

HISTORY

IMPRESSIONS OF INNER MONGOLIA, 1945-1950

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The following essay briefly chronicles three trips I took to Inner Mongolia, some events, serious and humorous, which took place on these trips, and some of my impressions cast in terms of Chinese-Mongolian relations.

The trips to and within Inner Mongolia were made for various reasons, to different areas, and by diverse means of transportation--by plane, jeep, horse, truck, and camel. My first trip was by jeep and plane from Peiping to Kalgan, Dolon Nor, and Peitzemiao and back in the late winter and early spring of 1946. The second trip was from Peiping to and throughout the Ordos (Ikechou) and Ulan-chap areas and return from May to October of 1948. The third trip I took as a Fulbright scholar from Lanchow to Ningshia and Ting-yüan-ying, the administrative center of the Special Alashan Banner, and from there by camel across the Gobi to Shan-tan in the Kansu Corridor in the summer of 1949.

Each trip was made under different auspices and for different purposes. At the time of the first trip I was a member of the organization which was a continuation of the wartime Office of Strategic Services. There were a series of administrative changes which those of us in the field paid little attention to as we still thought of ourselves as members of the O.S.S. I recall that at the time we were as yet not called the Central Intelligence Group and that the reorganization into the Central Intelligence Agency was to occur months later. I had just returned from a mission to the Chi-Chung Liberated Area south and south-east of Peiping, where we studied the type and causes of truce violations taking place.

At this time the peace talks between the Communists and Nationalists, under the auspices of the United States and the personal guidance of General George Marshall, were still taking place but were steadily losing impetus for a number of reasons. One of these was the continual skirmishing between small units of Communist and Nationalist forces. From what I could observe, the skirmishing in the Chi-Chung was set off by groups of foragers on the Nationalist side. These troops were not well provided for, seemed to resent the villagers for harboring the Communists, and apparently felt little compunction about taking a moderate amount of hay for their animals and grain for their own consumption from the countryside. The Communists, on the other hand, could hardly allow foraging of this type to take place as it would show a lack of Communist ability to protect areas under their control and because it could be interpreted as a form of taxation. The Chi-Chung at this time was a well-established Communist area even though it had been surrounded by the Japanese for years. As such it had developed a history as a guerrilla base. Both the intricate system of tunneling and the sense of unity testified to this history. With the completion of this mission we learned that the Chin-Ch'a-Chi base area wished some sort of liaison with our unit, perhaps because of the flexibility with which we could

operate and, at that time at least, impartiality in the civil war. Thus the stage was set for additional trips into the Chin-Ch'a-Chi area.

My first trip was precipitated, from the American point of view, by events taking place in Inner Mongolia. Mongols living in the area, to a large extent former members of the Japanese-sponsored semi-autonomous political organization in Manchuria, held a meeting in a village near Wang-yeh-miao in the west-central Hsinggan Mountains and authored the rationale for an Eastern Mongolian Autonomous Government. This was hardly a revolutionary act as the area, as I came to understand it, was largely self-governing although more by default than by the assertion of independence or autonomy. Representatives of this government were sent to various powers in the region in order to secure sponsorships. The Soviets replied that the time was inappropriate but that at a later date the Mongols might indeed benefit from Soviet influence. Authorities within the Mongolian People's Republic (M.P.R.) replied in very similar terms. At that time the M.P.R. was very concerned for its own standing as an independent government and wished to secure recognition from the United Nations. The representatives who traveled to Peiping to discuss the issue of sponsorship with the Chinese Nationalists had hoped to travel on to confer directly with Chiang Kai-shek, but were not allowed to do so. They were mostly met with indifference. In part as a consequence of these failures, a meeting was scheduled for March 1946 in Ch'eng-te with the permission and probably with the encouragement of local authorities within the Chinese Communist political organization which controlled this part of southern Manchuria.

It was agreed upon that I leave for Kalgan, the administrative center of the Chin-Ch'a-Chi base area, to learn more about this Mongolian movement and the Chinese Communist responses to it.

