong until the 1940s. During the whole of this period Sinkiang remained largely independent of central government control, its internal and external policies being in the hands of provincial governors. With these the Russian government maintained close contact and on several occasions assisted them by introducing Russian forces to suppress local revolts. After the 1917 Russian Revolution, relations were only interrupted for a short spell in 1920 and thereafter became closer than ever. By 1931 there were five Soviet Consulates and eight trade agencies in Sinkiang, and the Governor General, Sheng Shih-ts'ai, became a member of the Russian Communist Party. In 1942, however, he decided that the Soviet Union was going to lose the war, and made common cause with the Kuomintang government. Thereafter, Soviet influence began to wane, but continued in some sort until 1962 when all the Soviet Consulates were removed.

Before considering how the Sino-Soviet conflict has affected relations between the two states in Central Asia, it is necessary to examine briefly the ethnic composition of the peoples in the frontier region, and how they have been affected by the Russian and Chinese Communist revolutions of 1917 and 1949. Apart from Russian and Chinese settlers, the population on both sides of the frontier between the U.S.S.R. and the Sinkiang-Uygur Autonomous Region can broadly be described as Turkic Muslim. This description covers two of the three Soviet republics which adjoin Sinkiang—the Kazakh and Kirgiz S.S.R.s—as well as four-fifths of the indigenous population of Sinkiang itself, which includes four million Uygurs, half a million Kazakhs, and smaller numbers of Kirgiz and Uzbeks. Apart from the Turkic elements, there are the Iranian Tadjiks of the Tadjik S.S.R. and some 14,000 Tadjiks in Sinkiang, about 200,000 Chinese Muslims (Dungans), and some 150,000 Mongols. There are broad cultural affinities among all the Turkic peoples on both sides of the frontier, particularly in respect of their languages which are mutually intelligible.

In considering the effects of the Russian and Chinese Communist revolutions on the broadly similar peoples straddling the Central Asian frontier it is important to bear two facts in mind. (1) The Russian revolution preceded the Chinese revolution by over thirty years, and (2) whatever early Soviet plans there might have been for extending the revolution into the neighbouring Asian countries of China, Afghanistan and Persia, these were

RUSSIA AND CHINA IN CENTRAL ASIA

GEOFFREY WHEELER

FOR the purposes of this article the term Central Asia is used to include the areas on both sides of the Chinese frontier with the Mongolian Peoples Republic, the Kazakh Soviet Republic, and the four Soviet Central Asian Republics. The article is mainly concerned with those areas on both sides of this frontier which contain a broadly speaking homogeneous population.

Chinese influence was paramount in what is now Soviet Central Asia and Sinkiang about a thousand years before the coming of the Russians. When the Arabs conquered this region at the beginning of the eighth century A.D. they regarded it as a province wrested from the Chinese emperors, and there are records of many embassies sent by local princelings to Peking asking for help, and also of Arab representation in Peking designed to prevent Chinese intervention in their conquests. Chinese intervention in western Central Asia came to an end with their defeat at the battle of the Talass river in 751. This was a crushing blow to Chinese prestige in Central Asia of which the whole, except for outer Mongolia and the khanate of Jungaria in the northern part of Sinkiang, was to remain mainly under Turkic Muslim or Islamized Mongol rule for the next thousand years. This is not to say that the Chinese emperors, of whatever dynasty, ceased to regard Sinkiang, as well as large parts of what is now Russian territory, as an integral part of the Chinese empire. They were apt, however, to describe it as "an outer region peopled by barbarians".

In 1756, just when Russian encroachment on the northern part of what is now the Kazakh Republic was beginning, Chinese forces overran the khanate of Jungaria and re-established some sort of control over the whole of Sinkiang. But Sinkiang was not formally constituted a province of the Chinese empire until 1884.

In the Far East, Russia and China had come to grips in the seventeenth century, and the treaty of Nerchinsk (1689) had attempted to regulate their conflicting interests. But the two powers did not collide in Central Asia until the first half of the nineteenth century, when Russian forces began to approach the present Sino-Soviet frontier and to clash with Chinese piquets.

