

# Xinjiang and Wang Enmao: New Directions in Power, Policy and Integration?

Donald H. McMillen

At first glance, it would seem that over the past two decades Chinese Communist Party (CCP) power and policy in the distant Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of the People's Republic of China have travelled full circle.<sup>1</sup> By late 1981 the region's foremost pre-Cultural Revolution leader, Wang Enmao, and many of the more moderate and pragmatic policies he had come to advocate for consolidating CCP (and Han) control without unduly provoking the sensitivities of the majority non-Han (and primarily Islamic) indigenous population, had returned.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the stage was set for Xinjiang's *de novo* overall integration with the rest of China. Against a brief historical backdrop this article will analyse recent leadership and policy trends in strategically-located Xinjiang, particularly the significance of Wang's return. It will then assess subsequent socio-economic developments and discuss their relevance to security and defence-related issues. Finally, some conclusions will be made concerning the always complex process of integration, in terms of both its nature and degree and its interaction with the processes of 'modernization.'

## *Xinjiang to the Eve of the Cultural Revolution*

When the CCP assumed power in Xinjiang in 1949 it faced several obstacles, many of them unique, to the region's pacification and integration with the new Chinese state. There was the long tradition of ethnic and religious animosity among the native groups, which was especially strong between these groups and the Han people from "China Proper." Such animosity, when combined with Xinjiang's location and distance from the centre of declining authority in national politics, meant that it had, in modern times, devolved largely into an autonomous appendage of the Chinese state. While Chinese administrators were sent to govern the region, local affairs were left primarily in the hands of non-Han and Muslim religious leaders who, so long as Chinese power and prestige were sufficiently strong, accepted Han overlordship. With the demise of central authority earlier this century Russia was able to "fish in troubled waters" in China's far west without fear of intervention from the national government.<sup>3</sup> Local Chinese warlords, such as Sheng Shicai in the early

1. This broad-brush treatment is based upon the author's continued reading of mainland China media and interviews with informants (primarily in Hong Kong) over the past half decade, a personal visit to Xinjiang in March 1982, and other reports and observations.

2. The author has treated these events in greater detail in *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-77* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1979).

3. This, of course, is not to deny that China had, and continued to have, a "continentalist" policy which placed a premium on retaining imperial authority (and thus legitimacy) in the regions beyond the Great Wall. Zuo Zongtang's campaigns against Yakub Beg in the 1870s were reflective of this attitude.

1940s, set up virtual independent kingdoms there, often supported by Moscow. The tilt towards the Soviet Union became particularly pronounced in the strategically-located and resource-rich Yili border area, which in the late 1940s was the centre of the separatist "Eastern Turkestan People's Republic" headed by anti-Kuomintang (and anti-Han) minority nationals trained and backed by Moscow.

Initially, CCP policies in Xinjiang were generally moderate, being based upon the goals of stabilization, consolidation and gradual development. They were governed by Beijing's desire to reorientate the region to the east while slowly building up CCP power in an area where it previously had no real base, and where anti-Han sentiments had so often bubbled to the surface. In addition, the Party refrained from pursuing policies which might have upset its then comradely relations with Moscow. Party power was patiently, but firmly consolidated under a leadership dominated by Wang Zhen and Wang Enmao and their Han colleagues from the First Field Army Group of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). *De facto* political authority remained in the hands of this group, despite the granting of regional autonomy in 1955 under the nominal leadership of such minority cadres as Seypidin Azizov and Burhan Shahidi. Over time Wang Enmao's leadership came to recognize the importance of taking into account local conditions and peculiarities when implementing policies within the region. As the author has pointed out elsewhere<sup>4</sup> a basically Han organization of demobilized PLA men, former (and now "reformed") Kuomintang soldiers of the Xinjiang Garrison, and resettled Han people (including educated urban youths), called the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (PCC, or Corps), played a crucial role in the region's post-liberation political and socio-economic development. It served both as a useful "coercive reserve" to the nascent CCP authority and as a model (and manpower base) for technological and collectivist transformation.

From 1957 to 1961 CCP policies shifted towards a more radical and strictly Chinese (Maoist) approach to communism with less consideration being given to conditions peculiar to Xinjiang. The period, which coincided with deteriorating Sino-Soviet relations, was characterized by an "anti-local nationalist" campaign which saw the purge of many minority and some Han cadres who avowedly had retained pro-Soviet (or anti-CCP) sympathies or connections.<sup>5</sup> The universalist Great Leap Forward policies that followed, including the launching of the communes, abolition of material incentives, curtailment of private plots, virtual closure of rural markets and bazaars, attacks on religion (Islam), and emphasis on more assimilationist ("fusionist") nationality policies proved to be even more premature and destabilizing there than in the more "advanced" Han areas of China. Discontent among the minorities

4. Donald H. McMillen, "The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps: a Han organisation in a non-Han region," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 6 (July 1981), pp. 65-96.

5. At the same time, the CCP, for obvious reasons, abolished the minority language written scripts based upon Cyrillic that had been launched in Xinjiang with Soviet advice in 1956 and replaced them with new Latinized versions.

was reflected by the exodus of over 60,000 minority nationals from the Yili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture to Kazakhstan in 1962. As a result, Wang Enmao readjusted regional policies along generally more moderate lines aimed at achieving socialist law and order and gradual development within Xinjiang, while simultaneously insulating the region from potentially centrifugal currents elsewhere in China and protecting it from outside (Soviet) influence and subversion.<sup>6</sup>

### *Xinjiang's Cultural Revolution Interregnum*

During the most radical phases of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1971 conditions became so chaotic in Xinjiang that the central authorities were compelled officially to suspend the movement there and place the turbulent PCC under direct military control (similar actions were taken in other strategic frontier regions). Some Beijing leaders feared that in the virtual anarchy accompanying persistent efforts by radical Red Guards to unseat Wang's entrenched leadership, which had been branded as a "revisionist independent kingdom" by the leftists around Mao Zedong, Xinjiang would be ripe for internal secessionist movements and Soviet meddling. There was even concern over threats to the nuclear test centre at Lop Nur, and, according to some reports in May 1967, Wang himself may have used the security (or, rather, the insecurity) of these facilities as a bargaining point in his efforts to save himself and to prevent a further deterioration in the regional situation. Certainly the possibility of Soviet intervention in Xinjiang was fed by Moscow's actions against Czechoslovakia in August 1968, and the series of Sino-Soviet border clashes along the Ussuri River and in Xinjiang from March through August 1969.

By mid 1969, however, Wang had been removed as Xinjiang's top CCP and PLA leader, and for nearly a decade the region experienced a succession of leaders and policies that fluctuated according to the prevailing currents of the nationwide "two-line struggle." The XUAR generally remained tense due to continued factional contention, especially within the Xinjiang PCC where radical elements had substantially increased their influence, as well as to a general downturn in the regional economy and signs of increasing restiveness among the minority nationalities. Much to the displeasure of the radicals, however, from 1972 there was a halting return to many of the policies previously advocated by the now-departed Wang. Simply, the more radical policy initiatives of his immediate successors – many of which had been attempted with little success during the Great Leap period – failed to stimulate enthusiasm for either production or unity. Thus, while the centre exhibited its ability to reach into the region and pluck out local leaders it deemed unsuitable, thereby reflecting a degree of political integration at least at the upper levels of the regional elite, it was nonetheless compelled to accept that it

6. A radio propaganda war was subsequently launched from both sides of the Sino-Soviet border in the Xinjiang region. India was also deemed to be a security threat as a result of events in Tibet (1959) and hostilities along the Sino-Indian borders (1962).

could not always implement policies in ways that it wanted in Xinjiang, nor could it easily impose unity upon the contending groups.