Upon my arrival in Kalgan I asked Ulanfu about the meeting at Ch'eng-te and was astonished to learn that he had not heard of the eastern Inner Mongolian movement. The next morning Ulanfu departed for Ch'eng-te. Ulanfu gave me the impression of a Chinese Communist official although he wore a Mongolian gown during our second meeting. It was said that he did not speak Mongolian which was not surprising for a Tümet of his generation. The Independent Provisional Mongolian Republic which had come into existence in the fall of 1945, upon the arrival of troops from the M.P.R. and the Soviet Union, had been terminated when the Chinese dominated the area. Leaders of the Independent Provisional Mongolian Republic allegedly were executed by the Chinese after they had been invited by Ulanfu to leave Shangtu and come to Kalgan.

Not only Ulanfu but no one else seemed to be knowledgeable about the situation in those areas of Inner Mongolia inhabited chiefly by Mongols when I visited Kalgan. Therefore I decided to travel to Dolon Nor by jeep, accompanied by representatives of the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Liberated Area to discover for myself who was in control.

Dolon Nor turned out to be a Chinese town on the margin of the area inhabited by Mongols. We visited the temple just outside of town which the Chinese Communists said had been saved from total destruction by troops from the M.P.R. Soviet troops had apparently begun to burn down this temple when M.P.R. troops surrounded the temple and thus saved it from further destruction.

There were no representatives of any Mongolian government at Dolon Nor and

no one who seemed to have any information about the situation in the Mongol regions. Amazingly I was able to persuade a U.S. Army plane to fly to Dolon Nor, pick us up and take us to Peitzemiao to the northwest of Dolon Nor in Shilingol League and then to return in a few days to pick us up again at Peitzemiao and bring us back to Dolor Nor. We would have used the jeep instead if we had carried with us or been able to obtain sufficient gasoline, but this rather bizarre means of transportation turned out to be the only way. The airfields at both Dolon Nor and Peitzemiao were emergency landing fields, built by various military forces, Japanese or Soviet, that had passed this way. The one at Dolon Nor had more of the outline and structure of an airfield than that at Peitzemiao. As there were no communications between Kalgan and Peitzemiao, let alone between Peitzemiao and Dolon Nor, we could only hope that the field at Peitzemiao was operational and that we would be welcomed when we arrived.

All came off splendidly with the Chinese in our party excitedly pointing out yurts below us on the steppe as we skimmed over them, slowly circled the temple complex, and landed on a field outlined by the red gowned lamas from the temple. After jumping from the door of the plane to a friendly welcome, pilot and crew were invited to take tea at the temple. This they declined. The plane took off and we settled down for an interesting time.

Government in Shilingol was in local hands, considered itself temporary and, for the most part, consisted of members of Prince Te's (Demchukdonggruba's) former Meng Chiang government. These officials had the reputation of not favoring one side over the other in the civil war nor of committing themselves to any other government or movement. I suspect they would have welcomed the return of Prince Te as their leader, but this was not actually stated. The Chinese Communist-sponsored Inner Mongolian Autonomous Movement had a representative in the area who was staying at the temple. He was a considerate and knowledgeable young Mongol who seemed to be well liked but not much listened to. He held what seemed then only a remote chance of representing a movement or government that would ensure peace in the region, let alone dominate it.

While at Peitzemiao, we rode camels about twenty miles (twenty *p'ao-li*) to visit a Mongolian encampment, one of the closest civilian encampments near the temple at that time. In hindsight, it seems that the family we visited may have been more than usually sympathetic to the arguments of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous representative. The family had lost both husband and father and was in strained circumstances. This impression would not have occurred to someone who had seen poverty in China proper. In comparison, the Mongol family seemed quite well off.

During our visit the son of the Mongol family felt called upon to deliver what seemed an impromptu lecture. He chided the Chinese Communists and their representative for allowing so much power and wealth to remain in the hands of the elite of the Meng Chiang period. The representative appeared embarrassed. He was in no position to make promises, denials, or apologies.

