

## XVII

### THE LAST CHAPTER SEPTEMBER 1950 - APRIL 1966

Prince De, who dedicated his whole life to the betterment of his Mongolian people, spent the last quarter of his life, from his extradition in 1950 to his death in 1966, under very difficult circumstances.<sup>1</sup> He spent these last sixteen years of his life in confinement, undergoing interrogation, confession, sentencing, imprisonment, forced labor, "reform through labor" (really psychological and physical torture aimed at brainwashing a person and breaking his will), intimidation, humiliation, mockery, release, house arrest, more confessions, and disease. Although he was a warrior who had fought nobly and faithfully for the freedom of the Mongolian people, he ended up losing his own freedom.

This book should, of course, include an account of the calamities he suffered, the labor he endured, and the questions he considered, as well as the spiritual and corporeal changes he underwent during this last quarter of his life. But all these things currently remain secrets. I have been unable to obtain any detailed information concerning these years, and Mongols with whom I have talked do not know any more than I do. Perhaps in some cases they know, but are unwilling to talk. At any rate, unless the Chinese government allows its citizens to speak freely and makes the appropriate materials available for public inspection, these last years of Prince De's life will probably remain blank pages in Mongolian history. I hope that some day someone will fill in these blank pages without fear of the political consequences or pressure to remain quiet. With this lack of available information, I can offer below only the barest of outlines of these last years of Prince De's life.

As mentioned in the last chapter, Prince De and three other men were extradited to Beijing on September 18, 1950. Li Shouxin was one of these three other men; the other two are unknown. Nothing is known of their interrogation and imprisonment after they arrived in Beijing. It is only known that in 1959, Ulanfu, then the chairman of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, announced that Prince De had been punished and that he had been sent to labor at the Fushan coal mines. This, of course, meant imprisonment or "reform through labor." Several years ago, Duan Kehe, a war criminal released from prison by the Chinese Communists, published in America an article entitled "A Self-Narration of a War Criminal" in the Chinese-language *World Daily* (*Shijie ribao*). In this article he said that during his imprisonment, the Chinese Communist authorities brought Prince De and Li Shouxin to observe the progress of the prison's efforts at "reform through labor." Duan said further that he resented the fact that while he lived in destitute and bitter circumstances at his prison, Prince De and Li Shouxin were well-dressed and apparently well-fed.

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<sup>1</sup> There are three different dates given for his death: April 25, May 23, and June 4, 1966. I have been unable to determine which date is the correct one; perhaps the actual date will never be known.

Another account contradicts this one. It maintains that they were tortured continually, that Prince De always refused to speak even one word, and that because Li Shouxin was so tall, the prison guards constantly forced him to stoop, not allowing him to stand at the full height of his stature. I find neither of these reports completely believable. But common sense tells me that they did indeed suffer from the constant interrogations, confessions, and "reform through labor."

Both Prince De and Li Shouxin were released on April 9, 1963, by an amnesty of the Chinese government. It is certain that the twelve years and seven months of his imprisonment had made Prince De physically and mentally feeble. His obstinate personality and princely temperament more than likely poisoned his soul with anger at the spiritual torment, physical abuse, and mental cruelty he suffered.

During his imprisonment, all his family members, with the exception of Dugursurung, were returned from Mongolia to China. No information about the whereabouts or fate of Dugursurung is available at this date. Prince De's second son was interrogated and released after his arrival in Beijing. His third son died of the heart ailment caused by the severely cold climate in Arkhangai. His fourth son survived, but is said to suffer continually from his heart ailment. In the *Personal Narrative*, Prince De says that he brought upon himself his punishment at the hands of the authorities of the Mongolian People's Republic. But he maintains that "it was unjustifiable to put my children, who were innocent and ignorant of my political activities, into military exile and force them to suffer from severely cold weather."