The first attempt to define a Sino-Russian frontier in Central Asia was made in the treaty of Peking of 1860. By this time, however, the Russian conquest had not yet extended to the khanate of Kokand, so that only about two-thirds of the present border between the two states was covered. Before Russian conquests were extended any farther to the south, Russian forces occupied the whole of the Ili district of Sinkiang and remained there for ten years until 1881. In the meanwhile, in 1876, the Russians had overrun Kokand thus greatly improving their bargaining position. Under the treaty of St. Petersburg (1881) Russia gave up most of the occupied terri-

pieced together information derived from the Chinese press and from the National Chinese News Agency's broadcasts. His thesis is that from 1958 onwards the Chinese government concentrated on removing Soviet influence from the Ili district, influence which was mainly due to the proximity of the district to the Soviet Kazakh S.S.R. He concludes that the Chinese Communist Party by means of the People's Liberation Army and the so-called Production-Construction Corps had overcome natural obstacles and had "tied this frontier firmly to China proper. The result was that a forward position established by the Russians in Central Asia had been destroyed and the real Sino-Russian frontier pushed back. The Han Chinese had successfully extended themselves into an alien environment and overcome their cultural, 'natural' frontier in the north-west beyond which the mounted nomad had always ruled supreme."

Moseley's description of the largely successful methods employed by the Chinese is convincing and probably accurate. But the evidence on which he bases his assessment of the extent of Russian influence in the Ili district is very slender. The plain fact is that next to nothing is known about the extent of Soviet influence in this or any other part of Sinkiang. During the heyday of Sino-Soviet Communist friendship, that is, from 1949 until about 1957, there were a number of Soviet technicians in Sinkiang. It is also known that in 1957 the Chinese government had apparently accepted the idea of the Cyrillic alphabet being used for the Kazakh and other Turkic languages current in Sinkiang. The five Soviet Consuls in Sinkiang until 1962 were presumably engaged among other things in intelligence and propaganda operations. But there is no information about any contacts between the Soviet and Chinese Kazakhs.

Owen Lattimore has stated that "the Central Asian peoples have always tended to accord prestige and admiration more readily to Russia than to China".* In a general way this may be true, but it should perhaps be remembered that the Kazakhs as a whole have suffered much more at the hands of the Russians than of the Chinese. After the 1916 revolt in the Russian province of Turkestan some 200,000 Kazakhs fled into Chinese territory. A further unknown number fled during the rigours of the civil war and the total of Soviet Kazakhs fell by over 800,000 between 1926 and 1939. And at present Kazakhs only constitute less than 30 per cent. of the population of the Kazakh S.S.R., while in the Kazakh chou of the Ili district they are said to be still in the majority.

Whatever the Russians knew or felt about what was happening to the Kazakhs or other Muslims in Sinkiang they maintained complete silence on the subject until the autumn of 1963. Reports had, however, appeared in the Chinese press indicating that there had been considerable resistance to Chinese reconstruction methods in Sinkiang; and rumours had reached the West of a large exodus of Kazakhs into Soviet territory during the spring of 1962. This exodus has for some time been accepted by the Western press and even by George Moseley as a fact, the numbers involved varying from 50,000 to 70,000. There is, however, no real evidence that an exodus of this magnitude ever took place at all. The Chinese, it is true,

* Owen Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History*, London, 1962, p. 196.

largely abandoned by 1930. Thenceforward, Soviet policy in Asia adopted what might be called a defensive position. Its subsequent advances from this position have, with one or two exceptions, taken more or less legitimate forms, that is to say, economic aid and moral support as distinct from earlier techniques of direct action and subversion.

As regards the Muslim peoples in the territory bordering on western China, the Soviet government has for the past thirty-five years concentrated exclusively on their economic and cultural development within the existing frontiers of the Soviet Union. The results, which have certainly exceeded Western if not Soviet expectation, may be summed up as follows. Material conditions are by and large better than they have ever been before: they are much better than in Sinkiang; they are generally speaking better than in the other adjoining independent countries of Persia, Afghanistan and Pakistan; and in some respects they are even better than in the rest of the Soviet Union. Great strides have been made in agriculture, industry, education and public health. There has not for many years been any evidence of active or potentially effective nationalist opposition to the Soviet régime. Nevertheless, national consciousness and passive resistance to Soviet cultural regimentation remain strong. The Soviet nationalities policy, which involved the creation of synthetic nation states in the form of republics, was really a plan for treating the incipient disease of nationalism by homeopathic methods. It is clear, however, that recently the Soviet government has been assailed by doubts that the republics may be acquiring a kind of individuality of their own. In any event, there has during the past five years been a great deal of talk about the need to abolish national distinctions of frontier and language within the Soviet Union; but no mention whatever of extending the frontiers of the republics to include their co-nationals (Kazakh, Kirgiz, Uzbeks, Tadzhiks) across the Chinese and Afghan frontiers.

