

# *Five Years of the Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region, 1955-60*

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## 1

SINKIANG, that vast, rugged land in Inner Asia, rich in undeveloped resources and peopled by farmers and nomads of many races and creeds with deeply-rooted differences in ways of life and long years of conflict over political aspirations, is today in the throes of a revolution of unprecedented magnitude and intensity aimed at the achievement of sweeping cultural, social and economic changes. This prodigious effort at transformation is the keynote of Chinese Communist rule of Sinkiang. Its groundwork was laid in the first years after the Chinese Communists took control in 1949.

From the very outset of their rule, the Chinese Communists had taken pains to assure their domination by emphatic assertions of the paramountcy of the Party and the inalienability of the region, by monopoly of the key positions in the machinery of government and by outright display of military power.<sup>1</sup> Half of the officials of the provincial people's government and three-quarters of the members of the provincial Party committee were Chinese. A determined effort was made to recruit a corps of disciplined and faithful functionaries from the minority races to assist the Chinese cadres. By 1955, there were 36,000 native cadres, three times the number of 1950, but only 5 per cent. of them held government or Party positions above the county level.

Paying special attention to the young, the Communist authorities opened more schools so that the number of primary school students reached 366,000 in 1955, a 70 per cent. increase over 1950. The people were grouped into mass organisations. The campaign for the suppression of the counter-revolutionaries weeded out the dissidents and silenced the opposition, while land reform prepared the way for collectivisation. By September 1955 over 62 per cent. of the rural population was organised into mutual aid teams and 5 per cent. into 1,702 agricultural

<sup>1</sup> The inalienability of the national autonomous areas is stipulated in article three of the 1954 constitution of the People's Republic of China and the subordination of the governments of these areas to the Communist Party of China is stressed in the statement of Wang Feng, vice-chairman of the Nationality Affairs Commission of the State Council, *People's Daily* (*Jen-min Jih-pao* hereafter abbreviated as JMJP) September 27, 1959, as translated in *Current Background* (hereafter abbreviated as CB) (Hong Kong: U.S. Consulate-General), No. 609.

producers' co-operatives, and there were seventy-two state farms, over half of which were mechanised. Between 1950 and 1955, the Communists claim, the cultivated acreage increased by 25 per cent. to about 3.6 million acres and the number of livestock rose from twelve to seventeen million head.

Under the impetus of Soviet guidance and assistance, industrialisation got under way. Before they were turned over to the Chinese in 1955, the four Sino-Soviet joint stock companies helped the Chinese in prospecting and surveying, in technological direction and planning, and in equipping and constructing modern factories. As a result, while there were only fourteen factories in 1950, there were sixty-four in 1955 and production in 1955 was said to be ten times the volume of 1950. By 1955, there were about 2,500 miles of highways and a tenth of the 1,500-mile Lanchow-Sinkiang Railway, begun in 1954, had been built.

The construction work was carried out largely by Chinese labour since native workers, numbering about three thousand in 1955, were considered untrained. Besides the large numbers of Chinese who were brought into Sinkiang, 30,000 in the year 1955 alone, the Chinese Communists, following the historic Chinese practice of employing military colonists, organised a large body of labour troops, at first mostly former Nationalist soldiers, to farm, to reclaim wasteland and to build roads and factories. Called the Production and Construction Corps of the People's Liberation Army, its men tilled in 1955 over a million acres of land besides performing military duties.

After setting the stage by these measures to tighten their grip over Sinkiang and after experiments conducted at lower administrative levels in 1954 had shown that their system of controlled and limited self-government for the minority peoples was safe, the Chinese Communists finally granted autonomy to the whole of Sinkiang.<sup>2</sup> The Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region, comprising of three municipalities, seven administrative districts, five autonomous districts, seventy-three counties, six autonomous counties, and a population of 4,874,000 (according to the 1953-54 census), 4.3 million of them non-Chinese (including 3.6 million Uighurs), formally came into being on October 1, 1955.