During the academic year of 1947-1948 I was no longer in intelligence. I was enrolled at Fu Jen University in Peiping studying Classical Chinese and spoken Mongolian. In May 1948 I went to Paot'ou as the executive officer of the Paot'ou branch of the China Relief Mission, an interim organization which filled the gap between the demise of UNRRA and the creation of the Economic Cooperation Administration which later came to be called A.I.D. I had several

reasons for accepting this position. For one, it offered a job and a break from school during the summer months. It also promised to allow me to increase my knowledge of Mongolia while doing something worthwhile. My main reason, though, was more subtle. For the past several years, and especially during the academic year when my contacts had been almost entirely with Chinese, I had come to see situations largely from a Chinese point of view. Through my brief experience with the Mongol way of life the previous year, my studies of the literature on Inner Asia and of the Mongolian language, and my discussions with Mongolian acquaintances, I had begun to realize that one could look at China and Inner Asia from points of view other than those of the Westerner looking at "Orientals" or of the Chinese looking at "barbarians." It was time to qualify my sinification, and so I took this position which would allow me to travel some more in Mongolia.

There existed a very real need for the China Relief Mission in the China of 1948. In many places in North China the 1947 harvest had been inadequate. Spring and early summer of 1948 were lacking in sufficient moisture. It appeared that another crop failure was in the offing. The hardest hit population in the area of Paot'ou were the almost totally agrarian and industrialized Chinese and thus the bulk of relief went to Chinese people. A part of the relief goods, however, had been set aside for Mongols, to be distributed from a small branch station at Paot'ou. We had been able to obtain trucks for transporting grain and other materials. These trucks were specially designed with a very high clearance to enable them to overcome flash floods, dry sand and even quicksand on occasion. They had to be driven from Peiping to Paot'ou by way of the Southern Gate (Nank'ou), through Kalgan and Northwest Shangtu southwest to Kueisui where the trucks and some Mongolian refugees were placed on railroad cars and then shipped to Paot'ou.

Transporting the trucks to Paot'ou did not take us through Mongolian territory, strictly speaking, although the region leading to and from Shangtu was a border area. The town of Shangtu, the one-time summer capital of Kublai Khan and now largely inhabited by Chinese, was a small town surrounded by a wall which enclosed mostly empty space. Maybe the empty space had at one time been covered by imperial palaces. Now it was used as a place of refuge by Mongols and their flocks from raiding parties. Perhaps the wall had originally been built with this purpose in mind, an alternate means of assuring safety to the flocks of vassals, similar in function to the twin cities built by the Khidat (Chin) deeper in the steppe.

Upon arriving in Paot'ou the great need of the Chinese to the south became very apparent. A grain distribution center was established for this purpose south of the Yellow River for a few days. Expecting people to come to the distribution center proved a hardship for them, so we simply shipped the grain to different points south of the Yellow River which were operated by other relief agencies. Fu Tso-yi, the commanding general of the area, refused to allow refugees fleeing the famine area to cross the river.

Grain, including buckwheat for late spring planting which it was hoped would replace the ruined winter wheat crop, was distributed to the banner administrations or directly to Mongols living on banner lands. Some Mongolian banners were almost entirely pastoral. None were as dependent upon agriculture as the Chinese living in this region, and thus the Mongolian need was not as acute as that of the Chinese.

During this period I made trips by jeep and truck to most of the Ulan-chap and Ordos areas. When distributing grain to Ujin Banner of the Ordos we half-filled each sack of grain and tied the sacks to the backs of cows which were then herded to the points of distribution. The half-filled sacks balanced well on cow back. We relied on cows rather than on camels for transportation because the Mongols like to rest their camels during the summer, allowing them to recuperate from the winter and to accumulate fat. The men rode horseback. Ujin had no roads because the land was sandy but also as a result of deliberate policy. The absence of roads plus the negative attitude of the banner government helped deter Chinese colonization.

Ujin Banner was the first area where I was personally responsible for relief distribution. It made a deep impression on me. Even though there were no roads the people of Ujin Banner practiced both pastoralism and agriculture. From what I could observe, they lived in well-built houses of Chinese style, open to the swallows which built their nests along the rafters and kept down the fly population. In back or to the side of the *baishing*, as the Mongols called them, a yurt was generally set up either for storage or to accommodate guests or grandparents. The Mongols preferred goats to sheep here for both milk and wool as they found goat wool of greater commercial value.

