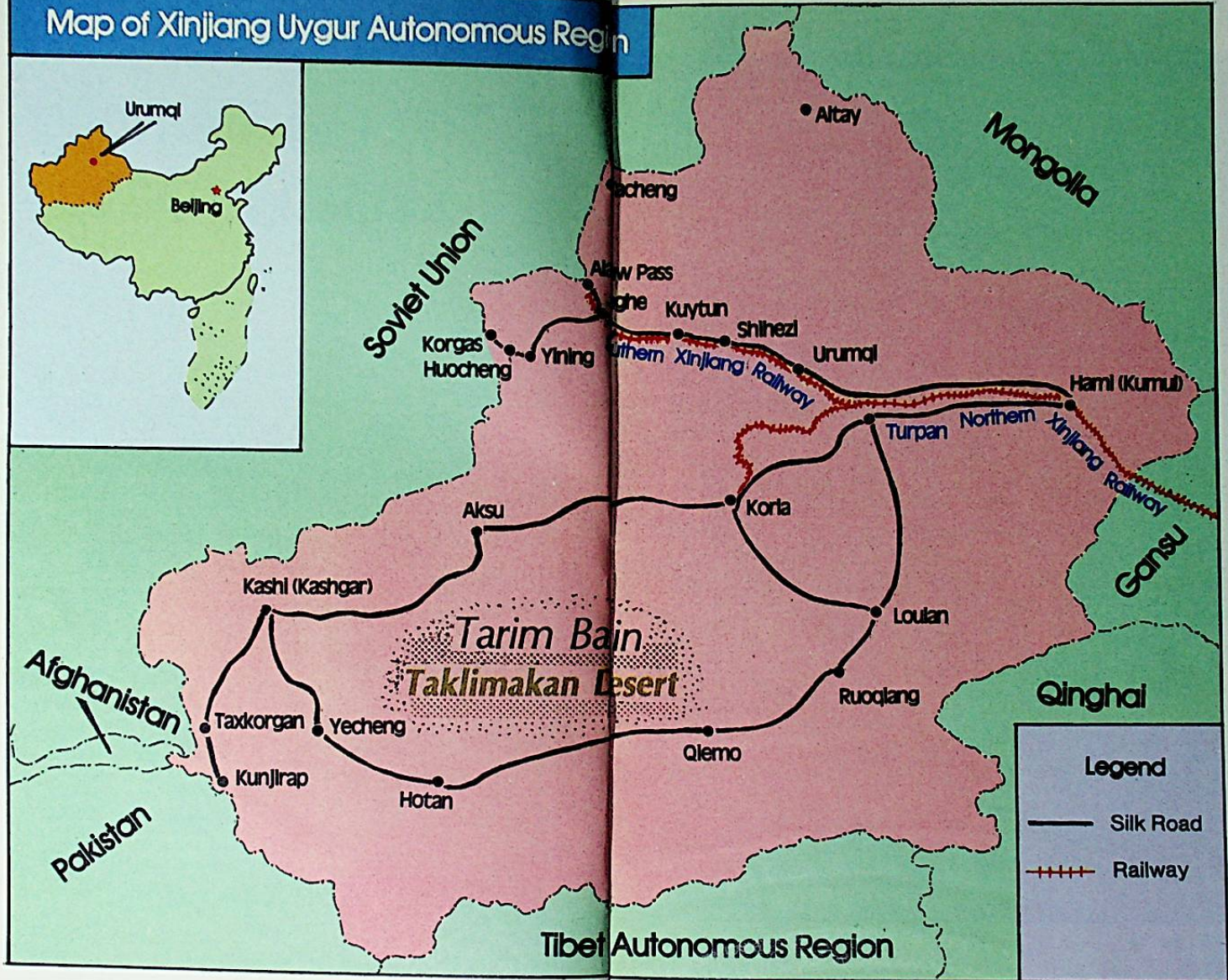