There are many different accounts of Prince De's fate and welfare after his release. One account says that he was assigned to work in the library of the Central Nationalities Institute. Another says that he worked in the library of the Inner Mongolian Academy of Social Sciences. Yet another account claims that he was kept under house arrest in Hohhot and was followed everywhere he went by government surveillance personnel. Still another claims that after his release, he was brought to a place where he could view the success of the government's ten-year plan, and was asked his opinion of it. He supposedly answered, "I probably could have done better if I had been able to get ten more years of time." This statement led to more difficulties for him. This last account has been given to me repeatedly by many different people. They maintain that his treatment would have been more favorable had he commented upon the accomplishments of the ten-year plan more positively.

After his release, Prince De's uncompromising attitude and unyielding spirit produced even more difficulties for him. The Chinese government treated him differently from Puyi, the abdicated last emperor of the Manchu Qing, who embraced no guiding ideology nor showed any degree of obstinate temperament. Owen Lattimore informed me that during his visit in China with Zhou Enlai in 1972, he went to the Central Nationalities Institute and mentioned Prince De's contributions to the Mongol people. A young man from the Alashan banner asked Lattimore not to mention Prince De again.

At an academic gathering at Berkeley in April of 1982, I met with a Mr. Li, a member of the Nationalities Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. A group of scholars and I engaged him in a discussion about Prince De. After a while he said, "In spite of the views you gentlemen have toward Prince De, from the standpoint of our country, he was a criminal—a traitor (*hanjian*) who betrayed the nation and collaborated with the enemy." In other words, Prince De was viewed as a *hanjian* because he dared to oppose Han chauvinism. The other scholars at this gathering scorned Li's stance and refused to discuss Prince De with him further.

After Prince De's extradition to Beijing, the Inner Mongolian leagues and ban-



ners were combined into one autonomous body and given some measure of self-rule. Prince De had struggled and hoped for this development for years, and he eventually saw it materialize. Almost all Mongolian areas, except for those in Xinjiang and the Kokonor region, were placed under the jurisdiction of this Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, with Ulanfu as its chairman. The ensuing socialistic revolution in Inner Mongolia did produce some progress, especially in the areas of education and health care.

During the first few years after the establishment of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, all national construction work in Inner Mongolia was based on the Chinese economic plan, though with a nod to the new standards and precedents established by the Mongolian People's Republic. Even the old Uighur script used for writing Mongolian was temporarily (from 1957 to the mid-'60s) abandoned in favor of the Cyrillic alphabet, which was used in the Mongolian People's Republic and the Soviet Union; this system lasted until the Chinese-Soviet honeymoon ended. The feudalistic institutions and the prerogatives of the temples and monasteries were all eliminated. Religious freedom was, however, guaranteed, at least nominally. Many of Prince De's former followers and intellectuals, who were supported and educated during his period of leadership, now threw themselves enthusiastically into the service of the new autonomous region. In order to protect themselves, many of these individuals outwardly displayed opposition to Prince De's former policies.

The great Chinese migration into Inner Mongolia began in 1951, a few years after the 1947 establishment of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. Chinese had previously lived in Inner Mongolia in scattered centers, but now they came in great droves and soon made the Mongols a minority in their own "Autonomous Region!" This inundation of Chinese settlers was definitely a negative development because it seemed to cancel the positive developments made in the field of education.

Soon the Sino-Soviet honeymoon period ended. China and the Soviet Union began experiencing seemingly unresolvable disagreements. Mongolia, which had sacrificed Prince De to buy friendship from Beijing, followed the lead of the Soviet Union and changed its attitudes toward China. Prince De, who had worked so long for the good of his Mongol people, must have viewed these vicissitudes of international politics with bewilderment and disillusionment.