Although the majority of the people probably attached little political significance to the establishment of the Autonomous Region, the event did mark, in a way, the conclusion of the stage of preliminary preparations by the Chinese Communists and the opening of the developmental stage to increase the agricultural and

<sup>2</sup> For a review of the political developments in Sinkiang during the first five years under Communist domination, see the chapter "Political Dynamics" by J. P. Lo in *A Regional Handbook of Northwest China* (Human Resources Area Files, Inc., University of Washington, 1956), II: 483-531.

industrial productivity of the region and to integrate the economic development of the region with the overall plans of China. Since Sinkiang is now closed to non-Communist observers, the only available information are the glowing accounts and the array of figures presented by the Communists, but, even after making due allowances for the inaccuracy of their statistics and the exuberance of their claims, a picture emerges of colossal changes that have come over Sinkiang.

## 2

As Saifuddin Azizi, chairman and concurrently a Party secretary of the Autonomous Region, remarked in 1959, both the Soviet Union and Communist China had a share in Sinkiang's economic growth. From 1950 to 1960, 1,066 large tractors, 140 combines, and 4,000 tractor ploughs, drills and other equipment came from Soviet Russia besides the parts for the thousands of tractors turned out by the October 1 Motor Repair and Assembly Shop, which was itself built with Soviet help. Soviet planes sprayed insecticides, Soviet experts gave technical direction to increase cotton production, the Soviet Government donated two hospitals, and, after Soviet engineers helped in the discovery of the Karamai oilfields, "everything was done by the Russians and all the heavy machinery and tools for prospecting—30 to 40,000 tons a year—came from Soviet Russia."<sup>3</sup>

The Chinese Communists, handicapped by distance and the lack of railway lines, furnished manpower and capital. Factories, highways, dams and many major engineering works were built by the army's labour corps augmented by workers from China. The credit which Peking extended to Sinkiang to cover general operational expenses and to meet its budgetary deficit came to 13,980 million yuan for the 1950–58 period. However, nearly half of this amount was for the year 1958 alone to defray the expenditure needed in the establishment of the communes and the "big leap forward" in production. Of the 2,522 million yuan appropriated for the educational, cultural, economic and administrative development of the region from 1949 to 1957, 1,630 million yuan came from Peking, and of the investment of 1,720 million yuan for capital formation (not wholly in industry), 1,310 million yuan came from Peking. Since the cost of living is not published, there is no way of knowing the

<sup>3</sup> JMJP November 6, 1957. On Soviet aid to Sinkiang, see New China News Agency (hereafter abbreviated as NCNA) feature article, "Extensive Soviet help to Sinkiang," October 28, 1957, translated in *Survey of the China Mainland Press* (hereafter abbreviated as SCMP) (Hong Kong: U.S. Consulate-General), 1642, and article by Saifuddin, "Sinkiang's great achievement in agriculture in ten years," *Chung-kuo Nung-pao*, 1959, No. 19 (October 8, 1959), translated in *Extracts from China Mainland Magazines* (Hong Kong: U.S. Consulate-General) (hereafter abbreviated as ECMM), 193.

actual value of these sums. Moreover, the transactions were not entirely one-way; Saifuddin mentioned the taxes paid to Peking and revealed that of the proceeds from government enterprises only 20 per cent. was retained by Sinkiang.<sup>4</sup>

The goal of the First Five-Year Plan (1953-57) in Sinkiang was the achievement of economic self-sufficiency. In 1958, when the Second Five-Year Plan was undertaken, the Party committee of Sinkiang, in compliance with the directive of the Eighth Party Congress, announced the aim of converting Sinkiang into a base for the production of iron, steel, oil, coal and cotton, an objective to be attained by launching a multi-phase campaign: propaganda, a purge of the rightists, increase of production, technological improvements and a cultural revolution.<sup>5</sup>

One of the means to the achievement of economic self-sufficiency was to speed-up the programme of collectivisation. By spring of 1956, there were 8,500 lower-type agricultural producers' co-operatives in which ownership of private property was permitted to a certain degree. They comprised 45 per cent. of the farming population. At the end of 1957, when over 95 per cent. of the peasants were in collectives, the transition to a higher type of co-operatives took place. There were 5,800 of these co-operatives in which all means of production were communal property and wages were distributed according to labour. Meanwhile, in the pastoral areas, 46 per cent. of the herdsmen were organised into co-operatives. In the autumn of 1958, 7,000 agricultural and a number of animal husbandry co-operatives were merged into 450 large-scale communes embracing over 96 per cent. of the peasants and herdsmen and operating over 17,000 small factories and mines.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the number of state farms and ranches reached 220, of which 178 were mechanised, occupying a million acres of farmland and possessing two million head of cattle.