The collective leadership that evolved in Xinjiang during 1975–76 was not dominated by any one all-powerful individual or factional group. As a consequence, there was a lack of real leadership within the region, in decision-making terms, as well as a prolongation of factionalism. This trend continued after the death of Chairman Mao in 1976 and the subsequent smashing of the radical so-called “Jiang Qing clique.” In Xinjiang, Seypidin was removed in January 1978, a victim of the vicious cycle of constant power and policy permutation and the poor regional economic performance that flowed from it, and was replaced as the top Party person by Wang Feng. While a few other regional leaders were denounced and purged, the development of further anti-leftist efforts made little headway.<sup>7</sup> Although the regional press claimed that much was being done to set things right, including redressing many cases of “frameups, false charges and wrong sentences” against veteran cadres in the Cultural Revolution, it warned against becoming “entangled in past events.”<sup>8</sup> Concern was expressed about the recurrence of the widespread factional violence that had exacerbated the always sensitive and sometimes hostile relations between the Han and non-Han peoples. Great emphasis was placed upon the importance of intensifying *re-education* on nationality policy, with a particular stress on opposing Han chauvinism. Clearly, factionalism was complicating nationality relations at a time of crucial leadership and policy transition both within the region and at the centre.<sup>9</sup>

Most of these problems were blamed upon the remnant influence of leftist elements opposed to the rehabilitation of pre-Cultural Revolution policies and personnel. A regional CCP work conference held in early August 1978 was said to have been the occasion for an “acute inner Party struggle” against persons trying to obstruct or reverse the growing emphasis on economic production and modernization and decreased attention to class struggle.<sup>10</sup> Despite leftist objections, however, there was a notable increase in the number of cadres who were rehabilitated after having been purged along with Wang Enmao.

It is not inconceivable that the lingering influence of what was branded leftism may have been partly the result of the regime’s own concern over the potentially disastrous effects a total denunciation of Maoist policies and principles, upon which much of the previous 30 years of CCP rule in the region had at least been nominally based, would have in Xinjiang. Some visitors to Urumqi, including the author, noted that pictures and written quotations of Mao were still displayed in some public places, despite the recent tarnishing of his image and the removal of such items

7. Wang Feng was quoted as saying that such efforts had encountered “great resistance amidst acute struggle.” *Urumqi Radio*, 4 February 1979, in United States Government, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service – People’s Republic of China, Daily Report* (hereafter FBIS-PRC), 5 February 1979, pp. M6–8.

8. *Xinjiang ribao* (*Xinjiang Daily*, hereafter *XJRB*) editorial, 4 July 1979.

9. See, e.g. *Urumqi Radio*, 30 December 1979, in FBIS-PRC, 1 January 1980, p. M1.

10. *Urumqi Radio*, 4 February 1979, in FBIS-PRC, 5 February 1979, p. M6.

elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> As shall be discussed below, it is also possible that some leading officers of the Urumqi Military Region (UMR) might have welcomed at least the nominal retention of some Maoist ideals and practices if only to maintain discipline and an *esprit de corps* in both the military and civilian sectors.

Continuing difficulties in the regional economy contributed to the persistent malaise. For example, the state farms and industrial enterprises of the Xinjiang PCC, which in 1974–75 had gone through a “structural readjustment” that led to its nominal disappearance,<sup>12</sup> were said to be operating inefficiently and at great financial loss. Similar production problems were encountered in the communes and industrial and commercial enterprises in the region. In the early 1970s there were continuing complaints about theft, speculation, black marketeering and mismanagement.<sup>13</sup> Following the re-emergence of Deng Xiaoping in 1977, policies of reform and liberalization were introduced to reverse this slump. In the (former) Xinjiang PCC units these measures included strengthening leadership and heightening scientific management, extending the right of self-management and improving business accounting methods, developing a more diversified economy, and allowing bonuses in addition to basic wages.<sup>14</sup> Following Hua Guofeng’s visit to Xinjiang’s state farms in 1978 it was decided that, where possible, the farms should be run as “agro-industrial complexes” in which farming, industry and commerce were integrated. They were to be allowed to market their products directly or process them for sale on condition that they met government purchasing departments’ quotas.<sup>15</sup> In the regional communes (and factories) policy guidelines called for increasing material incentives, assigning production quotas to household units, and broadening the market economy. These “responsibility systems” (*zeren zhi*), which had been tested throughout China in the late 1970s, lowered the level of the basic production and decision-making unit to that of the household rather than to the production team or brigade.

Initially, and for a variety of reasons, the regional economy did not respond well to these reforms. Poor weather and natural disasters in some areas of Xinjiang during 1979–80 contributed to the bleakness of the economic climate. More important, however, was the continuing factionalism in the cadre ranks and the lack of a strong, unified regional Party leadership to overcome it. In the minds of some of the more pro-Maoist cadres, the new policies were deemed rather too liberal and remunerative and constituted a step back from the commune system towards the restoration of private ownership and capitalism – a process that not only

11. David Bonavia, *Far Eastern Economic Review* (hereafter *FEER*), 15 May 1981, p. 34. The author visited Xinjiang in March 1982.

12. The reorganization and various problems of the Xinjiang PCC are discussed in McMillen, “Xinjiang and the Production and Construction Corps,” pp. 85–88.

13. See, e.g. *Urumqi Radio*, 21 January 1971, in *British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary of World Broadcasts/Far East* (SWB/FE), No. 3599, BII, p. 16.

14. *Beijing Review*, Vol. 23, No. 16 (21 April 1980), p. 7; and *Renmin ribao* (*People’s Daily*, hereafter *RMRB*) editorial, 16 March 1979.

15. *Beijing Review*, Vol. 23, No. 31 (4 August 1980), p. 19; and *XJRB*, 3 May 1979, cited by *Urumqi Radio*, 3 May 1979, in *FBIS-PRC*, 9 May 1979, pp. T1–2.

challenged their own deeply felt principles but the legitimacy of their authority as well. Wang Feng, for instance, condemned the “pernicious ultra-left influence of bigness, public ownership, egalitarianism and poverty” (the so-called “iron rice bowl mentality”).<sup>16</sup> He observed that some cadres wrongly considered egalitarianism as the only socialist mode of distribution and a poor peasant as always more revolutionary and socialist than one who earned a few *yuan* more for himself. Also, the traditional conservatism and anxiety of the peasantry towards rapid changes in methods and policies was also a factor of some importance. There were cadres of considerable experience in the region who recognized that constant policy fluctuations would breed apathy and uncertainty among the masses. While perhaps excessively cautious, their position probably held an important truth, namely that in the eyes of the local population, particularly the minorities, the reputation and authority of the (Han-dominated) CCP could easily be damaged by such policy variations and disputes. Thus, alterations should be cautious and muted. Understandably, however, some people simply thought it safer not to be too enthusiastic about new policy initiatives, since having been criticized before they were afraid that the new line would change again, and as a result they would be criticized for “practising capitalism.”<sup>17</sup>

#### *The Regional “Dislocations” of 1980–81*

By 1980 there were only a few signs of improvement in Xinjiang’s overall situation. Early that year there were reports of serious economic dislocation and “impoverishment” in southern Xinjiang<sup>18</sup> amid deteriorating Han–minority and civilian–military relations. That not all was well in the social sphere was traceable to the Cultural Revolution when the minorities were treated harshly: many non-Han cadres were demoted or dismissed, mosques were ransacked and closed and the Muslim faithful intimidated; restrictions were placed upon the use of minority languages and scripts; privately-owned plots and animals were disallowed and free markets (bazaars) curtailed; the numbers of Han cadres and settlers were enormously increased; and “revolutionary Han models” were set up for universal emulation. Besides arousing ethnic sensitivities, these events had the effect of driving many economic and religious activities even further underground.

These accumulated frustrations apparently boiled over in April 1980 in an incident involving minority nationals, resettled Han youths and troops of the South Xinjiang Military District who reportedly were sent to Aksu

16. *Xinhua (New China) News Agency* (hereafter XHNA) (Urumqi), 9 July 1980, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6467, BII, pp. 1–2.

17. Interviews by the author with informants in China and Hong Kong, December 1980, November 1981 and March 1982.

18. These economic problems and the various measures taken to solve them are detailed in *XHNA*, Urumqi, 2, 7 and 9 July and 7 August 1980. Significantly, the bulk of Xinjiang’s minority population resides in the western portion of the Tarim Basin, which has remained less accessible than the northern districts due to distance and poor communications. It also has remained relatively underdeveloped economically and comparatively more Muslim in cultural–religious terms.

