The Northward Migration of the Chinese

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THE NORTHWARD MIGRATION OF THE CHINESE

By Walter H. Mallory

MANCHURIA has aptly been called the Belgium of the Far East. For many decades this ancient domain of China's last ruling house has been criss-crossed by the interplay of political and economic forces between China, Japan, and Russia. It was the bone of contention in the Russo-Japanese war, and Roosevelt by using his strength to prevent a decisive issue to that struggle, which might have upset the "balance of power" of the Pacific, preserved the problem for solution at a later date. The factors making for strife are the same today as they were a generation ago. They are economic and strategic, but lately there has been the added factor of nationalism which modern China is expressing with unwonted animation.

China wants Manchuria to become in fact, what it is in theory, a recognized part of the Republic of China, and a home for the excess population of her other provinces. She hopes to develop its vast resources for the profit of Chinese citizens, and she aims at removing the special privileges which other nations have acquired and which seem not only to deprive her of material profit but also to carry the implication of inferiority or incompetence.

Japan also wants to develop Manchuria, but primarily for the benefit of her own people. Largely by means of the special privileges which she secured there as a result of the Russo-Japanese War, assuring her of an unrestricted supply of raw materials and foodstuffs, she has built a modern state. In the process, Manchuria has been securely welded into the economic fabric of Japan. Japan has passed from an agricultural to an industrial nation, and this has made possible the doubling of her population in the last forty years. She fought a war with a major Power to gain her Manchuria privileges. It is reasonably to be expected that she will take whatever steps she considers necessary to conserve them.

In the background stands Soviet Russia, at present deeply immersed in domestic affairs, but inevitably concerned with the title of the area through which her commerce must pass on its way to Vladivostok. Her Pacific strategy depends on Manchuria,

and in the final analysis it is the guarantee of her eastern maritime domain. Vladivostok can be reached by rail from Moscow through Russian territory only by a circuitous route, the direct line running through the heart of Northern Manchuria. Apart from this interest in the fortunes of Manchuria, Russian policy has in the past been concerned with the acquisition of a warm water port to replace those she lost as a result of the Treaty of Portsmouth, and it is conceivable that this consideration may again influence her conduct.

This, then, is the background. In the foreground are a rampant Chinese nationalism, articulate but without effective organization, and a Japanese government which has adopted a "positive policy" and which feels itself "responsible for the maintenance of peace" in Manchuria. Athwart the whole picture falls the ominous shadow of Soviet Russia.

While the political scene has many dangerous aspects, there nevertheless are working quietly, almost unobserved, economic forces which in the long run may make the political problems less difficult of solution. Manchuria is prosperous. Japan is receiving from the region the raw materials and food she requires. She is developing the country by means of a growing network of railways. Russian goods move over the Chinese Eastern and South Manchuria Railways. Yet China each day is getting a firmer and firmer grasp on this region through the migration of Chinese to Manchuria, a migration which at first was slow but which has grown year by year until now it is the most significant movement of population in the world.

Manchuria, which lies outside of the Great Wall, has an area of 363,700 square miles. It is about one fourth as large as China proper, and it has less than 6 per cent of the country's total population. It is on the whole a rich land with fertile soil and probably capable of sustaining a population density somewhat comparable to that of the original eighteen provinces of China. The proportion of plain is somewhat larger than in China proper, but the climate is colder, and this eventually may prove a severe handicap to dense settlement. More dependable rainfall and less frequent floods make the crops more reliable, however, than on the great southern plains, where the people labor under the constant fear either of too much rain or none at all.

Manchuria has always been regarded as a dependency rather than as an integral part of China, although a strong effort to

weld her more securely to the eighteen original provinces has been made by the Chinese authorities in recent years. It was the home of the Manchu tribes who conquered China in 1644, but who, instead of making it part of a greater China, kept the Chinese from settling it. At the same time they offered special inducements to the descendants of the victorious Manchus who had gone to Peking as the imperial entourage of the Emperor to return and develop their homeland. During almost the entire Manchu régime, therefore, Manchuria was ruled as a separate dependency; but by the Imperial Decree of April 20, 1907, the three provinces comprising Manchuria — Shengking (Fengtien), Kirin, and Heilungchiang — were combined into the single vice-royalty of the Three Eastern Provinces.