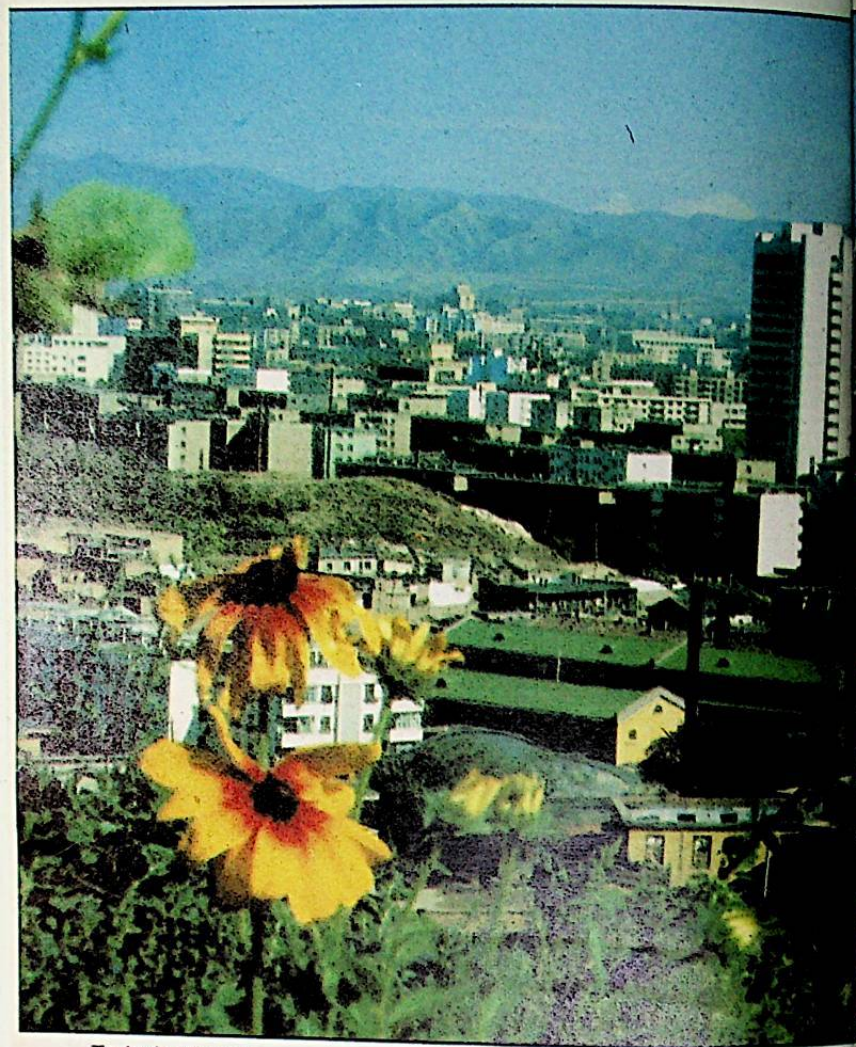