As the people of Ujin Banner were both pastoralists and farmers, there was really no rationale for settling Chinese on banner lands. The banner administration allowed the settling of Mongols from other banners to farm Ujin Banner lands while discouraging Chinese encroachment. The movement of Chinese onto banner lands elsewhere was not simply the result of Chinese land hunger, although without this the strategies of both Chinese provincial governors and banner governments could not have been accomplished. The Chinese strategy was to encourage enough Chinese to move onto Mongol lands so that, in due time, the area would come under direct Chinese administration and be incorporated into a *hsien*, the approximate equivalent to our county.

The Mongolian banner government's strategy was to allow Chinese settlement to a limited extent. This would allow greater income through taxation to the banner government and could be used to increase the banner prince's personal expenditures. I saw a small palace built in the middle of the steppe filled with various gimcracks. These funds also allowed the support of banner schools (cf. Lattimore, *The Mongols of Manchuria*, 1934). In the long run, these strategies worked to Chinese advantage and the gradual erosion of Mongol control of their lands.

One point which became strikingly clear was that the Mongols, on the whole, had a higher standard of living than the Chinese. The comparison is somewhat difficult to make with regard to housing. A well-built yurt cost as much as an ordinary Chinese house. The frame-built houses, such as those found in Ujin Banner, were of the middle range of Chinese homes. I did not see evidence of extreme poverty in any of the yurts or houses I visited while I had seen a great deal of poverty in Chinese villages. The Mongols dressed better and also ate better than the Chinese.

There was an obvious difference in wealth apparent among the Mongols. A sharp difference existed between the ordinary Mongols and members of princely families and some administrators. So-called palaces were not very elaborate, about on a level with well-to-do Chinese households, if one does not include space and

buildings used for administrative purposes, the banner school, and space used for markets and workshops. Taking into account differences in subsistence base between the Mongols and Chinese, the one depending on pastoralism and mixed animal husbandry and agriculture, the other dependent on intensive agriculture, the Mongol population was relatively less dense than the Chinese population in China proper. The Chinese living in Mongol areas as farmers, artisans, or merchants appeared well off or even wealthy.

To the north of the Yellow River, where the Meng Chiang government had operated under Japanese auspices, various tactics had been attempted to limit the movement of Chinese onto banner lands and to limit Chinese influence. In one case, lands along the Chinese ethnic border had been given to Mongolian families who were supposed to farm the land, thus creating a buffer zone through which Chinese settlers could not move. In this area Chinese were prohibited from owning banner land. This did not work as planned. The Mongols rented their lands to Chinese farmers and moved further into the steppe with their flocks. In a neighboring banner lands occupied by Chinese were simply cleared of all residents, Mongols and Chinese alike, creating a great habitat for gazelles.

In addition to limiting the influx of Chinese farmers, some banner officials also set about to control the number and occupations of other Chinese allowed to live in the area. In many banners permits had to be obtained for a Chinese artisan or trader to enter Mongol land. Naturally these controls varied. In Ujin Banner trade was reportedly controlled by one Chinese merchant who was making it a lucrative business. In other banners the large temples were the main trading centers. Here access was limited by the banner government and by the frequency of temple fairs. It may well have been too difficult for a trader to wait out the time between temple fairs. In at least one banner, artisans were not allowed to bring their families. By this time, then, the Mongols in most areas tried to control Chinese access to Mongolian lands. The Mongols had obviously realized that there were vastly more Chinese than Mongols. If the Mongols hoped to maintain their identity as a people they had to limit access to their banner lands.

While the Mongols were trying to regulate Chinese colonization of Mongol lands, the Chinese on their part were trying to control the Mongols themselves. The Mongols naturally resisted these attempts. On one level these attempts were mostly to integrate the Mongols into the Chinese socio-political concerns rather than a simple desire to dominate the Mongols. The organization of Mongols into the Chinese Communist sponsored Inner Mongolian Autonomous Movement can be seen in this light as can the efforts made by the Kuomintang to ensure Mongol representation within the party and national assembly.