"to settle a local disturbance."<sup>19</sup> Several hundred civilians and soldiers were reportedly killed or wounded. The seriousness of such events compelled Wang Feng and other regional CCP leaders to make immediate "investigation tours" of Aksu and the troubled southern districts. That tensions remained high was indicated by a follow-up visit to the worst affected localities in October 1980 by no less a figure than the former top Party and PLA leader in Xinjiang and now Politburo member, Wang Zhen. Warning of the dangerous implications of continuing unrest, both Wang and Tomur Dawamat, a Uygur secretary of the XUAR CCP Committee, spoke of the need for unity and stability in Xinjiang's nationality relations – which they described guardedly as being merely "basically good."<sup>20</sup> Audiences were reminded that "not long ago, something harmful to unity among the nationalities and to unity between the army and the people happened which had an adverse effect." Strict orders were given to guard against further incidents and to emphasize mutual respect among all peoples in the region. Later that month, either in response to or anticipation of similar disruptions, the Xinjiang People's Government tightened security by issuing a circular on protecting lines of communication from accidents and deliberate sabotage.<sup>21</sup>

Serious discontent also rose among Han youths who earlier had been "rusticated" to the region, primarily to the Xinjiang PCC, from Shanghai and other urban centres. Many wanted better jobs, improved living conditions and educational or training opportunities within the region, but a significant number also demanded permission to return home. In late 1979 *Guangming ribao* revealed that "for several years" such youths had been flowing back from China's border areas to cities like Shanghai "in large numbers."<sup>22</sup> Once there they demanded employment and refused the authorities' repeated calls to return to the frontiers. As early as February of that year returned youths from *inter alia* Xinjiang rioted in Shanghai.<sup>23</sup> Within Xinjiang itself, thousands of resettled Shanghai

19. "Ba Yi Radio" (clandestine, probably from the Soviet Union, in Mandarin to China), 28 July 1980, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6484, A3, p. 6; David Crook, "Notes on the new marches (Xinjiang)," *Eastern Horizon*, Vol. XIX, No. 11 (November 1980), pp. 39-40; and *International Herald Tribune*, 14 September 1981. While these reports may have been exaggerated, their basic veracity was strengthened by interviews the author conducted with informants in Hong Kong in December 1980, November 1981 and March 1982. During the author's March 1982 visit to Xinjiang, local cadres also admitted that there had been such disturbances over the previous three-year period, particularly in southern Xinjiang at Aksu. The author's request to visit Aksu was denied for "logistical reasons."

20. *Urumqi Radio*, 30 September and 5 October 1980 and *Beijing Radio*, 6 October 1980, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6544, BII, pp. 4-5; and *Urumqi Radio*, 9 October 1980, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6549, BII, pp. 1-2.

21. *Urumqi Radio*, 23 October 1980, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6560, BII, p. 10.

22. *Guangming ribao* (*Enlightenment Daily*), editorial, 11 December 1979. Some informants from China interviewed by the author in Hong Kong in November 1981 and March 1982 claimed that "thousands of youths" had returned to Shanghai from Xinjiang during and after the Cultural Revolution. One report said that in the 1979-82 period alone some 20,000 youths had illegally ran back to the municipality from the region. See *Newsweek*, 28 June 1982.

23. Interviews by the author with informants from China, Hong Kong, November 1981 and March 1982. See also, Anne McLaren, "The educated youth return: the poster campaign in Shanghai from November 1978 to March 1979," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 2 (July 1979), pp. 1-20.

youths in Aksu reportedly staged a demonstration that led to violence during November 1980 over the lack of jobs in their home municipality and their dissatisfaction with conditions in the region.<sup>24</sup> It was apparently this affair that required another visit by Wang Zhen, who flew from Beijing and ordered strict measures for dealing with it.<sup>25</sup> Subsequently, Han youths were reminded that "Soviet revisionism" had never given up its dream to subjugate China or attack its frontier areas, and therefore they should remain in the region to defend and build it up. The Xinjiang Education Bureau and the regional office in charge of the settlement of youths in the countryside issued public notices requesting various units to help improve conditions, while at the same time intensifying their ideological education so as to remove "existing confusions."<sup>26</sup>

These events undeniably contributed to souring relations between the regional military and state farm (Corps) personnel and the local non-Han population. In addition to the Han youths' unhappiness about being settled in areas they considered not only remote and harsh but alien as well, there had long been minority resentment about having to compete, from a position of relative disadvantage, for jobs and profits against the region's large, heavily subsidized, and technologically more advanced state farms and enterprises which were predominantly Han in composition. Minority and religious elements may have also sought to express their views and air their grievances in a manner similar to that of their youthful Han counterparts at Aksu, and at a time when the "democracy (wall) movement" was in its hey-day.<sup>27</sup>

Undeniably, these various incidents greatly alarmed the regional and central authorities. They could hardly remain insensitive to the unsettling effects such events might have as the country passed through a period of transition in its leadership and economic difficulties and as a wave of fundamentalist Islamic resurgence and Soviet interventionism swept through the regions adjacent to Xinjiang. Their response largely took the form of measures designed to improve living conditions and cater to some extent to the cultural and religious beliefs of the non-Han peoples. First, concerted efforts were begun to wipe out ill-feelings resulting from attempts made during the Cultural Revolution to destroy Islam. Mosques were reopened (27 major ones were repaired or refurbished by special government financial allocations), elaborate and extravagant Islamic weddings were again performed by imams, and the *Koran* and other religious

24. *Hong Kong Times* report cited by David Bonavia, *FEER*, 16 March 1981, pp. 30-31; *Zhengming (Contending)* (Hong Kong), No.5 (1 May 1981), pp. 20-24; and informants from China interviewed by the author in Hong Kong in December 1980 and November 1981.

25. *Ibid.* Wang was to make further "inspection tours" to the troubled region in late January 1981, May 1981 and August 1981. During the latter visit, he was accompanied by Deng Xiaoping in what was to be a highly significant event in light of later developments in Xinjiang. *International Herald Tribune*, 14 September 1981.

26. *Urumqi Radio*, 16 March 1981, in *FBIS-PRC*, 17 March 1981, pp. T1-2.

27. These views were expressed to the author by minority nationals and Han PCC workers formerly resident in the region in interviews conducted in Hong Kong in November 1981 and March 1982. It was not surprising that in the view of many non-Han elements, the PCC in particular had evolved into a "Han mini-state" within the already Han-dominated region.



texts were once more available in local bookshops.<sup>28</sup> When the Urumqi authorities rejuvenated the Xinjiang Islamic Association in June 1980 it was instructed to organize and support Islamic forms of academic studies, enhance unity between believers and non-believers, develop friendly contacts with Muslims abroad in line with China's overall foreign policy, and work hard for China's socialist modernization. However, religious elements were told to be patriotic and support the leadership of the CCP, and *not* to use religion to spread rumours, sow dissension or undermine nationalities' unity.<sup>29</sup> In the following two years more than 1,800 people of seven non-Han groups from local religious circles were elected as deputies and committee members of the People's Political Consultative Conferences at various levels in Xinjiang.

Secondly, and complementary to the above-mentioned efforts, in a highly significant move in terms of its potential impact on overall integration, the Party leadership decided officially to reinstate the Arabic script for the Uygur and Kazak languages.<sup>30</sup> The modified Latin script, which had been introduced in June 1958 as a replacement for the slightly modified Cyrillic alphabet, had met with considerable apathy, if not opposition, among the minorities who deemed it to be yet another example of Han cultural chauvinism.

Thirdly, the regional authorities began to emphasize the rehabilitation and training of minority nationality cadres. On 4 February 1980 *People's Daily* bemoaned the fact that less than 5 per cent of China's cadre force was from the non-Han groups, considerably lower than their 6-7 per cent share in China's total population. The shortage was said to be especially acute among technical and skilled cadres. There were also reports of under-employment of, disrespect for and discrimination against minority cadres. In Urumqi it was officially announced that all signs of "Great Han chauvinism" should disappear and that a fixed proportion of well-trained and professionally competent non-Han cadres would be cultivated.

Fourthly, particular attention was focused on rectifying the urgent socio-economic problems of southern Xinjiang. Following an enlarged meeting of the XUAR CCP Committee in late April 1980,<sup>31</sup> work teams responsible to the regional and prefectural governments were sent into the area to make detailed investigations and outline suitable plans for dealing with conditions there. In the areas hardest hit by economic difficulties, the state allocated \$US4.3 million in immediate relief, including food and medical aid. In addition, rural and pastoral taxes were either lowered or suspended, controls were relaxed on former minority landlords and

28. *XHNA*, Urumqi, 31 May 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7042, BII, p. 5. The author also saw these publications, in Arabic and Uygur scripts, on bookshop shelves in Urumqi in March 1982.

29. In fact, Xiao Xianfa, China's religious affairs director, openly decried the fact that "some religious dissidents" had used their restored freedoms for disruptive purposes. Cited in *FEER*, 1 May 1981, p. 9; and David Bonavia *FEER*, 15 May 1981, p. 33.

30. *Urumqi Radio*, 6 and 9 July 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, 11 June 1980, pp. T1-2. It was explained that "conditions had not yet matured sufficiently" for the use of both the old and new scripts. *XHNA*, Urumqi, 19 September 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7137, BII, p. 5.