The Old Silk Road Xinjiang Today

China Today Press

Map of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

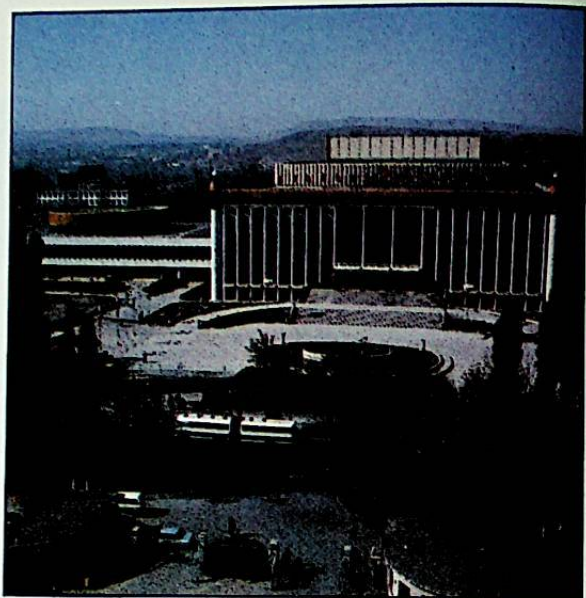




Today's Urumqi.



Li Yang

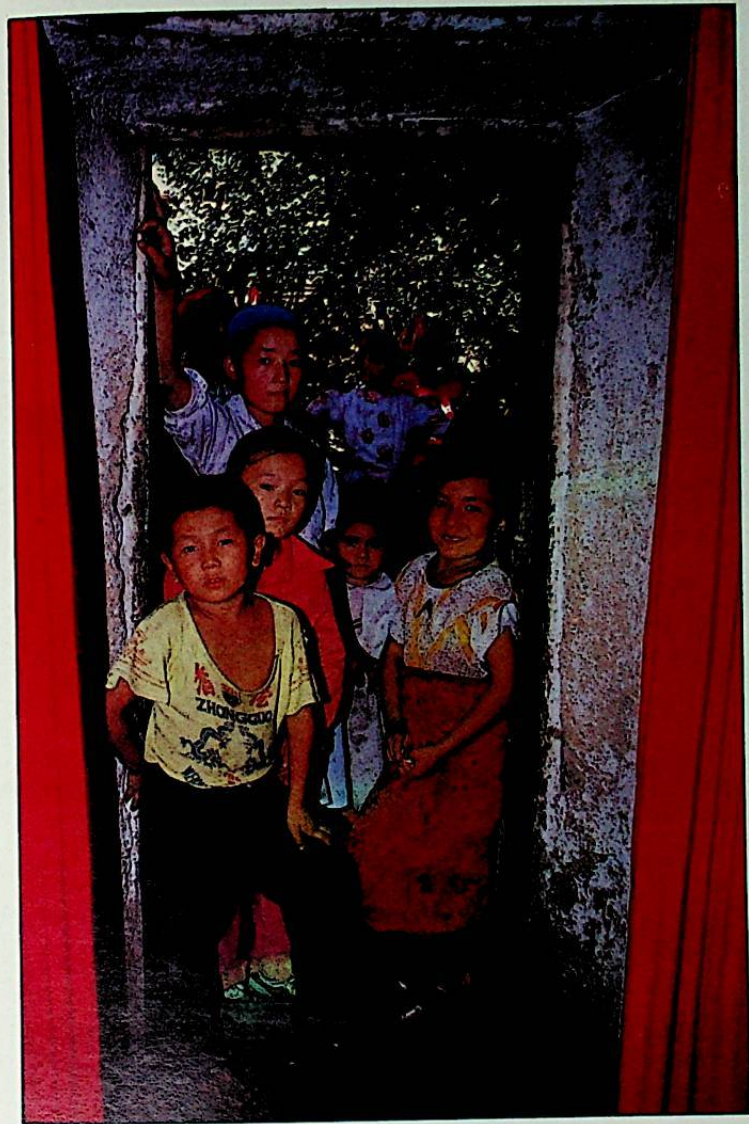
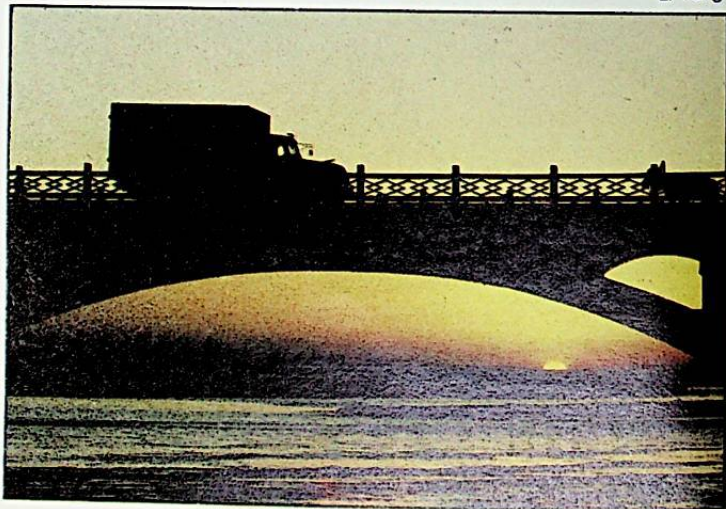


The Regional People's Hall in the center of Urumqi.

Xie Jun

Sunset glow on the bridge over the Ili River.

Li Yang



A happy Uyghur family.