The biggest and the best of the communes, as the Communist leaders hailed it, is the aggregate of farms of the Production and Construction Corps which since 1955 had multiplied enormously in size. One division in 1959 was three times its 1954 strength and press dispatches mentioned as many as eight divisions. Besides operating 147 mechanised farms and

<sup>4</sup> The figures for the loans and investments are cited by Saifuddin in his article, "Celebrate the tenth national day with tremendous achievement in production increase and economy," *Min-tsu T'uan-chieh*, 1959, No. 10 (October 6, 1959), translated in ECMM, 196, and Wang En-mao, "Struggle to implement the people's Marxist-Leninist line for the solution of the nationality question," JMJP June 27, 1958, in CB 512.

At the official rate of exchange, a yuan is equivalent to three shillings or U.S. \$0.42.

<sup>5</sup> Speech of Wang En-mao, *Sinkiang Jih-pao* (hereafter abbreviated as SKJP) June 6, 1958, in CB 512.

<sup>6</sup> Saifuddin's articles "Celebrate the tenth national day" and "Sinkiang's great achievements."

ranches covering nearly 1.6 million acres of farmland, they built 430 factories between 1955 and 1959. In 1957, their output of cotton came to 29 per cent. of the regional total and their industrial output to 36 per cent. In addition, the men of the labour corps not only lent armed support to the regular army and the public security forces, but they also trained cadres and technical personnel in the management of co-operatives as well as in the operation of tractors and combines.<sup>7</sup>

The people's communes were launched in Sinkiang, according to Communist press dispatches, in an atmosphere of prosperity and abundance. In response to the exhortation of Party committees to carry out the "big leap forward" in agricultural production, the farmers "joyously reported and happily celebrated an unprecedented bumper harvest."<sup>8</sup> Grain production was reported to have reached three million tons in 1958, nearly three times the amount of 1949,<sup>9</sup> and cotton production reached 58,000 tons, eleven times that of 1949.

A major factor for the increase of agricultural production was said to be the extension of the irrigated acreage from 2.4 million acres in 1949 to 5.6 million acres in 1959 brought about by the construction of hundreds of small reservoirs and canals. By 1959, the cropping area reached over 6.6 million acres, over a million acres of which were added during late

<sup>7</sup> Summary of the work of the Sinkiang Production and Construction Corps in JMJP April 16 and July 31, 1960, and the article "Brief account of the achievements of the Sinkiang Production and Construction Corps of the army in the last ten years," *Chung-kuo Nung-k'ien*, 1960 No. 3 (February 5, 1960) in ECMM 204.

<sup>8</sup> SKJP September 30, 1958, translated in Union Research Service XIII:17 (November 21, 1958).

<sup>9</sup> These were the revised figures for 1958 as cited in the article "Sinkiang's great achievements" by Saifuddin, who revealed that the per *mou* (one-sixth of an acre) yield of grain was 290 pounds. Previously, the grain production for 1958 was, according to the SKJP, September 30, 1958, estimated at three and a half million tons and the per *mou* yield was over 365 pounds. This SKJP dispatch also revealed that the farming population of Sinkiang, in 1958, was still 4.2 million, indicating almost no substantial increase from the number of peasants in the 1949-53 period. Since the *per capita* production of grain increased from 500 pounds to 1,100 pounds in 1958, the 1958 total could only have been a little more than double the 1949 amount, certainly not three times. In his speech in April, 1960, when he reported that the production of grain in 1959 was three and a half million tons, Saifuddin said that it was only 2.4 times the amount of 1949 (NCNA, April 5, 1960).

The preliminary estimate given in the SKJP, September 30, 1958, stated that the grain harvest of 1958 was 70 per cent. more than the 1957 figure, but Saifuddin, in his report on the readjustment of the production figures (SKJP, September 5, 1959, in SCMP 2132), revealed that the grain production of 1958 was only 45.5 per cent. over 1957 (in his article "Sinkiang's great achievements," he declared that it was 47.5 per cent.), and he revealed, too, that the annual rate of increase from 1952 to 1957 was 4.8 per cent. These percentages were high compared to percentages of overall agricultural growth in Communist China where the 1958 total was 35 per cent. over 1957 and the rate of increase from 1952 to 1957 was 3.7 per cent. Cf. Noboru Tsuchi, "Analysis of economic growth in Communist China" (Chugoku no keizai kakudai ni tsuite no Kento), *Ekafui Tsushin* 229 (May 21, 1960), 1-30, translated in United States Joint Publication Research Service 7051 (November 15, 1960) and Choh-ming Li, "The First Decade, Part II, Economic Development," *The China Quarterly*, No. 1 (January-March, 1960), 40-41.