Here we have the reason why this rich land of opportunity, lying so near to areas of dense population and even of gross overcrowding, should today be so sparsely settled. Economic laws have not been permitted to function. They have been deliberately set aside for considerations of a political nature, and during the last generation they have been constantly interrupted by conflict.

If we examine the ancient history of China we find that her problems were very similar to those of Rome. Her people were an agricultural race who settled on the plains and developed a civilization. They were surrounded, however, by barbarian tribes and the most savage and warlike of these were always to be found in the north, in Manchuria and Mongolia. For centuries these tribes made repeated incursions into China proper, conquering varying portions of territory and setting up dynasties to rule the amenable Chinese, until they in turn were absorbed and civilized and so fell before another wave of barbarian conquest. Even the Great Wall, separating China proper from Manchuria and Mongolia, served as but a temporary check to these inroads.

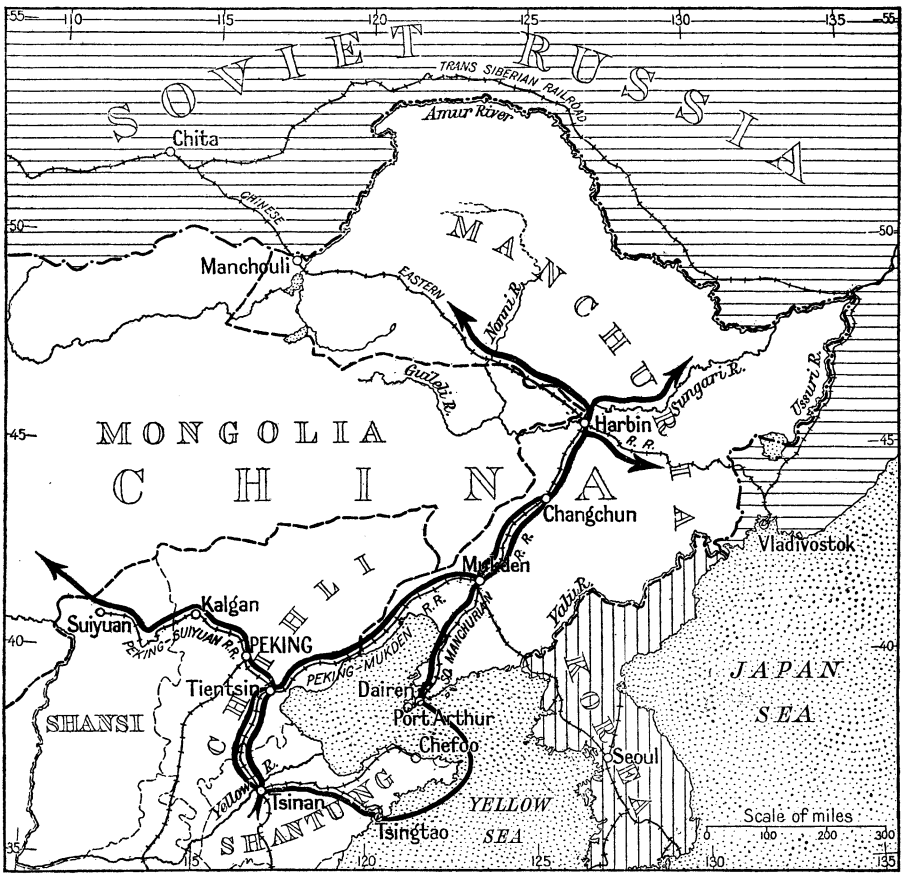
But the Chinese have not always been on the losing side. C. W. Bishop, the archaeologist of the Smithsonian Institute, states that evidences have been found in Southern Manchuria of the existence there in prehistoric times of a civilization apparently identical with that of the Chinese of the Yellow River valley at the close of the Stone Age. This would indicate that in prehistoric times Southern Manchuria at least was included within the Chinese culture area. Later on, there seems to have commenced a southward movement on the part of the Tungusic tribes of the

valleys of the Sungari and Amur which resulted in the retreat of the prehistoric Chinese to a line somewhat south of that at present followed by the Great Wall. The entire historical period has been occupied by the struggle of the agricultural Chinese to push the northern invaders back, while the latter have as constantly tried to conquer the people of the Great Plain.

