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ADB - 19

Tingyuanying, Alashan Territory, Ninghsia
 September 25, 1948
 Mailed From Lanchow, Kansu
 September 30, 1948

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
 Institute of Current World Affairs
 522 Fifth Avenue
 New York 18, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Seventy miles West of Ninghsia City, in a small oasis just beyond the Ho Lan Mountains, lies the quaint walled town of Tingyuanying. This town, usually called Wangyehfu by the local inhabitants, rests on a high slope overlooking the steppes which stretch as far as the eye can see toward Outer Mongolia. To the Southwest, huge rolling sand dunes catch the rays of the sun and take on the appearance of a vast yellow sea. The vistas are bleak and treeless, but Tingyuanying itself nestles in the shade of a grove of tall trees. It is a compact friendly town with a mixed Chinese-Mongol population of about 7,000. This small oasis is the capital of the Alashan Special Banner of Mongols.

There is a romantic legend concerning the founding of Tingyuanying. Originally the Alashan Mongols lived in Sinkiang, from whence they moved to the vicinity of Lake Kokonor in Chinghai about 300 years ago. A little over 200 years ago, according to the legend, the Prince (Wang) of Alashan was returning from Peking to Kokonor with his new bride, a Manchu Princess. At that time, the Manchus followed a definite policy of linking peripheral principalities to the throne by marriage, and the Prince of Alashan had just married a beautiful young girl from the Imperial Household. When his entourage, on their return trip, reached the present site of Tingyuanying the Princess became sad and despondent at the sight of the bleak, arid plains of Mongolia. The Prince was so moved that he decided to go no farther. He moved his whole Banner North and built a Chinese walled town just to please his new bride.

There is also a less romantic explanation of the Northward move of the Alashan Mongols. They had been fighting on the side of the Manchus against the non-Chinese people in Sinkiang and against the Tibetans in Kokonor, and their move was probably a result of this fighting. It may have been motivated by a desire to live in a more peaceful region or by a desire to be nearer to the Manchu Throne with which the Alashan Banner was closely allied. The loyalty of the Alashan Mongols to the Chinese still continues, and at present the Alashan Special Banner maintains a cordial relationship with the Chinese Central Government which is in marked contrast to the unstable Central Government-Mongol relations in some other areas.

On the map Tingyuanying is a part of the Chinese province of Ninghsia. According to the Prince of Alashan this is merely because "Alashan's territory is adjacent to Ninghsia's territory". In actual fact, the jurisdiction of the Ninghsia Provincial Government does not extend West of the Ho Lan Mountains, and its 13 Hsien all are located in the narrow agricultural region East of the mountains. The major part of

the province to the West is divided between two autonomous Mongol units, the Ehsengol Special Banner (to the far West) and the Alashan Special Banner. These two autonomous units are directly under the jurisdiction of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission of the Central Government's Executive Yuan.

The Mongols in China Proper are organized into approximately 130 Banners, each traditionally ruled by an hereditary Prince. In normal times most of the Banners are grouped into 13 Leagues, each of which is under a chief (called Meng Chiang in most cases) elected by the Banners themselves but formally appointed by the Chinese Central Government. Four of the Banners, however, are called Special Banners and independently have a status equal to that of the Leagues. Alashan is one of these Special Banners. (See the attached map. This map shows the geographical distribution of Mongol units but does not indicate numerical strength. Some of the largest League areas - particularly in Sinkiang and Chinghai where the Leagues and Banners are numerous but small - have a sparse Mongol population. In many of the regions shown as Mongol areas, furthermore, the Mongols are a minority group within the total population.)