1958 and early 1959. Working in the Tarim and Dzungarian Basins, the men of the army's labour corps reclaimed 2.7 million acres of desert land from 1955 to 1959, and, in the first six months of 1960, when 30 per cent. of all the able-bodied men of the region were mobilised to build irrigation works, nearly 1.5 million acres of arid and alkaline land were reported to have been reclaimed.

Besides enlarging farm acreage, the authorities made vigorous efforts to increase the productivity of the soil by campaigns to collect manure for fertiliser, by deep ploughing, and by urging the farmers to work their fields more intensively. *Per capita* production of grain, which averaged 500 pounds in 1949, rose to 800 pounds in 1953-57, and to 1,100 (1,320 in south Sinkiang) pounds in 1958. *Per capita* production of cotton rose from 22.8 pounds in 1949 to 68.8 pounds in 1958.

Elated by such returns, which were far above normal, the Party leaders set even higher targets for 1959. The *per capita* production of grain was to be raised to 2,200 pounds and the regional total to six or six and a half million tons, doubling the 1958 total. *Per capita* production of cotton was to be raised to 65-75 pounds and the total increased to 180,000-225,000 tons. The targets for southern Sinkiang were even higher.<sup>10</sup> But, as in China proper, the Party leaders had over-estimated. Neither cajolery nor coercion could make the farmers produce more, and the failure to reach the targets necessitated a drastic readjustment. Instead of six to six and a half million tons of grain, the amount harvested in 1959 came to only three and a half million tons. And even though this amount was, as Saifuddin modestly revealed, 2.4 times that of 1949 (*sic*), a food shortage was felt all over Sinkiang which he attributed to waste, lack of manpower, inadequacy of techniques, rightist opposition, and natural calamities. He urged the people to work harder and to make greater sacrifices so that the state could have sufficient food to feed the growing population in the industrial and mining areas and in the towns through which the Lanchow-Sinkiang Railway would pass.

Meanwhile, the number of livestock also increased, from seventeen million head in 1954 to twenty-two million in 1958, but the Party directive to increase the 1959 figure to twenty-eight million head was not carried out.

### 3

The most conspicuous aspect of economic development in Sinkiang has been in industry.<sup>11</sup> Exclusive of handicraft workshops, the number of

<sup>10</sup> The production targets for 1959-62 are mentioned by Wang En-mao in SKJP June 28, 1958, and July 18, 1958, in CB 521.

<sup>11</sup> The statistics on industrial expansion, particularly regarding the leap forward, are to be found in the above-mentioned articles by Saifuddin and Wang En-mao and in numerous press dispatches. See, in particular, Saifuddin's "Report on the readjust-

factories rose from sixty-four in 1955 to over four hundred in 1957, and to over fifteen hundred in 1958. Particular emphasis was placed on the production of petroleum, coal, iron and steel, and electric power, the prerequisites of modern industry.

*Oil:* Sinkiang's petroleum industry was born during the Second World War. By the end of the war, the output of oil reached 22,000–29,000 tons, the bulk of which came from Hungtungshan (Kolayalun) and Tushantzu, the site of a Soviet-built refinery. The large-scale and systematic surveys and prospecting carried out jointly by Chinese Communist and Soviet teams led to the discovery of many new oilfields, the largest of which is in the area around Karamai (Black Oil) and Uerho in the northern part of the Dzungarian Basin. When oil gushed forth from an experimental shaft in the winter of 1955, workers from thirty Chinese cities and oilmen from six East European countries immediately flocked there, while Soviet Russia supplied all the equipment. The Chinese built 300 miles of roads in the area, laid a pipeline to the Tushantzu refinery, and dug a canal to supply water. Karamai is said to be so rich that, in 1959, one well alone produced 30,000 tons a year and, along with other new oilfields, it contributed to a huge increase in oil production. In 1958, Sinkiang produced 330,000 tons and, after the production of 400,000 tons (more than a tenth of China's total) in the first six months of 1959, the target for the year was set at 670,000 tons.