31. For further details, see *XHNA*, Urumqi, 7 August 1980, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6495, BII, pp. 12-13; and *Urumqi Radio*, 20 September 1980, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6530, BII, p. 6.

herdowners, and the production of commodities aimed at the non-Han peoples was increased. The main highway between Urumqi and the Tarim Basin across the Tianshan Mountains was upgraded and the construction of the southern spur of the Lanzhou–Xinjiang Railroad from Turpan to Korla partially completed. This reflected the regime's desire to tie the southern districts more firmly to the rest of Xinjiang and China. As these arteries come into full use, with the railway being extended to Kashi and thence around the southwestern fringe of the Takla Makan Desert, not only will the transport of produce and commodities be far easier than hitherto, but so will the movement of personnel (including Han settlers and troops). The development and exploitation of potentially rich oil fields in the Hotan area, where exploration and drilling activities were stepped up in 1977, will also be facilitated.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, considerable efforts were made to normalize relations within the troops of the UMR, and between them and the civilian population. The "Jiang Qing and Lin Biao cliques" were said to have clandestinely dispatched their followers to spy and collect information about leading UMR comrades, thereby "throwing the units into chaos."<sup>33</sup> Former radical Red Guard inspired activities, euphemistically called "bourgeois factionalism," proved troublesome in some units in the region and required continuous criticism and study sessions.<sup>34</sup> As the more liberal policies of the Dengist leadership were implemented in Xinjiang, there were indications (as elsewhere in China) of dissatisfaction with the "undesirable trends" they had unleashed, such as the belief that there was no longer any need whatsoever for class struggle and the advocacy by some of a "bourgeois lifestyle" which was corrupting public morals. There were signs that some young recruits in the UMR units were expressing their desire to return to their family households to assist in production, or, at a minimum, receive some form of material compensation for lost household production caused by their absence.<sup>35</sup> It is not surprising in light of these problems that UMR Commander Xiao Quanfu, at a UMR political work conference held in May 1980, reflected reservations about some aspects of the more liberal policies by stating that *political* work in the army was the "life-blood of all work," and that in the "new historical period" when the nation was working for the Four Modernizations, political and ideological work in the army must be strengthened rather than weakened.<sup>36</sup> It was bluntly stated that the role of political work simply could not be replaced by material rewards. The pervasiveness of this debate and the disruptive influences it had generated compelled Tan Youlin, UMR political commissar, *twice* to lead a work group to a

32. *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), 17 January 1980. These efforts were noted by the author during his March 1982 visit to Xinjiang.

33. *Urumqi Radio*, 29 September 1979, in *SWB/FE*, No. 5633, BII, pp. 12–13.

34. Informants from China interviewed by the author in Hong Kong, December 1980, November 1981 and March 1982.

35. See, e.g. *Urumqi Radio*, 18 May 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7035, BII, p. 16.

36. *Urumqi Radio*, 27 May 1980, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6432, BII, p. 14.

number of units where “class struggle in the ideological sphere [was] protracted and acute and [should] not be underestimated.”<sup>37</sup>

These reactions must have been partially conditioned by the regional command's concern about the general decline in the military's image throughout China. Fewer recruits were coming forward for military service, and there was much talk about the poor prospects for youths joining the PLA.<sup>38</sup> Concurrently, the UMR was instructed to undertake belt-tightening budget cuts, make use of existing stocks, and repair or utilize old and discarded items. Thus, the UMR leaders would have found it easy to discern a decline in their political influence, as well as their public prestige and their troops' morale and discipline, all of which was felt could further sour Han-minority relations and affect the region's defence against external enemies.<sup>39</sup> An armed clash between Soviet and Chinese troops in the Tersadi area of Tacheng county on 16 July 1979 and the subsequent Soviet intervention into Afghanistan only exacerbated such fears about the security of China's vulnerable west.

These various relaxations of policy amounted to an attempt to encourage stability and steady development (if not modernization) through a *controlled* “revivalism” in religious and nationalities affairs and a promotion of economic prosperity for all sectors sponsored and closely managed by the now “pragmatic,” and “beneficent,” regional Party authorities. Coming shortly after the turbulent events both in Iran and Afghanistan and within the region itself, the symbolic importance of these efforts was substantial. But, the danger in this strategy of selected toleration and guarded liberalization is that once set in motion it could spark a floodtide of demands for further freedoms and greater autonomy by the local population whose feelings of ethno-nationalism have long been frustrated by central Chinese regimes. Having thus aroused expectations that could not easily be fulfilled or having rekindled latent aspirations that might not peacefully be restrained, the regime could find itself beset with serious difficulties. Although the new policies would later be generally welcomed by the various peoples of Xinjiang, there were some in Urumqi, particularly security-conscious Han cadres and their loyal Party converts from the non-Han groups, who viewed them with alarm, as a step backward rather than forward in the context of both ideology and integration. For instance, there were fears that the return of the Arabic-based scripts would allow more stress on the development of non-Han cultures and on religious dogma than merely on religious ritual – all at the expense of any unifying political culture for China. The implication was that the selected toleration of these nationality and religious customs

37. *Urumqi Radio*, 19 May 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, 20 May 1980, p. T4. Xiao Quanfu returned to this theme again in November 1981, thus indicating that the problems continued. *Urumqi Radio*, 11 November 1981, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6884, BII, p. 6. It is likely that some of the affected units may have been in the Xinjiang PCC.

38. These widespread problems in China's PLA are discussed in greater detail in Donald H. McMillen, “China's political battlefield: Deng Xiaoping and the military,” *Asia Pacific Community*, No. 18 (winter 1982), pp.129–41.

39. A more detailed discussion of these perceptions can be found in the author's “The Urumqi Military Region: defense and security in China's west,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXII, No. 8 (August 1982), pp. 705–31.

should be continued *only* so long as the local peoples were content with being culturally, but not politically, distinct.

By the summer of 1981 it was clear that despite some progress, there were still serious political and socio-economic problems in Xinjiang. First, on the political front there were increasing signs that Wang Feng was having trouble controlling the lower levels of the Party and administration where factionalism and Han-minority bickering were contributing to general "laxness and weakness."<sup>40</sup> Despite that prior to his purge in the Cultural Revolution Wang Feng had spent most of his career in the northwest as a Party specialist in united front work and minority affairs, he lacked lengthy, on-the-ground experience in Xinjiang itself and had not had the opportunity to develop a network of personal ties there. At an important meeting of the XUAR CCP Committee in early September that dealt with political and legal matters, Wang was notably absent. Instead, Gu Jingsheng, who had been transferred to Urumqi in April to take up the post of second secretary of the regional Party,<sup>41</sup> presided. In telling those present that there were many problems in leadership and ideological work in Xinjiang, Gu neatly summarized Wang Feng's leadership woes:

[For] some time a very few people have openly been spreading erroneous sayings that doubt and oppose the four basic principles and are divorced from Party leadership and the socialist track. Certain erroneous theories and writings . . . do not benefit Party leadership and the socialist system. Certain people admire and pursue bourgeois lifestyles. There are a number of sayings that violate the principles of equality of nationalities. Some people even cater to Soviet hegemonist attempts to sabotage the unity of the motherland, . . . stir up religious and other feelings to cause trouble, and resort to all kinds of illegal acts. Some people are seriously lacking in Party spirit and haunted by factionalism. There has been no fundamental turn for the better in various unhealthy trends in the Party and society.<sup>42</sup>

On the economic front, there were equally pessimistic reports. At a plenary session of the Xinjiang People's Government in mid September cadres were told that progress was slow in readjusting the economic structure and straightening out the enterprises, the "economic effect" was poor, the budget deficit was growing, and some units were paying no heed to the overall situation and were practising "seriously excessive" decentralization in production allocation.<sup>43</sup> Grain production in particular was adversely affected by many units or households who were planting more cash crops to obtain higher incomes.<sup>44</sup> In those places

40. See *Urumqi Radio*, 9 September 1981, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6831, BII, p. 7. According to one report, there was serious infighting between Han and non-Han members of the Xinjiang CCP Committee itself. *International Herald Tribune*, 14 September 1981.

41. Gu had most recently been a deputy political commissar in the Guangzhou Military Region. Significantly, however, he had previously been director of the Mass Work Department of the PLA's General Political Department.

42. Quoted by *Urumqi Radio*, 4 September 1981, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6822, BII, pp. 10–11.

43. *Urumqi Radio*, 20 September 1981, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6850, BII, p. 14. Song Zhihe, an XUAR vice-chairman and Party secretary who outlined those problems was, in all probability, later purged for the very shortcomings he had spoken about (and for which he was a responsible cadre).