The younger brother of the former prince of Ujin had reportedly become so engrossed in Kuomintang affairs that he seldom was to be found within the banner, leaving its administration to appointees selected by his brother or, to a lesser extent, to those of his underaged nephew. The princess of Mu Mingan was engaged in a somewhat similar manner in Chinese political affairs, leaving that administration to a relative. An example of a less subtle means of exerting control was to be found at Dsassak Banner where the former prince supposedly had tried to bring the Ordos into the Meng Chiang state. The Chinese Nationalists, not surprisingly, opposed this scheme, put him under house arrest, and placed a more "reliable" brother in charge of banner affairs.

At a lower level, opium was used to control banner policy. In one case the Nationalists and in another the Communists were said to have ensured a steady flow of opium to key personnel in their efforts to secure policies favorable to them. In still another case, a Kuomintang party representative, a Chinese, had been assigned to a banner in order to enlighten banner personnel about national goals as distinct from the provincial aims of the banner government. This particular very personable individual had, however, found himself so much in agreement with the Mongol point of view that he did not dare leave the Mongol-controlled area for fear of being arrested by the Chinese. There is an equation here. The more a banner administrator was concerned with the welfare of the banner, the more power he had in the banner and the less he had with the Chinese authorities. This was well exemplified in the Alashan, Ordos and in Ulan-chap.

My third trip was as a Fulbright scholar in 1949. I entered the Alashan from Lanchow, or rather from Ninghsia, past the crumbling walls of the Hsi-hsia capital and a small city commemorating the fall of the Tanguts and their city. This city, empty now, had remarkably well-preserved walls and gates. After studying Mongolian for several months at Ting-yüan-ying, the capital of the Alashan, I set out by camel across the Gobi to Shan-tan, a trip of nineteen days. I was accompanied on this trip by a young American who was permanently stationed at Shan-tan, working in the Cooperative School, and by two Mongol boys who planned to attend this school in order to learn a trade and other virtues. It was necessary to leave Ting-yüan-ying at this time because we feared the retreat of defeated and disorganized Chinese Nationalist troops pursued by Chinese Communists through this area. I feared that the Chinese Communists would have made me study about Inner Asia from the greater safety of Peiping.

The prince of the Alashan, a cultivated gentleman, spoke little Mongolian but excellent Chinese and some Manchu. His linguistic hybridization had come about because the princely family had been marrying daughters of Manchu noble families for generations, thereby tightening their ties with China, Chung Kuo, the Central Kingdom. People at Ting-yüan-ying had told me that the prince, as a young man, had tried to thwart the power of a Muslim warlord at Ninghsia and had spent several years under detention for his pains.

When I was in the Alashan he had become largely a spokesman for the banner to the Chinese and to Westerners. The banner was meanwhile run by a *toslokchi* or administrator from a collateral family. The Mongols of the banner were naturally well aware of this sharing of responsibility and gave little credit to the prince. The prince derived his income from lands specifically allotted to him and from hay provided by bannermen for his horses. The Mongols resented this gift, or tax, of hay. The lands allotted to him were actually looked after by his Manchu relatives. The *toslokchi*, on the other hand, understood little Chinese, had little to do with foreigners, but had allegedly some ties to the Mongolian People's Republic.

These two, dichotomized in terms of responsibility and viewpoint, exemplify the point I made earlier, that the more power a man had in the banner, the less he had with outside powers, especially the Chinese. In the Ordos and the Ulan-chap symbols of this dichotomy varied, with language being an important marker. Another was the type of home the leader lived in. In three cases families administering the banner, who were thought of as especially solicitous for banner welfare, lived in yurts. Sometimes they even lived next to a closed "palace"

which had been built in the past by some relative.

Inner Mongolia in the period 1945-1950 was an area quarreled over by the Nationalists and the Communists. The Mongols were generally not committed to either side but, instead, were committed to Mongolian nationalism. This explains the frequency with which the Mongols changed allegiances in the civil war. I remember one man who when I first met him was affiliated with Ulanfu. Troubled by some of the latter's tactics, he turned to the Nationalists, only to return in time once more to the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Movement.

The Mongols sought three guarantees from the Chinese. One was the right to be represented as a unit in the central government rather than through provincial governors. Another was their right to speak Mongolian and the use of Mongolian as the primary language in their schools. The third was the right to retain banner lands and develop them for their own benefit. The Chinese Communists spoke to all three points while the Kuomintang did not take these aspirations seriously. The Chinese Communists have maintained the first two points, but as to the retention of Mongolian lands for Mongols, this seemingly was dropped during the Great Leap Forward and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The man in Inner Mongolia who best symbolized these Mongol goals was Prince Te.