*Coal:* Chinese Communist claims of the discovery of new coal deposits, many along the path of the new railway, have raised the estimate of the coal reserves in Sinkiang from thirty-two to thirty-five billion tons. By 1955, coal production was thirty-one times the amount of 1950, and in 1958 it reached 3.6 million tons. After 2.2 million tons were mined in the first half of 1959, the year's target was readjusted to 3.9 million tons.

*Iron and steel:* Although Sinkiang has rich deposits of iron ore, estimated at 48.7 million metric tons, the large-scale manufacture of iron and steel began only with the construction, with Soviet assistance, of the August 1 Iron and Steel Plant at Urumchi in 1951. By 1957, production came to only 17,230 tons of iron and 14,640 tons of steel. In 1958, when the "big leap" was launched, with the aim of increasing the output of ferrous metals, the targets for Sinkiang were set at 57,000 tons of pig iron and 30,000 tons of steel. But, at the end of nine months, only 18,500 tons of iron and only 11,000 tons of steel had been produced, of which 18,000 tons of iron and all of the steel came from the August 1 Plant. The 90,000 home-made furnaces and workshops turned out four

ment of the principal targets set in 1959 National Plan of the Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region and the unfolding of the movement for production increase and economy of the region," in SKJP September 5, 1959, in SCMP 2132.

thousand tons of unusable scrap. After the installation of fifty blast furnaces and more than thirty steel converters in the August 1 Plant between 1958 and 1959, the Party leaders set the 1959 targets at 228,000 tons of pig iron and 228,000 tons of steel, for which the August 1 Plant was assigned 200,000 tons of each category. But when only 98,000 tons of iron and 17,000 tons of steel were produced during the first six months, the year's targets were reduced to 120,000 tons of iron and 60,000 tons of steel. The main obstacles were said to be the low iron content of the ore—less than 31 per cent.—and the poor grade of coke. The shortage of steel is said to be one of the chief reasons for the delay in track-laying of the Lanchow-Sinkiang Railway.

*Electric Power:* Up to 1954, the Urumchi Thermo-electric Plant produced 40 per cent. more power than the combined output of all the other plants in Sinkiang. With the installation of new generators, power output in 1955 was reported to be thirty times that of 1950 and in 1957 seventy-two times. Between 1957 and 1958, the construction of hydro-electric plants at Urumchi and Kashgar and nearly 200 small hydro-electric stations boosted power output to thirty-eight million kilowatt hours and, it is claimed, in the first six months of 1959 power output reached a hundred million kilowatt hours and that the target for the year was revised to 184 million kilowatt hours.<sup>12</sup>

Under this accelerated programme, industrial production is reported to be gaining on agricultural production. The gross value of production is revealed to have increased ten times since 1949 to 5,347 million yuan in 1958, an exorbitant figure divorced from any invariable index for calculation and derived from over-enthusiastic data received, which obliged the Party leaders to reduce the 1959 total to 2,487 million yuan. In the meantime, the value of industrial production rose from 5.7 per cent. of the total value in 1952 to 20 per cent. in 1956, and to 27.7 per cent. in 1957, when it surpassed the planned amount by 5 per cent. The revised value for industrial production in 1959 was 1,058 million yuan, or 40 per cent. of the total.<sup>13</sup> The original plans called for industrial production to occupy 57.5 per cent. of the total production by 1962, the end of the Second Five-Year Plan, but after what happened in 1958 and 1959, this goal may have to be postponed.

<sup>12</sup> As in the case of the other production figures, there is no way of ascertaining the veracity of the claims for electric power output. Saifuddin, in his article "Sinkiang's great achievements," mentioned 192 hydroelectric stations in 1957-58 and stated that more were under construction. But, according to an article in the *Chiao-shih Pao* (Peking), March 19, 1957, the Urumchi hydroelectric plant had a capacity of only 2,000 kilowatts compared with the thermo-electric station at Hungyenchih, near Urumchi, which a Urumchi dispatch published in the *JMJP*, November 9, 1958, claimed to have a capacity of 900,000 kilowatts.

<sup>13</sup> Saifuddin, "Celebrate the tenth national day," and Wang En-mao, in *JMJP*, June 27, 1958. Also Shao Min-ling, "Sinkiang today," *Peking Review* 1:19 (July, 1958), 12-13.