44. See, e.g. *Urumqi Radio*, 17 August 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7110, p. 7.

where economic reforms were slow to be adopted due to the continuing influence of the “iron rice bowl mentality” and the practice of the universal and equal distribution of bonuses, financial affairs were said to be in a “complicated state” with dampened production enthusiasm leading to declines in output (or output lower than targets). Overall, it would seem that Xinjiang’s economy was only making marginal gains, if any, and that these modest improvements were not keeping pace with the rising expectations of either the people or the authorities.

Equally disturbing were reports of continuing unrest among the minority nationalities. When Deng Xiaoping visited Xinjiang from 10 to 18 August 1981 he was reportedly confronted by an “unsteady situation” in which Uyghur dissidents were openly saying they did not want to be dominated and were calling for self-rule.<sup>45</sup> Deng subsequently ordered a reorganization of the regional leadership, made all the more pressing by the outbreak of renewed racial incidents in Kashi during October.<sup>46</sup> In these disturbances, which were to continue for nearly six months, very few people were blamed for trying to “intimidate local officials over religious matters.”

### *Wang Enmao's Return to Xinjiang*

By mid 1981 it had become obvious that the overall situation in Xinjiang demanded a Party leader who could steer the region out of its continuing drift. In late October Wang Enmao was sent back to Urumqi to re-assume the posts of first secretary of the regional Party committee and first political commissar of the UMR. Wang’s initial return following his removal from Xinjiang in 1969 had coincided with the brief reappearance of Deng Xiaoping under the presumed sponsorship of Zhou Enlai in 1975. He was then a deputy political commissar in the Nanjing Military Region. By August 1977 Wang had again risen to full membership on the 11th CCP Central Committee following his transfer to the strategic northeastern border province of Jilin where he assumed the top position in the Party and the Revolutionary Committee and became first political commissar of the Jilin Military District and deputy commander of the Shenyang Military Region.

Wang’s long experience in managing Xinjiang affairs in an understanding, yet firm, manner did not go unrecognized – nor did the fact that he was familiar with many civilian and military cadres (both Han and non-Han) who had served or been nurtured under his earlier leadership. He was, most importantly, sensitive to the region’s peculiarities and special conditions, while at the same time dedicated (but not overly-zealous) about consolidating Party power and achieving the ultimate goal of consolidating Xinjiang into a modern Chinese state. In fact, his pragmatic

45. *Zhengming*, No. 9 (1 September 1981), pp. 10–11; and *International Herald Tribune*, 14 September 1981.

46. *RMRB*, 17 April and 31 May 1982; Urumqi Radio, 3 May 1982 in *SWB/FE*, No. 7026, BII, pp. 7–8; *FEER*, 18 June 1982, p. 9; *Beijing Review*, 31 October 1983, p. 4; and informants from China interviewed by the author in Hong Kong, November 1981 and March 1982.

approach largely had been responsible for Xinjiang moving a considerable distance towards this goal by the eve of the Cultural Revolution.

Deng's tour of Xinjiang in August 1981 was designed to both measure and prepare the way for Wang's return. Local comrades were doubtless given the message that Wang's reappearance was also to be a confirmation that the general policy reforms launched earlier by the Dengist centre were not transitory. A crucial factor in all of this was not only Wang's perceived support of the centre's leadership and policies, but the centre's own belief that Wang's presence in Xinjiang would not lead to any regionalist tendencies of the most feared kind. It is also probable that shifting Wang to Xinjiang served Deng's own tactics in his power and policy battles in Beijing. The most immediate aspect of Wang's return, however, was that it reflected the deep concern felt in the national capital about the prevailing uncertainties in and around this vulnerable far western region.

Shortly after his return to Urumqi Wang emphasized six tasks requiring immediate attention. In order of priority, these were: unity in all quarters (upon which progress in all spheres depended), economic stabilization and construction, organizational strengthening of the regional Party, consolidation of border defence, the imposition of social order, and improvement of work-style.<sup>47</sup> These basically echoed his pre-1966 calls for socialist law and order amid unity and prosperity in Xinjiang. On the key issue of unity, he was to report that "very serious" problems still existed in maintaining and promoting unity and stability among the region's nationalities.<sup>48</sup> The eight measures he put forward to strengthen these relations emphasized the launching of "profound and extensive" education on the Party's nationalities policies, giving non-Han cadres more flexibility in their leadership roles, improving the livelihood of the minorities, and popularizing the policy of freedom to *believe* in religion. He did add, however, that a demarcation line would be drawn between legal and illegal religious pursuits, between religion and superstition, and between religious *activities* and customs and habits of the minorities. At an important regional work conference on religion more than a year later, the leadership's recognition of and approach to the religious issue was further clarified:

Xinjiang is an area where diverse nationalities reside and an area where relatively more people believe in religion. [T]he long-term, national, mass and international nature of the religious issue finds expression in Xinjiang . . . in a quite pronounced way. We must . . . adopt a specially prudent, extremely strict and carefully considered approach . . . [that] overcomes "leftist" trends and prevents "rightist" trends.<sup>49</sup>

It was held that existing religious figures should be won over to the united front with the Party through appropriate arrangements and treatment in political affairs and daily life, and by patient education in nationality unity, the four basic principles and patriotism. Younger professional

47. *Urumqi Radio*, 29 October 1981, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6869, BII, pp. 10–12, and *Urumqi Radio*, 7 November 1981, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6882, BII, pp. 9–10.

48. *Urumqi Radio*, 6 January 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 6925, C, pp. 5–6.

49. *Urumqi Radio*, 3 April 1983, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7300, BII, p. 15.

religious personnel also were to be fostered under the Party's supervision, while at the same time the study of atheism among CCP members was to be intensified. The meeting noted that the problem of sites for religious activities and the bringing of such activities into line with policy and law was to be "emphatically solved." Thus, while a few of these policies were the result of the demands of believers, they mostly served the Party's own desire to contain and control all religious and other activities.

On 17 April 1982 *People's Daily* reported that since Wang's return to Urumqi the problem of nationality unity had been treated as a matter of prime importance at every meeting of the regional Party committee. It cited historical reasons underlying continued racial tensions and said that a few "bad elements and counter-revolutionaries" from various ethnic groups were taking advantage of these disputes to cause disaffection. A few days later, Wang himself went on an extensive inspection tour of 26 cities and counties, regimental farms of the PLA and (former) Corps units, and factories and enterprises in southern Xinjiang.<sup>50</sup> In Kashi, he claimed that there had been great improvement in ethnic relations over the previous six months but warned that all elements who continued to sabotage unity would be severely punished. He explicitly placed the responsibility for continued improvement in the hands of the local leadership. In July the XUAR CCP Committee launched with great fanfare an intensive two-month public education campaign on nationality policy and unity throughout Xinjiang.<sup>51</sup> Later in the year, it also approved an obligatory course on Marxist nationality theory and Party minority policies for all colleges and secondary schools.<sup>52</sup>

A similar drive was launched in mid 1982 by the UMR to improve PLA-minority relations. Soldiers of these units, the vast majority of whom were Han, were ordered to learn patiently from the minority peoples, respect their customs and habits, and vigorously help them develop production and improve their livelihood. In May Xiao Quanfu and Tan Youlin, a UMR political commissar, visited military units in southern Xinjiang to solve problems in army-minority and army-civilian unity.<sup>53</sup> In addition, the propaganda section of the UMR Political Department compiled and distributed to all units a booklet on Xinjiang and the nationalities entitled "Love the motherland the border, and the nationality people."<sup>54</sup>

By the end of the year, while there were increasing signs of relaxed ethnic tensions, in part due to a general easing of economic difficulties (especially in the south), Wang pointed out that resolute struggles against internal and external enemies who were attempting to undermine unity and progress should be continued by opposing *both* Han chauvinism and

50. *Urumqi Radio*, 3 May 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7026, BII, pp. 7-8.

51. *XHNA*, Urumqi, 13 June 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7056, BII, p. 10. One report during this drive said that it was proving to be a "protracted and incessant struggle." People were constantly being admonished to "fight against speeches and deeds harmful to national unity." *Urumqi Radio*, 24 August 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7115, BII, pp. 6-7.

52. *Urumqi Radio*, 26 October 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7170, BII, p. 13.

53. *Urumqi Radio*, 11 June 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7055, BII, p. 10. See also *Urumqi Radio*, June 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7050, BII, p. 3.