It goes without saying that a great deal more is known about affairs on the Soviet than on the Chinese side of the frontier. During the past fifteen years it has been possible, by dint of a careful study of the Soviet press and literature, nowadays obtainable without difficulty, to construct a coherent and generally speaking reliable picture of economic and cultural affairs in the Soviet Muslim republics. Sources of information on Sinkiang are confined to the highly propagandistic Chinese broadcasts and references to the region in such of the Chinese press as is regularly available. The Russians are presumably better informed on Sinkiang than anyone else outside China, but they take care not to write about it. More of this, however, later. In general, all that can be said about affairs in Sinkiang up to the recent "cultural revolution" is that Chinese activities since the revolution of 1949 have included military occupation, extensive Chinese colonization, partial stabilization of the Kazakh nomads, considerable economic development and an attempt to eliminate Soviet influence from the Ili district.

By far the fullest account of recent developments in any part of Sinkiang is that contained in George Moseley's monograph, a *Sino-Soviet Cultural Frontier: the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Chou*.^{*} He has most skilfully

* East Asian Research Centre, Harvard University, 1966.

A strong refutation of China's implied claims to Soviet Central Asian territory was included in an article which appeared in the Russian edition of *International Life* in October 1964 only a few days before Khrushchev's fall from power. The fact that this article was suppressed from the English edition, which is normally a verbatim translation of the Russian, lent colour to the suggestion that Khrushchev's dismissal was in part due to his bellicose attitude towards China. Some attempt was made by Kosygin's administration to patch things up with China during 1965; but it came to nothing.

During the turmoil which ensued after the outbreak of the cultural revolution in the autumn of 1966 it was quite reasonably assumed in the West that tension had increased on the Sino-Soviet Central Asian frontier. But in spite of the fact that the Russians maintained complete silence on the subject of the frontier and of conditions in Sinkiang until January 1967, the Western press published stories about vast troop movements, Maginot-like defences and numerous frontier incidents. There must obviously have been increased vigilance on both sides of the frontier, some reinforcement of frontier garrisons, and very probably some minor frontier incidents. But there has been no hard news about any of these. During 1965 and 1966 there has certainly been some passage of refugees, but there is no clue whatever to its extent and the publication of refugee stories in January and February has now died down again just as it did in 1963 and 1964.

In so far as it can be determined, the present situation on both sides of the Sino-Soviet frontier in Central Asia is as follows:

(1) In the Kazakh, Kirgiz and Tadzhik S.S.R.s the situation is normal. There appears to be no new restriction on the movement of foreign tourists, who are still allowed to visit Alma-Ata less than 200 miles from the frontier of the Ili district of Sinkiang. There are no reports of any attempt to work up local feeling against China.

(2) Theoretically the 1,800 mile frontier is closed; but owing to the nature of the terrain, the passage of refugees and informants is not likely to be difficult.

(3) Reports on current conditions in Sinkiang so far available are contradictory. Soviet writing published between 1955 and 1957 followed the Chinese line in taking a highly favourable view of the treatment of minorities in Sinkiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia and claimed that the national question had been solved on Marxist-Leninist lines. But an article by T. Rakhimov in *Kommunist* No. 7 of 1967 asserted that Mao had from the beginning merely continued the oppression and discrimination exercised by the Chinese emperors and the Kuomintang. On the other hand, in a discussion broadcast by the B.B.C. on May 6, Owen Lattimore and Brian Hook of Leeds University and Stuart Gelder, a journalist, expressed views which were the exact opposite of those published in *Kommunist*: they declared that there was absolute equality as between the Chinese and the non-Han minorities and that the condition of the latter was now better than it had been for centuries.