Among the excuses offered by the Party leaders for this failure, the chief one was the shortage of skilled workers—an excuse, too, for the huge influx of Chinese into the region. At the end of 1957, the Sinkiang branch of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions had a membership of 252,000 “clerks and workers,” among whom 172,000 were Chinese. Of the remaining 80,000 native members, 43,000 were industrial workers, a marked increase in two years. In spite of its protestations, the Party is, apparently, reluctant to hire too many natives for industry. It banned migration of jobless farmers into the cities to find employment in factories, as, for instance in 1957, when 20,000 farmers were told to leave Urumchi. The figure of 650,000 native workers in 1958 can be discounted since most of them were local people making iron in backyard furnaces. Chinese immigrants continued to enter Sinkiang in ever-increasing numbers. One batch in the spring of 1959 numbered 100,000. Besides the troops of the army's labour corps who were engaged in industry, there have been persistent reports of convict labourers in roadbuilding and in the mines.

Telephone lines and highways were said to be over 6,000 miles in length by 1958. The army's labour corps which built the 180-mile Urumchi-Kurla highway over the Tianshan Range also operates a fleet of lorries which, in 1957, carried over 40 per cent. of Sinkiang's freight. The Lanchow-Sinkiang Railway, a vital link in Chinese Communist plans for the development of the region, reached Hami (Qomul) at the end of 1959 and was, by July 1960, within 200 miles of Urumchi. The roadbed, bridges and culverts have been built beyond Urumchi as far as Shihhotzu, but construction has been delayed by the shortage of steel rails and the problem of water on the desert stretch. A railway around the Tarim Basin to join the Lanchow-Sining-Tsaidam Railway, now under construction, is envisaged for the future.

## 4

All these physical changes in Sinkiang have taken place, *pari passu*, with a profound transformation of the life of the people. To further ideological indoctrination, the number of schools has been increased and, by 1960, the number of primary school students reached 957,000, comprising almost all of the children in the region.<sup>14</sup> Sinkiang College, with an enrolment of 4,000 in 1960, will be elevated to a university in 1962. Peking opera, plays and motion pictures bearing such titles as “In the footsteps of Mao Tse-tung” are now the dramatic fare in Sinkiang theatres.

<sup>14</sup> Kuan Ou-lo, “Sinkiang's higher education is developing rapidly,” JMJP, July 10, 1960, in United States Joint Publications Research Service, 4013 (August 26, 1960).

A more significant example of the sinification of Sinkiang's culture is the use of Chinese as the official language and, after ten years, the native languages have come to be interspersed with Chinese political and scientific terminology. The people are told that the study of Chinese is the only way to advancement, many government offices reject documents not written in Chinese, telegrams written in Chinese are given priority, and the majority of Chinese officials disdain to learn the native tongues. A government directive of February 1960, one of the many since, 1958, decreed that, in the interest of solidarity between Sinkiang and the rest of China, Arabic and the Cyrillic alphabet, introduced from Russian Central Asia in 1956, would be replaced by the Latin letters of the Chinese orthographical system, and the Uighur and Kazakh languages, heretofore written from right to left, would be written from left to right.<sup>15</sup>

Collectivisation, too, has brought in its train a social upheaval in the countryside. Home life is gone when the people are compelled to eat in the 30,000 communal kitchens in the region and to leave their children in communal nurseries. With collective ownership of the means of production, the system of property inheritance has disappeared. Collectivisation in the pastoral areas has changed the age-old way of life of the nomadic peoples: they have become sedentary. In 1958, 600,000 Kazakhs, Khalkhas, Tajiks and other tribes were settled in co-operatives and by the end of 1959 two million nomads in Sinkiang and neighbouring regions had moved from their yurts into clay and wooden houses in the communes.<sup>16</sup> In 1959, the Marriage Law of Communist China, heretofore considerably modified in Sinkiang, was strictly enforced with particular stress on monogamy and legal sanction for divorce. Women were required to perform more labour than before. A traveller reported that many of the wells in the Karamai oilfields were operated by women. Among the many changes in the customs of the people was the reduction of the month-long holiday during Ramadan to two days.