54. *Urumqi Radio*, 6 June 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7055, BII, p. 10.

local nationalism.<sup>55</sup> He added that in order to carry out construction and modernization in the region, it was not only important that the minority peoples work hard in their own efforts but that it was also essential to have state assistance in financial and material resources as well as in Han manpower resources. In his work report at the fifth session of the Fifth Xinjiang Regional People's Congress in late December, Chairman Ismail Amat stated that nationality relations had "notably improved," but that the "popular mood and the social atmosphere were very far from meeting the demands" for an all-round turn for the better.<sup>56</sup>

Following his return to Xinjiang Wang intensified efforts to solve the region's economic problems. In agriculture, stress was placed on preventing the further decline of grain production while at the same time developing subsidiary cash crops. The area planted in foodgrains in Xinjiang was some 81, 250 hectares lower in 1982 than the previous year, and production in 1980-81 was down by an estimated 5-8 per cent from the output for 1976. Pastoral production was also depressed, with livestock totals showing no increase, and in some cases even decreasing, over the 1976-81 period. On the other hand, cash crops like cotton, sugar beets, vegetables and fruits showed marked increases. Thus, although there were signs of higher output for some rural products, the region's grain situation was not particularly good, especially in light of the fact that it continued to fall short of self-sufficiency.

While visiting southern Xinjiang during April 1982 Wang said that to achieve prosperity, peace and contentment in the countryside, it was essential to adhere to the "five-goods" in rural construction.<sup>57</sup> The communes were told to strive for increased production, total income, contributions to the state, collective accumulation and distribution, while minimizing the amount of overspent cash. Net income within the communes was to be distributed at the rate of 5 per cent for state taxes, 15 per cent for retention by the collective and 80 per cent for commune members.<sup>58</sup> Throughout 1982 efforts were made to expedite the introduction of production responsibility systems in the communes, and even within some Xinjiang PCC farms, according to local conditions. There were even indications that the pilot projects launched in Sichuan Province as early as 1980 to "de-structure" the communes economically and administratively by reactivating the older *xiang*-level organs were being

55. Cited in *RMRB*, 17 October 1982. Speaking on the same topic from Kashi at this time, Ismail Amat, a Uygur secretary of the XUAR CCP Committee and chairman of the XUAR People's Government, also mentioned the need "to deal resolute blows at crimes by enemies at home and abroad in sabotaging the unity of nationalities." *Urumqi Radio*, 22 October 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7170, BII, p. 13. It is quite possible that this marked a slight retreat from the overtly lenient nationalities policies outlined in Tibet in early 1980 by Hu Yaobang and the apparent floodtide of "nationality resurgence" it subsequently engendered there and in other minority regions.

56. Quoted by *Urumqi Radio*, 22 and 23 December 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7230, C, p. 16.

57. These were good strips of land for mechanized farming, good channels, good roads, good forest belts and good management centres. *Urumqi Radio*, 25 April 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7021, BII, p. 15.

58. *Urumqi Radio*, 17 August 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7110, BII, pp. 7-8.



experimentally launched in some areas of Xinjiang – a process which would have been welcomed by many of the local people in the region.<sup>59</sup>

In the industrial sector, the authorities took a swipe at the declining quality of some products which resulted from increased pressures to obtain higher outputs) by threatening to reduce workers' bonuses.<sup>60</sup> Product inspection standards were raised, and measures were taken to crack down on economic crimes, corruption and anti-socialist behaviour. Publicity was also given to regional endeavours to cultivate a corps of minority nationality workers and specialists in science and technology, of which there were said to be 60,000 and 22,000, respectively, in 1981.<sup>61</sup> Efforts were also continued to attract skilled manpower from other provinces, as well as to prevent the flight of talent from Xinjiang.

Reports for early 1983 indicated significantly improved overall economic performance in Xinjiang. Particular growth was noted in light industry output, while heavy industry grew more slowly. Grain production appeared to at least stabilize, despite accounts of a serious drought in the northern rural and pastoral districts. Wang Enmao remarked guardedly that the political and economic situation in Xinjiang was "very good" (improved from "good," but not yet "excellent").<sup>62</sup> It was noted that the output of luxury items such as sugar, wine, cigarettes, candy, cakes and milk powder had increased by 40 per cent over 1981, while items produced specifically to meet the needs of the non-Han peoples had also multiplied.<sup>63</sup>

On 1 June 1982 a significant development occurred: the Xinjiang PCC was nominally revived, some six months after a CCP Central Committee, State Council and Military Affairs Commission joint decision in December 1981.<sup>64</sup> The decision was the result of a proposal by Deng following his inspection tour of the region in August 1981, undoubtedly seconded by both Wang Zhen and Wang Enmao. It probably took several months, particularly after Wang's return to the helm in Xinjiang, effectively to deal with remaining radical elements and influences within the organization before such an "institutional rehabilitation" could be publicly announced, which it was, at a rally in Urumqi attended by Wang Zhen.<sup>65</sup> Wang Enmao said that under the leadership of the regional Party committee and government, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, and the UMR, the Corps<sup>66</sup> would strive to

59. For details, see *XHNA*, 11 June 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7055, BII, pp. 1–2; and McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power*, pp. 138–46 and 157–62.

60. *Urumqi Radio*, 4 July 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. W1197, A, p. 15.

61. *XHNA*, Urumqi, 13 June 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7056, BII, p. 10.

62. Quoted in *RMRB*, 17 October 1982.

63. *Urumqi Radio*, 20 October 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. W1209, A, p. 6.

64. *RMRB*, 3 June 1982; and *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), 10 June 1982.

65. *Urumqi Radio*, 1 June 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7043, BII, pp. 1–3. In fact, Wang Zhen stated that the organizational system of the Corps had been abolished as a result of earlier destruction and persecution by the "gang of four." He said practice had proved that it had been an inappropriate move. Quoted by *Urumqi Radio*, 2 June 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7044, BII, p. 4.

66. There were said to be 10 divisions and three management bureaus in the Corps as of late 1982. See, *Urumqi Radio*, 27 September 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. W1206, A, p. 12.

implement the Party's nationality policy and promote unity, run great socialist economic enterprises well, defend the border and strengthen the building of armed militia companies, and strengthen Party leadership and step up political and ideological work. It was pointed out that the PCC's revival was beneficial to the speeding up of the development and reclamation work in the economic and cultural spheres, opposing hegemonism and defending the borders, and protecting the "four modernizations" drive in the region.<sup>67</sup> The implication was that while the Corps was to remain a model of large-scale collectivist activity, it was also to become a model of production and modernization. With increasing internal and external pressures on the PCC to adopt greater material incentives and the production responsibility systems, both of which emphasize smaller unit (including individual household) activities, it was not surprising that these goals were seen by some as contradicting the large-scale collectivist model.<sup>68</sup>

The economic role of the Corps in Xinjiang was already considerable by mid 1982. It had opened up some 937,500 hectares of land for cultivation (about 30 per cent of Xinjiang's total), established over 170 state farms and ranches with a population of over 2.2 million people (almost wholly Han), and built 691 medium-large factories. The gross value of its industrial and agricultural output was nearly 25 per cent of the regional total.<sup>69</sup> It had long been an initiator in introducing and developing new methods and technologies in the region, and had been responsible for the construction of much of Xinjiang's new urban housing, factories, transport and communications facilities. Significantly, the Corps also provided an organization which could absorb labour and provide disciplined, guided employment for such people as educated Han (and some non-Han) youths from within the region (including former radical Red Guards), dissidents and corrupt officials, and demobilized or retired army men.<sup>70</sup> It could also receive settlers from elsewhere in China, and undertake joint technological, investment and productive ventures with enterprises and institutions located in the "more advanced" Han areas.<sup>71</sup> For example, an April 1979 Party decision outlined a programme for technical and

67. *Urumqi Radio*, 9 June 1982, in 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7050, BII, pp. 2-3.

68. In fact, in May 1983 the Corps commander, Chen Shi, complained that the implementation of the production responsibility system in the PCC was still being obstructed by cadres who could not free themselves from "old conventions and leftist influences." Nonetheless, he vowed that the new policy line would not be abandoned. *Urumqi Radio*, 30 May 1983, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7350, BII, p. 7. This was complicated by the fact that some of the PCC youth had continued their demands for even further policy liberalization and better living conditions, in some cases by such actions as passive boycotts. See, *RMRB*, 5 and 7 November 1982.