Although all Leagues and Special Banners are normally directly under the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission (this organizational set-up is confused by recent developments which I will describe shortly), in many areas, particularly where Mongols are intermixed with other racial groups, a Mongol political organization in the past has been merely a sort of sub-government under the provincial administration of the region. In Ninghsia, however, the Ho Lan Mountains form a well-defined ethnic and political boundary, and the Alashan Banner Government with its seat at Tingyuanying not only handles the affairs of the 120,000 Mongols within its region but also has definite territorial jurisdiction over a very large area. (There is a definite boundary between Alashan Territory and Ninghsia Proper which follows the crest of the mountains. To cite one specific example of the type of territorial jurisdiction which Alashan possesses, no non-Mongols are allowed to own any land in Tingyuanying - and this includes Han Chinese who may rent land but cannot own it.) Alashan Territory covers almost one-half of Ninghsia Province and is much larger than the territory administered by the Ninghsia Provincial Government. (Similarly, the Ehsengol Special Banner has territorial jurisdiction over its area in the West.)

Administratively, also, the Alashan Banner has a greater degree of autonomy than many other Mongol groups. Many Mongol regions elsewhere are included in the general provincial administrative system and are broken down into conventional Chinese administrative divisions, such as Hsien. This is not true in Alashan. Although the Chinese influence upon the Banner Government has been strong, local administration is entirely Mongol in its forms. The Banner's territory is divided into 36 Baga, each of which is ruled by a Pien Kuan appointed by the Prince. A number of Eastern Baga are grouped together into three larger units, each of which is under a Tsung Kuan, also appointed by the Prince. The whole administration is highly centralized. There is no popular assembly, and all orders and instructions come from the Banner Government where power is concentrated in the hands of the Prince, who is assisted by

three Hsiehli and two Tsangching (the equivalent of counsellors and special secretaries), four Ch'ü Chang (department heads), and various other functionaries.

The present Prince of Alashan, named Ta (Wang), is a genial connoisseur of horses, amateur photographer, and hunter. He is 44 years old and took over the Prince's duties after his father's death in 1931. During his youth he spent eight years in Peking, studying with private tutors, and he appears to be an enlightened and progressive person. He has become so Chinese, though, that he cannot even speak his own native Mongol language (although he understands some). This fact does not seem to have diminished his popularity among the Alashan Mongols, however, and his territory is one of the most stable, peaceful regions in China.

Because of its autonomous status the Alashan Special Banner is sometimes called the Kingdom of Alashan, but it is an integral part of China. In political matters it is faithful in following the instructions of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission which maintains a representative in Tingyuanying. The Prince, also, is a member of the Executive Yuan of the Central Government and of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang. In military matters Alashan comes under General Chang Chih-chung's Northwest Headquarters in Lanchow. The Prince, who is a two-star general in the Chinese Army, has the title of Area Defense Commander, and he has under his command about 1000 Mongol soldiers in three battalions of well-trained Peace Preservation Corps troops, all of them cavalymen mounted on stocky Mongolian ponies. These troops are financially supported by the Central Government. Perhaps because of its strong ties with the Central Government and its Chinese orientation the Alashan Special Banner maintains no connections with other Mongol groups.

Relations between the Alashan Banner Government and the Ninghsia Provincial Government are more difficult to define and are somewhat touchy and delicate. Prince Ta describes the relationship as one of "personal friendship" between himself and the Ninghsia Governor based upon a friendship formed between their fathers, T'a Wang and Ma Fushiang. There are many factors, however, which make the relationship more complicated than this statement would seem to indicate. Ninghsia's Governor, General Ma Hung-kui, maintains a battalion of about 500 provincial troops on the outskirts of Tingyuanying "as protection against bandits", and this garrison force takes conscriptees from the Chinese in Alashan (approximately 5000 Chinese live in Alashan, almost all of them in the environs of the Tingyuanying city wall) The Prince of Alashan is a member - "as a private citizen" - of the nine-member Ninghsia Provincial Commission, the highest-ranking provincial organ. Alashan Territory depends for almost all of its grain requirements on imports from other areas, particularly Ninghsia, and there is resentment in Alashan because "General Ma's tight control of grain makes it difficult to obtain needed supplies". General Ma, on the other hand, claims that China's Mongols are gradually turning Communist or are drifting toward a close allegiance to Outer Mongolia, and he complains that the "Central Government won't allow the situation to be handled properly".