Meanwhile the population of the region steadily mounted. The 4.3 million native peoples in the 1953-54 census grew to 4.6 million by 1956. The multitude of Chinese, military and civilian, who poured into the region further swelled the population. By the close of 1958, the population of the region was mentioned as being six million.<sup>17</sup> As the rural inhabitants are now herded into communes so industrialisation has spurred the growth of urban population in some localities. Following the opening

<sup>15</sup> JMJP, February 10, 1960, in SCMP 2198.

<sup>16</sup> NCNA, December 13, 1960, 1959 and *New York Times*, January 20, 1960.

<sup>17</sup> Speech of Wang En-mao, SKJP, September 11, 1958, in Union Research Service XIII:15 (November 21, 1958). The rural population was still cited as 4.2 million, see SKJP, September 30, 1958, in Union Research Service, XIII:17 (November 28, 1958).

of railway traffic, the population of Hami rose to 100,000. By 1956, Urumchi, the capital of the Autonomous Region, had 210,000 residents, 50 per cent. more than in 1949. A new industrial centre at Shihhotzu has been built by the army's labour corps and, at the Karamai oilfield, a new city is rising out of the desert sand, a city which is already elevated to the rank of one of the four municipalities of Sinkiang and which by 1959 had a population of 50,000.

## 5

This picture of the recent developments in Sinkiang, it must be reiterated, is a highly coloured, one-sided view as seen by the Chinese Communists and as they wish it to be seen by the world. The emphasis has been on prominent, visible features and on quantity rather than quality. As the 1958-59 production record reveals, the glowing reports and impressive figures published by the Communists must be carefully scrutinised and re-examined before they can be accepted. On the obverse is the grimy, unadorned side of the picture as seen by the local residents who must endure the regimentation and the privations, the hardships and the sacrifices forcibly imposed upon them as a result of these convulsive changes. The overwhelmingly large proportion of non-Chinese peoples who are proud of their cultures and traditions and attached to their religions, who have long yearned for independence and many times have risen in revolt, and who are still stirred by the appeal of Pan-Turkism, seriously complicate the picture.

The Chinese Communists granted regional autonomy to Sinkiang as a sop to the pride of the local peoples, assuring them, as Burhan Shahidi, chairman in 1955, did, that an autonomous region had the same status as a province of China but more power. Even though the people must have had little illusion about the autonomy granted them, they were still shocked to find what the Chinese Communist definition of it really meant. The autonomous powers, as promised, included the exercise of local authority, the administration of finances and the public security forces, and the use of native languages, but they all had strings attached to them. As Saifuddin disclosed in December 1957, the people were dissatisfied with the degree of autonomy and moreover objected to the drain of money and supplies from Sinkiang. All major decisions had to be approved by Peking and the administration of local autonomy "must be inseparably linked to the Chinese Communist Party, helped by the Chinese and local Party members."<sup>18</sup> The people were promised political equality but they had to submit to the guidance and help of the Chinese.

<sup>18</sup> An oft-repeated statement by Saifuddin, Wang En-mao and others. Also see Hsia Fu-jen, "Marxism vs. nationalism in Sinkiang," *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, April 10, 1958, in SCMP 1764.

Consequently, the bulk of the Party members and cadres in Sinkiang are Chinese. The number of cadres reached 134,000 in 1959, but native cadres comprised only half. In 1957, 5 per cent. of the native cadres held rank above the county level, comprising a third of the cadres promoted to these positions. Party membership in 1959 reached 130,000 in nearly 9,000 local branches, twice the 1956 membership, but less than half were natives.<sup>19</sup> In the Urumchi Party committee, only nine of the twenty-three members were natives. Since the native peoples comprised nine-tenths of the population, the most persistent demands have been for the promotion of more native Party members and cadres and the assignment of more offices to them according to population ratio. In reply, Wang En-mao, regional Party first secretary and concurrently commander of the Sinkiang Military District, told them in 1958 that these demands were impossible and contrary to Party policy.

The invasion of Chinese workers has been a chief cause of resentment. The natives, whom the Communists labelled "local nationalists," charged that the Chinese ate up all the rice, held the best jobs, and left the heavy work for them to do. They refused to co-operate with the Chinese, whom they called "new exploiters" and colonists. The main target of attack is the army's labour corps which, engaged in all kinds of economic enterprises, is regarded by the natives as unfair competition. Native peasants felt that they were steadily being pushed back when they saw the combined acreage of the army's labour corps and the state farms occupying 2.6 of the 6.6 million acres of crop land. The peasants of southern Sinkiang claimed that collectivisation had reduced them to starvation. The local peoples declared that industrialisation benefited China more than Sinkiang and they criticised the "big leap" as a fanatical scheme to apply Chinese methods to local conditions. Scorning the Communist type of literature as nothing better than almanacs, they opposed the study of Chinese and sought "linguistic independence."