According to the *Personal Narrative*, during the last three years of his life, Prince De left behind seven chapters of his memoirs that had been "recorded and edited—probably the confessions he was required to make upon his release from prison—and not originally written in chronological order or by topic. They were, however, later arranged into chronological order. No dates for these chapters are given in the *Personal Narrative*. But when Lu Minghui used these chapters in writing his book *Menggu zizhi yundong shimo* (Beijing, 1980), he supplied dates for all these chapters as follows:

1. Recalling the Mongolian Autonomous Movement at Bailingmiao—arranged June 1964.
2. How I became involved with the Japanese imperialists (no date).
3. The Mongolian Military Government—arranged 1964 (no month indicated).
4. The Mongolian Allied League Autonomous Government—arranged December 1964.
5. The Mengjiang Allied Autonomous Government—arranged May 1964.
6. Three Years in Beijing—arranged October 1965.
7. My Involvement in the so-called Western Mongolian Autonomous Movement—arranged 1965 (no month indicated).
8. My Experience in the Mongolian People's Republic—arranged 1965 (no month indicated).

I found no account of "How I Became Involved with the Japanese Imperialists."

in Prince De's *Personal Narrative*. It seems that not all the material Lu Minghui drew on for his account of the Mongolian Autonomous Movement at Bailingmiao is contained in the first chapter of the *Personal Narrative*. This evidence indicates the existence of a more complete and unexpurgated confession by Prince De. It is also interesting to note that the *Personal Narrative* contains only seven chapters, not eight. It is easy to see editorial pressure to alter or omit episodes in all of this. It is, therefore, difficult not to conclude that the *Personal Narrative* is based on selected materials and not on the complete oral account as given by Prince De.

Other aspects of the *Personal Narrative* seem to indicate that it is full of embellishments written with a specific Chinese political agenda in mind. Many passages of the book are thinly disguised attempts to demean the author. These passages do not ring true. When somebody writes his memoirs, be he a statesman, a thinker, a literateur, a religious man, or an artist, he may write of his regrets, his accomplishments, or of his becoming wise too late. His memoirs may even be a type of cathartic confession or expression of remorse at having done something wrong. But *no* man writes his memoirs with an eye to demean and vilify himself! I was intimately acquainted with Prince De; I knew his personality and temperament. I know that he never would have written such things. It is easy for me to see the ways in which the Chinese editors adulterated this book.

I am firmly convinced that Prince De did not actually make these confessions nor do I believe that he ever left behind a written account for posterity. But it is undoubtedly true that from the time of his arrest until his death, Prince De was continually forced to make confession after confession. The long-term afflictions and torment he must have received at the hands of his Chinese Communist captors is difficult for any reasonable person in the West to accept. Only his religious beliefs and strong will saved him from a complete nervous breakdown.

Demchugdongrob was born into a princely family of Chinggisid lineage. He was made a first-ranking prince in his youth. When he became a young man, he began to devote himself to the Mongolian autonomy movement. Although this movement eventually collapsed, he continued to struggle for the independence and continued existence of the Mongol people. He became a convicted criminal during the last quarter of his life and suffered afflictions until the end.

It has been said that on the early morning of May 23, 1966, at the dawn of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Prince De passed away in Hohhot, the city that had been the capital of the Mongolian Allied League Autonomous Government under his leadership. Soon after his death, his virtuous wife, Sebjidma, also died. Immediately thereafter, Prince De's beloved homeland of Inner Mongolia became embroiled in the chaos that was the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Many of the accomplishments he had worked so hard and so long to achieve were destroyed by leftist fanatics and marauding bands of the Red Guard. Khafungga and most of his other compatriots who had struggled for Mongolian nationalistic aspirations did not escape persecution or death during this calamitous time. If Prince De had a soul, it certainly departed this world unwillingly and unhappily. It left behind many unaccomplished objectives and a scene of almost unthinkable domestic political madness.

I have been unable to determine whether this tragic, unsung hero of modern Mongolian history left behind any last will or testament. I have only been able to learn that after his death, his friends and family cremated his remains and scattered his ashes on the mountain where the *obao* of the Sunid Right Banner was formerly located. The entire banner is visible from this place. Perhaps from here his spirit keeps eternal watch over the land and people he so deeply loved.