There are hints on both sides of the Ho Lan Mountains that General Ma Hung-kui would like to exercise direct control over the Mongol regions of Ninghsia and is dissuaded from taking steps to establish such control only by the fact that the Central Government opposes such action and gives its moral support to the Alashan Special Banner.

During the Sino-Japanese War, however, General Ma did establish direct control in the West of Ninghsia temporarily. At that time the loyalty of all Mongols in China was suspect, because the Japanese had set up a puppet Mongol regime in North China. Further cause for suspicion regarding Alashan was the fact that the notorious Japanese General Doihara had visited Ta Wang. On the basis of this suspicion, Ma Hung-kui's troops crossed the mountains in 1938 and took the Alashan capital after a few days of fighting. Ta Wang was sent to Lanchow where he was kept in honorable detention under surveillance until 1944 (although no evidence of collaboration with the Japanese was uncovered). During that long period Ma Hung-kui's troops exercised local control from their camps outside the walls of Tingyuanying. One incident which took place at that time is well-remembered by the Alashan Mongols. New street numbers were issued in Tingyuanying, and at the bottom of each sign there appeared, in small Chinese characters, "Tingyuanying Hsien". These signs were systematically and rapidly removed by the local Mongols.

At present, however, despite these facts, relations between the Alashan Banner Government and the Ninghsia Provincial Government appear to be relatively stable and placid - although suspicion continues on both sides.

Within Alashan Territory life goes on calmly among the Mongol population of 120,000 sprinkled thinly throughout the steppes and deserts. The tremendous distances mean that actual governmental functions are minimal, and the average Mongol nomad lives an isolated, independent existence. As a rule, families do not congregate, but each family yurt is an independent unit which moves periodically from place to place within its Baga's territory to graze the family's sheep, camels, horses, and other animals.

The only real town within the whole region is Tingyuanying, and the few other permanent settlements are mainly scattered lamaseries. (Lamaism plays an important role in the lives of the Mongols of this region.)

The Government does not impinge very deeply upon the lives of these nomadic people. Education, for example, is almost non-existent - one reason being the fact that Mongols consider education "bothersome", according to members of the Banner Government. There are no secular schools in the whole Territory except at Tingyuanying where the Banner Government maintains two primary (and one middle) schools. Despite the minimal character of governmental functions, however, order and peace are maintained throughout this tremendous region - by the Banner troops and the few troops attached to each Baga Pien Kuan - and banditry and disorder are said to have been completely eliminated.

One reason why the Banner Government cannot even attempt to expand its functions and activities much more than is the case at present is its financial weakness. The only outside financial aid which it receives

is the Central Government's support of the Banner's troops and the fees received, also from the Central Government, for exploitation of the salt lakes in the region. Its local sources of revenue are limited and consist mainly of taxes on animals and on the transport of traded commodities.

General economic conditions among the Alashan Mongols are probably better, however, than in any other Mongol region in China, for the Alashan Banner, unlike most other Banners and Leagues, has not been directly touched by war or civil strife. As a consequence, relative prosperity prevails. Even in Alashan Territory, however, economic conditions are not good compared with better days in past years. There is no starvation, but there are some Alashan Mongols who are short of food. During the past two years, furthermore, a few beggars have appeared among the Alashan Mongols, for the first time within the memory of local people.

The main cause of the existing economic hardship is drought. The economy of the nomadic population might be called a Grass Economy, and the livelihood of the people is entirely dependent upon the vagaries of the weather. During the past two years the weather has not been kind. There has been a severe drought, and many animals have died.