Before my first trip to Kalgan and Peitzemiao I was quite ignorant about Mongolian issues. I did not become aware of the importance of Prince Te and his associates until Ulanfu suggested that I had learned of the Wang-yeh-miao meeting from some of them. My friendship with associates of Prince Te strengthened through the years. We decided to increase the understanding of Mongol affairs in the Western world. To this end, we organized a Friends of Mongolia Society. This fledgling organization metamorphosed into the Mongolia Society. Now the Mongolia Society has structure and substance while that earlier association had only the ideal. The Friends of Mongolia initiated the migration of several Mongol intellectuals to the United States. The ultimate success of this venture was due to the backing provided by established American scholars like Lattimore and Lessing.

It was with pleasant surprise and considerable puzzlement that I learned while in Ting-yüan-ying of the impending meeting of Mongols which was to take place there for the purpose of proclaiming an independent Mongolian government. This event which took place in the summer of 1948 was based, I think, on the belief that the civil war would weaken China, thus allowing the existence of an independent Mongolian government. Delegates from different Mongol areas came together but especially associates of Prince Te and those who had maintained connections with the Nationalists, perhaps only because they lived in regions controlled by the latter at that time. This independent Mongolian government was not sponsored by either the Nationalists or the Communists. Neither had sent an official delegate.

The formation of an independent Mongolian government was based upon several factors. As already stated, the Mongols hoped that a divided China would be unable to control them. Another was a somewhat natural result of dissolving ties between Mongols and Chinese Nationalists, but a reluctance to join the Communist side. Some of the most faithful apologists of the Nationalists could be observed at the meeting as they were in the process of changing allegiances from the now nearly defeated Nationalists to the soon-to-become dominant

Communists. A third factor was an effort to proclaim to the world that movements for Mongolian independence and autonomy were not simply projections of Soviet, Japanese, or Chinese Communist political maneuverings, but the expression of the wishes of the Mongolian people themselves. Some of the delegates hoped that should Ting-yüan-ying be overwhelmed by Chinese forces, they could first retreat into the Gobi and then make their way to the M.P.R. That is exactly what some of the delegates finally did. The M.P.R. did give most of these Mongols asylum, but there were some tragic exceptions. It must be remembered that the M.P.R. was soon to establish close ties with the Chinese People's Republic, even if these proved to be temporary. Finally, the meeting seemingly took place due to inertia. Men who had been trying to form Mongolian governments ever since 1945, but who had constantly been frustrated in this, went ahead and formed a government even though it dissolved before its functions could be exercised.

My trips to Mongolia were of course not only somber lessons in realpolitik. This was hardly the case. They did force me, however, to realize the importance of ethnicity and of inter-ethnic relations and their influence on intra-ethnic social organization, ideas developed by Lattimore in his *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (1951). One of the less somber memories which floats to mind is the crippling effect of riding a camel between thirty and forty miles a day. On that first camel ride the insides of my thighs were rubbed raw by the long strides of the camel. And then I remember the delightfully lonely sound of the long trumpets rising from a lamasery as one nears it at night; or the feeling of homesickness for Chinese things after a month on horseback in Mongol areas; or amusement with a British friend, a journalist, who overindulged in Mongolian summer cheese (a type of half-dried *irgen*, I believe) which almost did him in. Then there was the relief at recovering from severe sunstroke contracted while setting up a grain distribution center south of the Yellow River. Some wise guy suggested aspirins and whisky until my temperature rose to 104 degrees and a Chinese doctor finally cooled me off. Other memories: the flash of wolf or gazelle in front of vehicle or horse; yurts on the steppe or a lamasery nestled in the foothills; receiving a ceremonial scarf at Edsin Khorö, supposedly the tomb of Genghis Khan; long and earnest discussions with the Chinese who tried to understand the Mongol point of view. And most of all I remember with gratitude the open-handed acceptance of a Westerner by the Mongols, even though he could speak their language only haltingly.