There were murmurings of discontent in 1956 when Saifuddin asked for the promotion of more native cadres and for more powers for the regional government to regulate its affairs. But, except for some mild admonitions against "great nation chauvinism," nothing was done. Following the Hungarian defiance of Soviet rule and the brief relaxation of control in China in 1957, the attacks on the Chinese Communist Party and Government came boldly out in the open and the chorus of anti-Chinese sentiments was echoed by many native cadres and officials in high places. They called for the expulsion of the Chinese and the Chinese Communist Party from Sinkiang, the change of the name of

<sup>19</sup> In addition, there were, in 1959, 10,280 branches of the Young Communist League in Sinkiang with a membership of over 220,000, half of whom were natives.

Sinkiang to Eastern Turkestan or Uighurstan, and the establishment of an independent federal republic.

The Chinese Communists struck back in November and December by the wholesale arrest of "counter-revolutionaries" followed by a series of rectification campaigns, in which, in speech after speech, it was pointed out that Sinkiang was an inalienable part of China, that Sinkiang owed a deep debt of gratitude to China, that the policy of the Party was correct and unchallengeable, that the large number of Chinese in responsible positions was necessary for the collective leadership and the hordes of Chinese workers were needed for economic reconstruction, and that there must be solidarity between the natives and the Chinese people.

The real work of the conferences was the shake-up and purge of the cadres. After the first conference in December 1957, 50,000 cadres were demoted to lower levels and their pay was cut by more than 7 per cent. The six-month-long conference, ending in June 1958, resulted in the purge of five high officials holding concurrent positions in both Party and Government, including the Mayor of Urumchi. The seventy-five-day conference at Kashgar led to the dismissal of Iminov, commissioner of the administrative district and one-time regional vice-chairman. Five high officials were suspended at the September conference, including the president of the court in an autonomous district, and nine more in February 1959. Conferences of other public bodies purged many more and hundreds were condemned to corrective labour. The police and the courts were ordered to be more severe and rigorous in making arrests, persecution and convictions.<sup>20</sup>

While the Communists may have raised this hue and cry about the rightists, the nationalists and the counter-revolutionaries to divert attention from the miscarriage of their economic plans, it is quite apparent that unrest and opposition is widespread in Sinkiang, and the antagonism is likely to grow as the Chinese bulldoze their way ahead. Sporadic revolts in Sinkiang were reported in the summer of 1959 during the Communist involvement in Tibet. On November 25 and 26, 1959, the *Sinkiang Jih-pao* revealed in four articles the existence of an organised

<sup>20</sup> Among the many publications on the spread of local nationalism in Sinkiang and the purge of local officials and cadres who entertained such dissident views, the more important documents are the speech by Saifuddin at the enlarged meeting of the Party committee of the Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region on December 16, 1957, in JMJP, December 26, 1957, speeches of Saifuddin and Wang En-mao at another enlarged meeting of the Party committee in the summer of 1958, JMJP, June 27, 1958, both in CB 512, the Decision of the Party to carry out the Rectification Campaign and the Resolution of the Sinkiang Regional Party Committee to Oppose Local Nationalism, in *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, September 11, 1958, in SCMP 1873, and speech of Saifuddin at the second session of the Second National People's Congress, NCNA, April 5, 1960, in SCMP 2238. Also SKJP dispatches of June 9, 1958, March 10 and 11, 1959, and August 22, 1959, in SCMP 1917, 1998, and 2134, and JMJP, February 14, 1958, in CB 500.

movement led by middle-grade peasants and supported by cadres and poor peasants to wreck the commune system, and, as late as the summer of 1960, after reports of sabotage and opposition to the Government's economic policies, Saifuddin exhorted the people to carry out ruthlessly the fight against local nationalists.

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## NORTH VIETNAM

A special issue on this country with contributions by

P. J. Honey, Bernard Fall, Hoang Van Chi

G. Tongas and others will be published

early next year by

THE CHINA QUARTERLY

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