It may be useful to review some of the factors likely to affect the course of action followed by the interested parties, that is to say, the Soviet and

have spoken of "tens of thousands" of Chinese citizens being lured into Soviet territory, but in Chinese parlance this simply means "a large number". It might be supposed that such a flight from Chinese oppression would have been a feather in the Russian cap and that the most would have been made of it. But the nearest the Russians have got to confirming the report has been a statement in a Central Asian newspaper in September 1963 to the effect that in the previous year "dozens of families" had crossed the frontier into Soviet territory. This expression—it is actually "tens" and not "dozens"—in Russian usually means about a hundred. It is significant that the refugees whose stories were printed in the Soviet press in 1963 and 1964 and again at the beginning of this year have never included any who fled in 1962: all the stories have been from people leaving before 1961 or after the beginning of the cultural revolution in August 1966. The only independent reports of any exodus in 1962 seem to have come from refugees from Sinkiang arriving in Hong Kong.

It is, of course, possible that such an exodus did take place and that Soviet silence on the subject can be attributed to the policy of reticence on the subject of Sinkiang which, with very occasional lapses, has been maintained since the Chinese Communist Revolution of 1949. These lapses have been widely separated. In 1962 a volume of historical studies was published in Alma-Ata, which included a highly coloured and strongly anti-Chinese version of the 1944 revolt and the creation of the East Turkistan republic. In the autumn of 1963 and again in the autumn of 1964 a small number of refugee stories were published. During the whole of 1965 and 1966 there was complete silence, which was broken by another small batch of stories at the beginning of this year. This remarkable reticence has barely been mentioned in the Western press, which has, on the contrary, sometimes given the impression that the Muslim population on the Soviet side of the frontier was being constantly regaled with stories of Chinese oppression. This is not so, and the lapses just alluded to may simply have been due to a feeling on the part of the Soviet propaganda authorities that total silence would have seemed suspicious. The information to be derived from the refugee stories has in fact been so meagre that many Western commentators have had to draw heavily on their imaginations in order to produce any kind of coherent story.

Sino-Soviet relations worsened during 1963 and 1964 and some hard things were said on both sides. References to the situation in Central Asia were confined to the Chinese accusation of Soviet subversion in Sinkiang referred to earlier, and to the general Chinese demand for the revision of "unequal treaties". Judging from published Chinese maps such revision would have included the cessation of large tracts of Soviet territory to China. Soviet charges were much milder: they accused the Chinese of "over 5,000 violations of the frontier" and the nearest thing to a demand was Khrushchev's reference made in 1963 to some Japanese journalists which was construed in the West as a statement of the Soviet right to protect the Kazakhs, Kirgiz and Tadzhiks living in Sinkiang. But these references were much less specific than the Soviet claims made on various previous occasions in respect of the Azerbaydzhanis, Turkmens, Uzbeks and Tadzhiks living in Persia and Afghanistan.

Chinese governments and the ten million or so Muslim peoples straddling the existing frontier. There can be no doubt that the Soviet government is apprehensive about the challenge offered to its position in Central Asia by the emergence of China as a great power. It is equally certain that it was reluctant to abandon the influential position which it had held in Sinkiang for nearly a century. This loss must have appeared particularly important when it became known that Sinkiang was to contain the site of Chinese nuclear installations. At the end of 1964 it was thought in some quarters in the West that the Soviet Union would resort to direct action in order to remove this particular danger and at the same time re-establish its position in Central Asia. Whether Khrushchev or anyone else seriously contemplated such a course is not known. From the Soviet point of view there would have been arguments for and against it and some of the latter could have been weakened by the confusion resulting from the cultural revolution. So far, however, there has been no sign whatever of action on these lines and it is probable that the Soviet government may have appraised the situation in the light of the following factors:

1. *Factors in favour of direct action*

(a) What appears to be the present disarray of the Chinese Communist Party and Government offers a golden opportunity for the restoration of Soviet influence in Sinkiang. Such an opportunity might not recur for a very long time since history shows that dynastic and other changes in China are apt to be followed by increased interest in the border regions.

(b) If the non-Han population of Sinkiang is as disaffected and as hostile to Chinese domination as refugees from the area claim, it might welcome Soviet intervention.

(c) The extension of the ethnic frontiers of the Kazakh, Kirgiz and Tadzhik S.S.R.s to include the Muslim population of Sinkiang would raise Soviet prestige in the Muslim world as a whole.