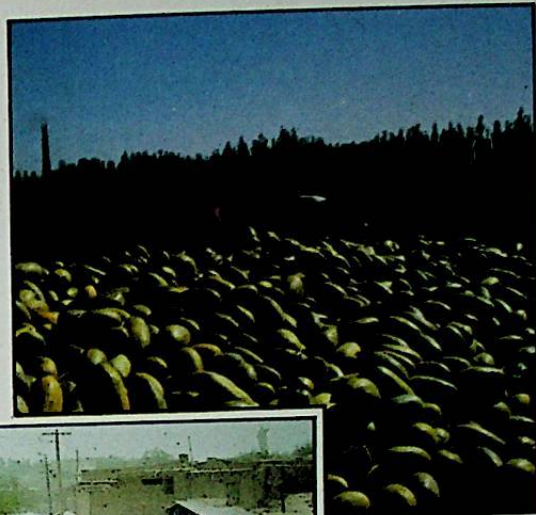
Zhang Jingde



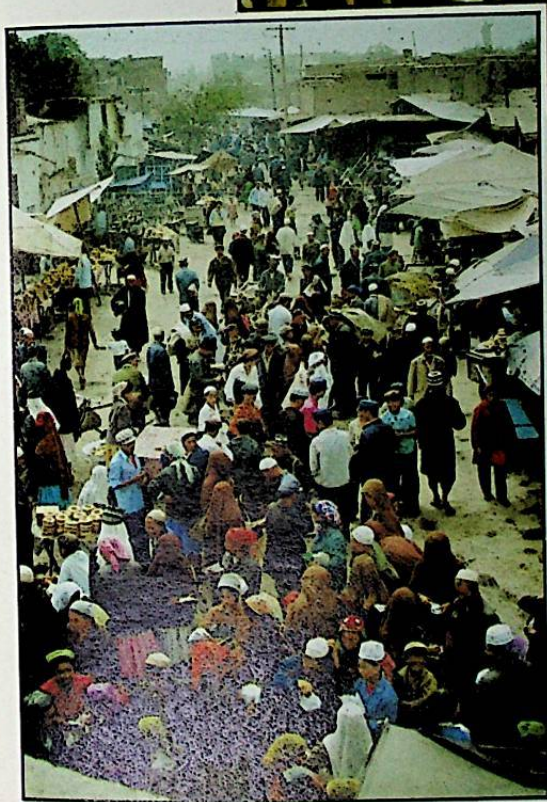
Kazak herders
boiling
mare's milk.
Xie Jun



Uygur and
Kazak girls.
Liu Chen



A Hami melon
bumper harvest.
Xie Jun



Kashi's bazaar.
Li Yang

PREFACE

China's vast inland Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has an ancient history, impressive present and boundless future. Once the center of the Silk Road, which tied China to western Asia and Europe, it has borders for thousands of kilometers, in a great arc from north to south, with the Soviet Union, Mongolian People's Republic, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Until half a century ago its links with the rest of China and with the outside world were mainly by camel caravan. Today there are multiple links by air, highway and rail — the last can ship great tonnages from China's Pacific coast to the Atlantic shores of Europe and the countries of the Middle East.

This region of deserts, oases, snow-clad mountains and green pastures is home to many of China's nationalities. In far-off times it was an area of Buddhist culture, of which fascinating relics remain, but for the last 12 centuries and more, of Islamic culture.

Economically, it has a thriving agriculture, yielding large quantities of grain, cotton and luscious fruit, pastures that produce meat, hides and fine wool, mines, oilfields, and manufacturing industries — some of which, since China's opening to the outside world, have attracted foreign investment advantageous to all concerned.

Visiting Xinjiang, I found it enjoyable, instructive, hospitable and vital with new energy. For the tourist, mountaineer, historian, archaeologist and student of the migrations and cultural interflow of different peoples, including their music and dance, it offers endless interest. To the environmentalist it has much to tell about old and new ways of irrigation and reclamation. For the entrepreneur it offers opportunities of investment and trade. For all guests the friendly welcome of its people is

unmatched, and, with modern transport and tourist services, what once took explorers arduous months to reach is days or even only hours away.

The table of contents of this small book will tell you the variety of themes it deals with. The articles themselves will give you much information and news. I hope they will also get some of you there to see for yourselves — you will not be disappointed.

Israel Epstein
Editor-in-Chief Emeritus
China Today
(Formerly *China Reconstructs*)

Beijing, March 15, 1991

Foreword

Xinjiang was a hub of economic and cultural exchanges between West and East on the Old Silk Road. It lost its prosperity when the Sea Silk Road took over. Later it became an out-of-the-way place of mystery to the outside world, given its geographic isolation caused by vast deserts and surrounding snowcapped mountains.

Since the 1980s, when China implemented its open policy, many foreigners have visited Xinjiang. However, the area is still strange and mysterious to the majority of foreigners. What is Xinjiang like today? What are the lives of its minority nationalities like? What economic and cultural development is there? Is transportation still inconvenient? How does one sightsee and do business there? To show Xinjiang's changes, *China Today* has cooperated with the autonomous region's Association for Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries in publishing this book, in which noted personages from Xinjiang, scholars and journalists report on the history, culture, minority-nationality customs, the natural landscape and the economic development of the region through personal experience and firsthand materials in the hope of helping readers better understand Xinjiang's yesterday and today.

We thank Ismail Aymat, minister in charge of the state Nationalities Affairs Commission, Tomur Dawamat, Chairman of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, and Chen Dajun, Wang Chenghe and their colleagues from the region's Association for Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries for their help in the writing, editing and publishing of this book.

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Cover Picture: Uygur people chatting.
Back Cover: Tianchi landscape.

Xie Jun
Zhang Jingde