

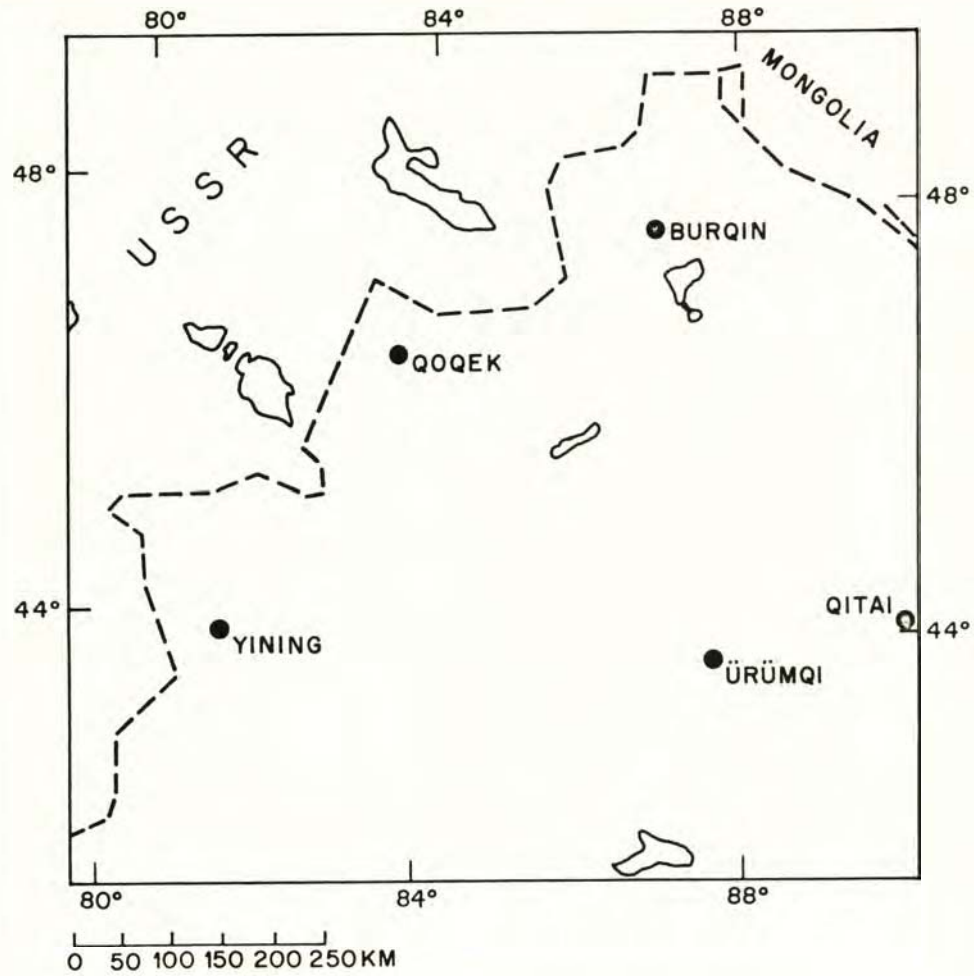
# 21

## Russian

The Russian 俄罗斯 nationality in China is one of the few that have lost in population in recent years. In 1957 there were still 9,000 Russians in China, excluding diplomatic personnel, advisors, and other visiting Soviet citizens.<sup>1</sup> By 1978 this figure had shrunk to a little over 600.<sup>2</sup> The most recent census, held in June 1982, shows a figure of 2,935 Russians in China<sup>3</sup> which is interesting because there had not been any known influx of Russians after 1978. Until firm evidence convinces me otherwise, I am inclined to assume that many Russians were not counted in 1978.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the remaining Russians live in Xinjiang,<sup>5</sup> especially in Ili but also in Qoqek (Tacheng) and Altay districts (see Map 21). The largest number of Russians in Xinjiang used to live in Ürümqi, in a district just north of the university, but they have all gone. In addition to Xinjiang, there is still a handful of Russians in the Hulunbuir league of Inner Mongolia and in Xunke and Huma counties of Heilongjiang province.

Compared to other nationalities surveyed in this book, the Russians have had a very short history in China. Virtually all of them arrived there during and after the Russian civil war of 1918-22 as so-called White Russians. They tended to cluster in certain cities such as Harbin where they turned certain neighborhoods into tiny bits of Russia, complete with Russian apartment houses, stores, police and street signs. Only a few Russians who fled across the border into Xinjiang took up farming and herding. After only a few years in China, many Russians moved again. Between the end of the second world war in 1945 and the Communist victory in China in 1949 large numbers of Russians moved to



Map 21. Russian

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Hong Kong as well as the United States and other countries. Others took out Soviet citizenship and migrated back to the Soviet Union. A second exodus from China took place after 1960 when relations between that country and the Soviet Union became much less friendly. Given the rate of decline in the number of Russians in China over the past twenty years, it is entirely possible that no Russians will remain in the not too distant future.

Because there are hardly any Russians left in China, there is nothing to report on their language, literature, society, and religion.



Illus. 48. A Russian Veterinarian

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Jiankuang, v. 4, 39.

<sup>2</sup>Zhongguo, 247.

<sup>3</sup>Minzu yanjiu 23 (1983), 81.

<sup>4</sup>Inquiries in Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Beijing leave me with the impression that my doubts about the accuracy of the 1978 estimate are justified.

<sup>5</sup>Drawing on the same census mentioned earlier, a Beijing periodical recently reported 2,662 Russians living in Xinjiang. See Minzu tuanjie 150 (1983), 10.