(d) The co-operation of the Mongolian P.R. could be relied upon since the Soviet presence in Sinkiang would reduce potential Chinese pressure on the Sino-Mongolian frontier.

(e) Chinese international prestige is at present so low that Soviet violation of Chinese sovereignty over Sinkiang hitherto recognized by successive Russian and Soviet Governments might be condoned.

(f) Re-establishment of Soviet influence in Sinkiang would hamstring Chinese nuclear installations there.

2. *Factors against direct action*

(a) The Chinese military presence in Sinkiang is stronger than at any previous time. It is uncertain how far, if at all, the disarray in the party and government has affected the armed forces. Moreover, Soviet direct action might have the effect of rallying dissident elements in China.

(b) Soviet forces might be able to occupy such cities as Kuldja, Kashgar and Yarkand without much difficulty, but the retention of an enclave would require a very considerable garrison.

have in mind for the subject peoples of the Soviet Union and the C.P.R. is assimilation. So far next to no assimilation has taken place between the Muslim and non-Muslim peoples of the Soviet Union: they remain biologically, socially, and to a large extent culturally, apart; and there is no immediate prospect of this situation changing. In Sinkiang, however, the possibility of assimilation is much less remote: Chinese methods are more ruthless; Chinese colonization is likely to increase; and the biological and social barriers between Chinese and non-Chinese are much smaller than between Muslims and non-Muslims in Soviet Central Asia.

On the basis of the very scanty information available it is impossible to formulate any clear notion of how Sino-Soviet relations in Central Asia are likely to develop. From the extreme caution so far displayed by the Russians and from their forbearance in the face of strong Chinese provocation in Peking and elsewhere it seems that the Soviet Government is at present intent on avoiding any action which might disturb the *status quo*. The Chinese, on the other hand, have historical and other reasons for wishing to disturb the *status quo*; but there is no evidence that they have any plans for doing so.

(c) Soviet attempts to restore lost influence in Sinkiang (1944), in east Turkey (1945) and north Persia (1945-46) by means of subversion, threats or direct action only resulted in a further loss of influence.

(d) Violation of China's frontiers would rule out any possibility of a rapprochement which might arise from a change of régime in China.

(e) Any annexation of the Muslim lands of western China would have to embrace the whole of the Sinkiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region. The addition to the Soviet eastern republics of a vast under-populated and largely desert area could complicate rather than ease existing Soviet nationalities and economic problems.

At the beginning of 1967, the arguments for and against direct action appeared, from the Western point of view, to break about even. Considering the general trend of Soviet policy towards stability rather than unrest it seemed to close students of Central Asian affairs highly unlikely that the Soviet government would resort to direct action in Sinkiang, unless some kind of separatist movement developed there and the local Chinese authorities asked for Soviet intervention. At present there seems to be little likelihood of this, but it must remain a possibility until the situation in China as a whole becomes more stable.

The Chinese government evidently expects what it calls its historic claims to large slices of Soviet territory to be taken seriously and the Soviet government probably does so. In their soberer moments the Chinese would not care to try conclusions with the Soviet armed forces. But if Red Guard hysteria were maintained and they gained more control over the Chinese armed forces than they appear to have done so far, there might be serious frontier clashes. At the moment, however, this danger seems to have receded.

There remains the attitude of the Muslim population on both sides of the frontier. The Muslims of Sinkiang are probably just as nationally conscious as their co-religionists on the Soviet side of the frontier. They probably dislike the Chinese even more than the Soviet Muslims dislike the Russians. There are strong cultural affinities between the two groups, but during the past fifty years there has been next to no contact between them and it is difficult to envisage circumstances in which this contact could increase to the point of their making common cause together. There are several other factors which militate against the possibility of a Turkic nationalist movement embracing all the Turkic Muslim peoples of Central Asia. The first is Soviet and Chinese determination that no such thing should happen. Secondly, as long as the *status quo* remains in the Soviet Union and provided that China returns to some kind of stability, the peoples on either side of the frontier will continue to grow apart. An important consideration here is the difference between the Soviet and Chinese systems of treating their subject peoples. The so-called Soviet Federal System has resulted in the creation of separate communist parties for all the Muslim republics and this has accentuated rather than reduced national consciousness, much to the annoyance of the Russians, who would like to abolish the national principle, but find it difficult to do so.

The ultimate future which the Russian and Chinese Communist parties