At the dawn of history the mountainous regions between the Great Plains of China and Manchuria were covered by a dense forest. Among the earliest Chinese historical records are accounts of the efforts to push into this region. At first they were successful, doubtless due to the fact that the Chinese were now equipped with bronze weapons while their northern adversaries were still in the late Stone Age. Toward the beginning of the Christian era, however, the Tungusic tribes seem also to have become possessed of metal, and of the horse as well. The great increase in mobility and hitting power thus acquired enabled them to turn the tables on their enemies, and from that time onward various tribes, ending with the Manchus themselves, not only were able to maintain their territory in Manchuria intact from Chinese settlement, but actually succeeded in conquering China itself.

The northern tribes, however, have never done more than effect a comparatively temporary military and political occupation of Chinese territory. They have never been colonizers. The conquest of China by the Manchus in the seventeenth century was in no sense a cultural one, but was merely a military occupation supported by garrisons. While it lasted, the Chinese were engaged in steadily absorbing their conquerors, both racially and culturally. This conquest led in the end to the undoing of the Manchus; for they were far too few in numbers and too backward in civilization to hold their own against the countless millions of their subjects. But until the dynasty had finally crumbled away, Manchuria was not a field for Chinese settlement. There can be little doubt that the Chinese farmers would have occupied Manchuria centuries ago had it not been for the war-like nature of its inhabitants and their unwillingness to share their lands. Even as it was, the Chinese succeeded during the opening centuries of the historical period, from about 800 B.C. onward, in reoccupying and colonizing part of the area which they seem to have lost in prehistoric times, making the entire country south of the line of the Great Wall essentially Chinese in culture, whatever it may have been politically.

Thus we find that despite the home-loving character of the Chinese people, there has always been the tendency whenever possible to push northward into the rich Manchurian plains. Although the settled policy of the Manchus was to prevent the influx of Chinese, there were times when the restrictions were slightly relaxed or when conditions in China proper were so unbearable that the people were willing to take great risks and



MAIN CURRENTS OF CHINESE MIGRATION TO MANCHURIA AND MONGOLIA

undergo unusual hardships to migrate. In such periods there was a marked acceleration of the rate of settlement. One instance of this sort was in the first half of the nineteenth century, when, in order to replenish the imperial treasury, the lands of the Sungari River Valley were offered for sale to the Chinese. According to Abbé Huc, the "Chinese rushed upon them like birds of prey, and a few years sufficed to remove everything that could in any

way recall the memory of their ancient possessors." It may have been due to this acceleration of the impetus to migrate, that Manchuria by the middle of the nineteenth century was no longer Manchu but Chinese. In the southern part, the most densely settled, practically the last vestiges of the ruling race had been blotted out. Today, so completely has Chinese ability to permeate and absorb a foreign culture prevailed that all alien characteristics and customs have been effaced. The few Manchus who remain and are distinguishable speak the language of the Chinese and follow their mode of life. The rest have been driven back into Mongolia and the northernmost reaches of the Sungari and Amur valleys.

The official barrier to immigration into Manchuria was removed in 1878, and a steady stream of Chinese has since moved into the Three Eastern Provinces. Since 1900, immigration has been officially encouraged, but while there has been a constant movement northward, it has not been official pressure that has produced the present unprecedented exodus from North China.

According to officials of the South Manchuria Railway, the population of Manchuria has increased since 1880 as follows:

Year	*Population*	*Average Yearly Increase*
1880	9,131,240	
1900	14,338,000	260,000
1920	22,513,750	408,000
1927	26,365,300	550,000

Of the present population approximately 800,000 are Koreans, 120,000 Japanese, something over 100,000 Russians and other foreigners, and the balance Chinese (the Manchus having been absorbed).

Unfortunately, there are no accurate statistics which trace this exodus into Manchuria. But figures covering the last few years are available for Dairen, one of the ports through which the immigrants pass:

Year	*Arrived from China*	*Returned to China*
1924	165,044	107,455
1925	193,802	95,816
1926	254,863	134,460

It is reported that 1,000,000 migrated in 1927, and the estimates for 1928 vary between two and four millions.

It should be explained that there is a seasonal movement of labor which is to be distinguished from immigration proper.