69. These 1982 estimated totals were 2,000 million *yuan* (\$1,040 million) and 8,060 million *yuan* (\$4,191.2 million), respectively. See *Urumqi Radio*, 15 February 1983, in *SWB/FE*, No. W1226, A, p. 7; and *Urumqi Radio*, 22-23 December 1983, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7230, C, p. 11.

70. In fact, renewed efforts were made after 1981 not only to attract new intellectuals for settlement in Xinjiang but to entice back those who had left the region earlier for their urban origins. "Rational readjustments" in terms of misemployment and low salaries were promised to them by Wang Enmao himself. *Urumqi Radio*, 19 November 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. W1213, A, p. 11.

71. See, e.g. *XHNA*, Beijing, 25 August 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. W1201, A, p. 2.

economic co-operation between the more developed eastern coastal areas and the relatively underdeveloped northwestern areas.<sup>72</sup> Its aims were to raise technical levels in industrial production, improve product quality and variety, promote the exploitation of natural resources, and train technical administrative personnel. Clearly, it was also designed to farm-out excess urban labour. In many ways the scheme harked back to the early 1960s when a "special connection" existed between the Xinjiang PCC and Shanghai.<sup>73</sup>

Throughout 1982, Wang Enmao also made pronounced efforts to reorganize and consolidate the Party leadership groups at all levels in the region. First, meetings were held (often for lengthy periods) in Party branches to exchange experiences and launch criticism against erroneous trends and elements (particularly leftists). At one such meeting in May Wang demanded that all Party organizations in Xinjiang adhere to the principles and policies advocated by the Dengist central leadership.<sup>74</sup> Significantly, three of the four regional Party leaders accompanying Wang had held top CCP positions in Xinjiang before their purge in the late 1960s, namely Qi Guo, Bai Chengming and Ren Gebai. In the next year even more former colleagues of Wang's would be identified in leading posts.<sup>75</sup>

Following the 12th CCP Congress in September, the regional Party convened a three-level cadre conference at which further structural reforms and rectification plans were made.<sup>76</sup> The XUAR CCP Standing Committee warned that not a single person who had followed the "Jiang Qing or Lin Biao cliques," had risen to power through rebellion during the Cultural Revolution, or had gravely factionalist thinking and had engaged in beating, smashing or looting would be promoted. It also called for the removal of those who had either opposed the line of the Third CCP Plenum (i.e. the Dengist line) or had seriously violated the law and discipline in economic and other fields.<sup>77</sup> It was said that there was still a very small number of such elements in regional leadership groups who affected stability and unity.<sup>78</sup>

Mobilization meetings were then launched at all levels to promote the building of a "socialist ideology," based upon the current thinking of the Party centre, that would "clear up existing confusion,"<sup>79</sup> Attention was drawn to the fact that the regional authorities would, nominally at least, promote more minority nationality Party members and, especially, cadres. It was also announced that efforts would be made to ensure that the cadre

72. *XHNA*, 14 October 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7164, BII, P. 12; and *Beijing Review*, 16 August 1982, pp. 23–26.

73. See, McMillen, "The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps," pp. 75–78.

74. *Urumqi Radio*, 12 May 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7029, BII, p. 12.

75. Many of these leaders also had a background in the PLA First Field Army or had connections with Deng's former loyalty system based in southwestern China and in the PLA Second Field Army group. These included Tian Zhong, Yang Yiqing, Huang Yuchen, Xing Yuanlin, Li Changlin, and (for a time) Gu Jingsheng.

76. *Urumqi Radio*, 24 September 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7138, BII, p. 15.

77. *Urumqi Radio*, 27 October 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7174, BII, p. 16.

78. *Urumqi Radio*, 10 September 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7130, BII, p. 4.

79. *Urumqi Radio*, 11 October 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7158, BII, p. 17.

force was younger and more "expert," and that there would be leaner administrative structures and general staff retrenchments or rationalizations. For example, the 71 existing work departments of the Xinjiang People's Government were slated for reduction to about 40, while similar cuts were to be made in the number of regional vice-chairman and various provisional and temporary organs.<sup>80</sup> In fact, precise numbers in regular and advisory Party and government leadership organs were stipulated, along with instructions setting out ratios for minority nationals, women and intellectuals.<sup>81</sup> These guidelines merely formalized the existing *de facto* Han control and dominance in the top levels of the Party organs, where real power continued to reside. For instance, the regional CCP committee was to have a total of six secretaries and deputy secretaries and a total of 15 standing committee members, "an appropriate number" of whom were to be minority cadres. On the other hand, of the seven chairmen and vice-chairmen of the Xinjiang People's Government and of the 50 members of the XUAR People's Congress Standing Committee (including the chairman and 13 vice-chairmen), over half were required to be from the non-Han groups – a proportion which still meant underrepresentation of the minorities in terms of their proportional share in the regional population. This ethnic pattern of power distribution was also reflected by the fact that Han elements (Wang Enmao and Xiao Quanfu) held the top Party and PLA positions in the region, while the chairmen of Xinjiang's People's Congress and People's Government (Tomur Dawamat and Ismail Amat) were of minority nationality – albeit both were secretaries on the XUAR CCP Committee. In fact, as the Table shows, of the 14 named members of the regional Party standing committee (a 15th, and female, member is yet to be announced), only 5 (or 35.7 per cent) were minority nationals.<sup>82</sup> Han predominance also extended to the Xinjiang PCC: of the 14 identified as active leaders only two (14.3 per cent) were non-Han. Overall Party membership figures indicate that, as before, Han nationals constituted the majority, while the minority groups continued to dominate the cadre ranks. For example, some 70 per cent of newly-appointed lower-level cadres in 1981–82 were minority nationals, a large number of whom had been tempered in land reform and socialist transformation during the early 1950s.<sup>83</sup>

In the military sphere, there were a number of personnel changes, including the apparent purge of at least one deputy commander of the UMR, Zhang Jiecheng, who had emerged during the Cultural Revolution. Besides the return of Wang Enmao as first political commissar, two new deputy commanders appeared. These were Liu Haiqing, formerly deputy

80. *Urumqi Radio*, 26 December 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7230, C, p. 10.

81. *Urumqi Radio*, 14 January 1983, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7244, BII, p. 11.

82. After its reorganization in early 1983 the committee's average age only marginally declined from 59.6 to 57.7 years, while members with a post-secondary school education increased from two to a total of three. Notably absent from this committee was Gu Jingsheng, who had run Party affairs in Xinjiang in the transition period between Wang Feng's removal and Wang Enmao's return. It is possible that he was transferred elsewhere.

83. *XHNA*, Urumqi, 13 April 1982; and *Beijing Radio*, 21 July 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7090, BII, p. 17.

Table: Second Xinjiang CCP Committee, March 1983

<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Other Information</i>
1st Secretary	* Wang Enmao	Han	b. 1912; 1FA; 1st Pol. Cmsr. UMR
Secretary	* Ismail Amat	Uygur	b. 1934; Chm. XUAR P. Govt.
Secretary	* Tomur Dawamat	Uygur	b. 1925; Chm. XUAR P Cong.
Secretary	Qi Guo	Han	veteran XUAR worker
Secretary	Li Jiayu	Han	veteran XUAR cadre
Secretary	† Janabil	Kazak	b. 1933
Mem. St. Cmte.	* Xiao Quanfu	Han	b. 1914; 4FA; Cmdr. UMR
(9)	Zhang Sixue	Han	
	Amudun Niaz	Uygur	Mem. Cent. Disp. Insp. Cmte.
	Yang Huansheng	Han	Pol. Cmsr., PCC
	Ba Dai	Mongol	
	Wang Zhenwen	Han	
	Fu Wen	Han	
	† Li Shoushan	Han	Secy., Urumqi CCP Cmte.
	(To be announced, f)	(?)	

*Notes:*

\* Member, 12th CCP Central Committee (9/82).

† Alternate Member, 12th CCP Central Committee.

commander of Beijing Military Region who became first deputy commander under Xiao Quanfu, and Wang Fuzhi, an ex-commander of the Shanxi Military District. The leadership of the UMR continued to be even more heavily dominated by Han personnel than the regional Party organs, with only three of 16 (18.8 per cent) identified as leaders being minority cadres. Indeed, as the author has pointed out elsewhere,<sup>84</sup> probably no more than 10–15 per cent of the estimated 250,000 UMR officers and soldiers are non-Han.