Those given in the above table as returning to China from Dairen constitute for the most part this group. For many years, even before the construction of railways, there has been an exodus of Chinese laborers from Shantung and Chihli to Manchuria in the spring. In the fall, they returned to their families with their earnings. Before railways were built, they walked. It takes about a month each way from Shantung. Even after a railway was completed they continued to walk, for the fare at first was over $9.00 and that sum was a little more than sufficient for a month's food. Time being of no value to the Chinese farmer, he walked and saved the difference. Finally, the railway authorities made a special rate, and every year now the migrants are loaded on flat cars and taken to their destination. It has proven an unexpected source of profit to the railway, for they load and unload themselves and they can be packed in the cars in such numbers that the profit is greater than on the usual freight.

Some of these seasonal laborers have ended by finding a permanent place for themselves in the land of opportunity and eventually have brought their families to the new home. But the migration which is taking place today is not a seasonal one, although the "spring come, autumn go" group is a part of the picture. Last year the labor element was but a fraction of the total; a fifth were women and children, and the proportion this year will be even larger. Many more of the men than formerly have the expectation of settling permanently and bringing their families later.

The great human stream pouring into Manchuria today is divided into two main channels, one along the Peking Mukden Railway line, and the other by sea from the ports of North China to Dairen and thence along the line of the South Manchuria Railway. The two channels meet at Changchun, and those who have not already found a place for themselves continue northward where they spread out into a fan-shaped arc from Harbin. Some go in a northwesterly direction along the Chinese Eastern Railway line toward the Russian border, and of the two other larger currents, one pours northeastward into the valley of the Sungari River, and the other turns southeast and follows the railway toward Vladivostok. Most of those arriving at Dairen walk the 400 or more miles to their destination, carrying their children and household possessions with them; others take the train as far as their limited means will permit and then walk the remainder

of the way. Many of them are desperately poor, ragged, diseased, and under-nourished.[1]

While this large movement into Manchuria has been taking place, a smaller but likewise significant migration from North China has been under way into Mongolia. Mongolia is nearly 90 per cent as large as China proper and it has only one-half of one per cent of its population. Although only the fringe is habitable for man, there is a large area there which is now only sparsely settled by Mongolians. It is estimated that the Chinese have penetrated into this region at the rate of about a mile a year for the past fifty years, and the rate has increased since the construction of the Peking Suiyuan Railway. The settlers travel up the line from Peking to Kalgan and beyond, and the Chinese officials in that region have recently been active in securing land from the Mongolian tribes for colonization purposes. Thus, there is a constant pressure all along the northern frontier line of China proper.

What are the motivating forces which have propelled this ever-increasing human stream into the fertile river valleys of China's northern dependencies? The Chinese are essentially a conservative, home-loving people. They have very little inherent urge to adventure. The graves of their ancestors hold them firmly to the lands of their birth, and their wise men have sought the most fitting phrases to express and pass on to posterity the merit of remaining quietly at home rather than to undertake the vicissitudes and uncertain rewards of adventures abroad. Thus in temperament, in religion, and even in speech, the Chinese are a stay-at-home race. Clearly there must have been some more than ordinary impetus to set this human tide in motion.

[1] According to C. Walter Young, 630,000 Chinese immigrants distributed themselves in Manchuria during the first six months of 1927, as follows:

Yalu River zone	25,000
Upper Sungari River zone	100,000
Others in South Manchuria	75,000
Taonan zone	15,000
Upper Nonni River	35,000
Chang-Chun Northern zone	35,000
Western zone, Chinese Eastern Ry.	60,000
Eastern zone, Chinese Eastern Ry.	125,000
Hulan River zone	10,000
Lower Sungari River zone	150,000
	630,000

It will be seen that more than two-thirds of all migrants settled in the northern region of Manchuria. See map.

The greatest number of immigrants are from the Province of Shantung, one of the most densely populated regions in China. There are districts where the figures run as high as 3,000 per square mile, and this does not include urban centers. Furthermore, Shantung is not rich. The Chinese classify their provinces in three categories; rich, medium, and poor. Shantung is in the last-named class. Its soil is sandy, it is subject to frequent droughts, and, when the rainfall is unusually heavy, to floods of the Yellow River. Chihli, the native province of most of the rest of the pioneers, while having a richer soil, is also liable to drought, and floods are even more frequent in occurrence.

The drought of 1920 which caused one of the most serious famines in recent years visited both these provinces. In 1921, the Yellow River left its course and flooded a large area in the northeastern part of Shantung. In 1924, one of the worst floods in the memory of the inhabitants inundated the Chihli plains, destroying the crops over thousands of square miles and causing damage estimated at $200,000,000, Chinese currency. In 1925, the Yellow River again broke its dykes in Western Shantung, flooding more than 1,000 villages. And in 1927, there was another severe drought which affected parts of both provinces. Add to this almost continuous distress due to natural causes, the miseries of warfare, the inhuman exactions of military officials, and the feeding of large bodies of soldiery on the depleted supplies of the people, and you have the conditions which are causing the most conservative to leave their ancient homes if they can but find the funds to pay their fare or to sustain themselves during transit. They know that better conditions can be found in Manchuria. And these better conditions are made possible by the influence of Japan and her determination to preserve peace in that region. Here indeed is a striking example of the frailty of human perception, for this very policy of Japan, which is so scathingly attacked by Chinese officials and buttressed by popular support, is making possible a place of refuge for a portion of China's starving millions whose destitution has been largely caused by government disorganization and civil strife. As Mr. Nicholas Roosevelt has said in his recent book, *The Restless Pacific*, "Manchuria, thanks to the peace-enforcing control of Japan and the efficient operation of The South Manchuria Railway, has been one of the few spots in China during the last quarter-century where the Chinese have lived in safety and prosperity." During

the early part of 1928, it was reliably estimated that ten million people were on the verge of starvation in North China. It is largely from this group that the more than two million immigrants this year have come.

The habit of going to Manchuria having been established, and the existence of better conditions of life there clearly demonstrated, it seems quite sure that the movement now under way will continue unless artificially checked. The birth rate in China is so high that more people are born than the land will support. Thus, in the long run, they must either migrate or starve; and unless prevented they can be depended upon to migrate. To be sure, the assimilation of such numbers of new settlers as are pouring into this region is not easy. It is taxing the resources not only of the government and of the railway administration, but also of private charity. Already conditions among the migrants are bad, and if the number of refugees increases there is likely to be famine at both ends of the line. This might lead to temporary obstruction at the Manchurian end.

However, China is anxious to colonize Manchuria, and it is only action on the part of Russia or Japan that would permanently impede Chinese settlement there. Russia, even if opposed to such settlement, is now in no position to exert her influence; and Japan is at present strongly in favor of it. It was Japan's original purpose to colonize Manchuria herself, and following the war with Russia she announced her intention of sending in one million colonists within ten years. Today, more than twenty-five years after she took it over, the Japanese population there is less than an eighth of this number, and only half of them are agriculturists.

Japan has been unable to induce her people to settle in an area where the standard of living is lower than at home. Japanese will go readily enough to Australia or America where the standard is higher, but competition with Chinese coolies is not so attractive. Also, no profit is to be expected through the appreciation in the value of land, for the Chinese have succeeded in preventing Japanese from leasing land outside the special areas, not only for settlement but for every other purpose. This impossibility of competition with the Chinese peasants seems to be one of the fundamental causes of the failure of Japanese settlement. But, since the future of Manchuria and incidentally of Japan is based on the exploitation of its vast resources, and

since the Chinese have demonstrated their ability to accomplish this end, Japan seems likely to continue her present policy of encouraging the immigrants in every possible way.

Under present chaotic conditions no clear indications can be given of what the future holds in store. But it is well to bear in mind that there is a vast difference between a military and political occupation of a territory and its effective colonization. We have an excellent example of this latter in the history of the Mississippi Valley. Our pioneers had not alone the Indians to contend with; they were faced with the open opposition of France and Spain. But they prevailed. It would appear that the Chinese eventually will do likewise.

It is far from sure that the intricate problem of Manchuria can be solved by pacific means; many, indeed, feel that it is most unlikely. But the establishment of undisputed control over Manchuria by a strong and united China would remove it from the field of ambitions of other nations, and one of the chief causes of discord in the Far East would disappear. The danger is that the crash may come before China can achieve this degree of undisputed control, and that her growing strength might even precipitate it. Meanwhile the settlement of Manchuria by the race which has demonstrated its greatest fitness for the task of developing the region seems destined to continue. Every year this "sheet anchor of Chinese sovereignty" is becoming more firmly imbedded in the soil of China's richest dependency.