The significance of these personnel changes after Wang's return was that the leadership appeared to be less collective in nature, tilted more in favour of those who had previous experience under his leadership in Xinjiang, and who had greater sympathy for the policies and policy style that he (and the Dengist centre) were advocating. This gave the impression that there was more direction in leadership and policy, factors which contributed markedly to the improvement of political and socio-economic stability. That there remained a collective character to the regional leadership, however, was undeniable. In part, the passage of time and events was responsible for the dwindling number of leaders from the liberation generation of primarily PLA First Field Army cadres that had for so long been associated with Wang and Xinjiang. Many had either died, retired or rendered politically ineffectual by years of political

84. McMillen, "The Urumqi Military Region," pp. 716–20.

persecution at the hands of radicals. Newer, and often younger and generally better educated, leaders emerged within the region or were drafted in from elsewhere. As a result, the pre-Cultural Revolution power base of Wang and his group was neither fully restored nor was it still in political limbo. That this identifiable, experienced leadership group with its easily detectable policy inclinations should be complemented by leadership elements from the local Xinjiang population who had been carefully nurtured by the Party veterans there and by administratively and technically skilled leaders brought in from other areas of China was both sensible and pragmatic. Furthermore, there was confidence in Beijing that this group would not evolve into a regionalist-minded authority that resisted central directives or balked at the integrative process and national cohesion.

### *The Defence and Security of Xinjiang*

In terms of defence and security, in many ways the UMR (which includes all of Xinjiang and the western portion of the Tibetan Autonomous Region<sup>85</sup>) remains both a "forward post" and an "exposed flank." With regard to general quality, the UMR forces (like their colleagues elsewhere in China) lack the modern firepower, mobility and logistics of their potential adversaries on the other side of the border. Neither distance from the core areas of China, terrain or population allow for a full application of the concept of "people's war" in Xinjiang. The vast deserts and steppelands do not provide secure rear areas and only limited harassment tactics could be carried out from the mountains. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that, given their experiences in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union would allow itself to be drawn into a region and bogged down for any length of time – even if it were joined by a significant number of "rebel" minorities.

While formerly there may have been a willingness by Beijing to give ground in the UMR, as the region becomes more Chinese through such consolidating processes as gradual assimilation, Han colonization and economic modernization, it may feel increasingly compelled to adopt a more "forward defence" strategy designed to defend the region down to the last inch of territory at all costs. There are signs, in fact, that since 1976 priority has been given to upgrading the military capabilities of the northwestern Lanzhou and Urumqi Military Regions, thus bringing their combat readiness up to a level closer to that of other border commands. The mid 1982 nominal revival of the Xinjiang PCC, which can serve as a support unit to the troops of the UMR and has some paramilitary capabilities of its own, is also indicative of this trend. In November 1980 the UMR held training classes for armed militia units, whose total numbers (again, predominantly Han) are at least equal to UMR troops, in anti-chemical and anti-nuclear warfare techniques. This implies that Beijing is at least considering the utility of tactical nuclear weapons as but one possible option for the region's defence.

85. The author has treated this topic in greater detail in *ibid.* pp. 711–31.

The maintenance of both a credible defence against external threats and viable security against internal unrest means that Urumqi's Party and military authorities must look both ways simultaneously. However, in recent months there has been a more relaxed situation along the borders and increased attention has been paid to matters of internal unity, stability and development. The perception of the less immediate Soviet threat has possibly made it easier to devote more financial and manpower resources to these ends.

Nonetheless, the wealth of natural resources and the proximity of the region to the highly volatile regions of the Persian Gulf and South-west Asia, as well as to kindred areas of Soviet Central Asia, mean that China will continue to show great concern about the security of her western frontierlands. Should the predominantly Muslim resistance groups in Afghanistan manage to hold out against the power of the Soviet Union and its communist puppet regime in Kabul, it might provide a "lesson" to be emulated by some of the region's Muslims. While it seems unlikely that any large-scale eruption of this sort will occur, in part because there are very few of the more zealous, fundamentalist Sh'ia Muslims in Xinjiang (almost wholly Tajiks residing in the remote south-west), there is a thin line between ethnic and religious identity – and one that can be blurred by chance happenings, outside interference or inept management. Perceptions, rather than facts, may matter more here. The translation of ethno-religious sentiments into active political movements within Central Asia, as an "echo effect" of events in adjacent regions, is seen by those who rule in Urumqi to constitute a threat of significant dimensions. The central and regional regimes' ability to manage or divert these real or perceived threats into non-destructive channels will depend largely upon solving the most serious of the region's economic maladies, rectifying the continued complaints of the resettled Han youths, improving ethnic and military-civilian relations, and maintaining a firm and stable leadership (and policy line and work-style) that recognizes the special conditions of Xinjiang while it seeks to traverse the rocky road to integration with the rest of China. Otherwise, whether throwing only money and men at these problems will bring exclusively positive end results remains to be seen.

### *Conclusion*

Nearly two years after his return to power in Xinjiang Wang Enmao could confidently, and not without some justification, claim that the political and economic situation was improving, relations between the nationalities and between them and the army and the Corps were more relaxed, Party-building was being strengthened, the general mood in society was more settled, and public security in urban and rural areas throughout the region was generally better.<sup>86</sup> Hu Qili, CCP Central Committee Secretariat member, later added in Urumqi that "many comrades hold that this is now one of the best periods in Xinjiang's

86. See, e.g. *Beijing Radio*, 21 July 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7090, BII, p. 17.

history, with political stability, nationality unity, and economic development."<sup>87</sup> But, none of this should be taken to mean that all problems there have suddenly disappeared. In fact, it would not be incorrect to suggest that in reality some of the various difficulties in Xinjiang often go beyond mere "contradictions among the people" and their resolution will be a long-term and complicated process.

Future threats to CCP control or to the integrative process are most likely to emanate from foreign influences that complicate internal areas of sensitivity, or from negative spin-offs from the modernization processes launched in this region by the Chinese themselves. The very modernization and politicization of ethnic groups, as Joseph Rothschild has pointed out,

... stresses, ideologizes, reifies, modifies, and sometimes virtually re-creates the putatively distinctive and unique cultural heritages of the ethnic groups that it mobilizes – precisely at the historical moment when these groups are being thoroughly penetrated by the universal culture of science and technology. Politicization of ethnicity is thus a dialectical process that preserves ethnic groups by emphasizing their singularity and yet also engineers and lubricates their modernization by transforming them into political conflict groups for the modern political arena. . . .<sup>88</sup>

Crucially, even Wang Enmao has shown at least a recognition of the positive *and* negative (centripetal and centrifugal) potentials of this national integration – modernization nexus:

It is necessary to study the theoretical question of *building socialism with Chinese characteristics, the different conditions and features in the autonomous region, and the question of how to engage in socialist modernization in our region*. For example, there is a nationalities question in the autonomous region. We should therefore study the question of socialist construction and of nationalities, and *study how to solve the nationalities question in the course of socialist construction* (emphasis added).<sup>89</sup>

The long-term nature of this process, and the need to devise thoughtful policies, was apparently foremost in the minds of Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang and Premier Zhao Ziyang when they made extensive tours of Xinjiang in May and August 1983, respectively. Their main message was that Xinjiang would become one of China's most important developmental bases in the next century, but that for the rest of this century it would continue to support developmental programmes in the economically more advanced areas of China. This was said to be an important plan not only because Xinjiang was strategically important in terms of national defence but also because it was richly endowed by nature and could be exploited for the whole country's development.<sup>90</sup> All of this potential,

87. Quoted by *XJRB*, 4 September 1983, cited by *Urumqi Radio*, 4 September 1983, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7432, BII, p. 9.

88. Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 3.

89. Quoted by *Urumqi Radio*, 12 July 1982, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7393, BII, p. 15.

90. *XHNA*, Urumqi, 20 May 1983, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7341, BII, pp. 1–5; *XHNA*, Urumqi, 1 September 1983, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7341, BII, pp. 1–5; and *XHNA*, Urumqi, 1 September 1983, in *SWB/FE*, No. 7432, BII, pp. 1–9.



however, was linked directly to the question of ethnic unity and other intensive medium-term preparations. Thus, by the Chinese authorities' own reckoning, the integration process in Xinjiang also was to be a fairly protracted one. Moreover, while there would continue to be a great deal of parallelism in policies and events between Xinjiang and the rest of China, there would also continue to be different, if not unique, factors compelling local administrators to adjust policy implementation more than is generally the case elsewhere in China (with the exception of Tibet which has similar problems). The nature of these various issues and problems and the revival of many of the leaders, institutions and policies which must address them indicates that in some very significant respects Xinjiang has come full circle, if not a partial spiral, since the eve of the Cultural Revolution.