Another contributing cause is the decline of trade with the rest of China, for although the Alashan deserts and steppes are remote the economy of the nomadic Mongols there is partially commercialized. The main Mongol exports are sheep and camel wool, leather, and other animal products. In addition, salt (from the numerous salt lakes) and soda are normally exported in considerable quantities to places throughout Northwest China, and coal and wood from the Ho Lan Mountains are sent to Ninghsia city. These export products are transported by camel caravans and carts to Paotow, to Lanchow, to Tingyuanying and Ninghsia City, and to many other trading centers - the most important single one being Paotow. (The only motor road now maintained in the Territory is a dirt trail from Tingyuanying to Ninghsia City, and it is periodically impassable; I had to make the trip by horseback over the mountains. The former direct Suiyuan to Sinkiang motor road, which skirts the border of Outer Mongolia, has not been used in recent years. Trade at present, therefore, is carried almost entirely by camels over trails leading from water hole to water hole.) Trade continues, but like almost all trade in China its scale has diminished during the past decade of war and disorder.

The northern border of Alashan Territory touches Outer Mongolia for many miles. This border is completely closed to all intercourse. Despite the ominous claims of Ma Hung-kui, however, there does not appear to be any strong attraction exerted from Outer Mongolia in this region. "All Inner Mongolians are afraid of Outer Mongolia", says Ta Wang, and although developments in some other Mongol areas do not support this statement, in Alashan there apparently is almost no sentiment pro-Outer Mongolia of pro-Chinese Communists. Furthermore, although there are a few emigre families from Outer Mongolia in Alashan there has not been any recent evidence of underground activity.

The border is carefully patrolled on both sides (by "many" troops in Outer Mongolia and by one of Ta Wang's three battalions of cavalry), but for the present at least there is no friction.

Alashan's relations with its northern neighbor and its experience with Communism have not always been so placid as at present. In 1926-1928, the Chinese "Christian General", Feng Yu-hsiang, (during his period of collaboration with the Soviet Union) used a Ninghsia City-Tingyuanying-Urga (Outer Mongolia's capital, now called Ulan Bator) route for bringing supplies from the Soviet Union. A sizeable supply line of trucks was operated over a steppe and desert route where no real motor road existed, and during that period agents and troops sent by Feng forcibly occupied Tingyuanying and exercised direct control over it for a few months. A few years thereafter, in 1932, a small but well-organized Communist underground carried out a coup d'etat in Tingyuanying, imprisoned the local officials, and held the city for several days. The Mongols throughout the Banner Territory rose in indignation, however, and converged upon the city, besieged it, and after almost a week of fighting killed or captured the Communist leaders and restored their own Government. Two years later, in 1934, a Communist agent from Outer Mongolia was arrested at the border as he was making his way toward Tingyuanying. Most recently, in the Winter of 1942-1943, a small Communist cell was discovered in Tingyuanying plotting against the Banner Government. These past events make Ta Wang and his Banner Government watchful and somewhat uneasy, but at present Alashan Territory remains one of the most stable, prosperous, and peaceful of all Mongol regions.

By contrast with the fortunate Alashan Mongols, a large percentage of the Mongols in China have been ravaged by war and are still involved in confused civil strife and political disorder. This is particularly true in the regions of Manchuria and Inner Mongolia where China's Mongols are most heavily concentrated, namely Western Manchuria and the provinces of Jehol and Chahar, and parts of the province of Suiyuan. (The Mongols in Sinkiang and Chinghai are numerically unimportant in spite of the large number of groups and their wide distribution.)

When the Japanese occupied North China in 1937, they set up a puppet Mongol state called Meng-Chiang. In establishing this theoretically independent Mongol government they obtained the cooperation of Teh Wang (Prince Teh), the powerful leader of the Silingol League in North Chahar. Prince Teh was made head of Meng-Chiang, and for the next eight years many of the proud Mongols of North China (they still remember nostalgically the days of Genghis Khan - whose artifacts, incidentally, are now kept by the Chinese in a repository in non-Mongol territory, in Kansu) experienced a nominal autonomy which the Chinese had not been willing to grant them in that region.

In the late Summer of 1945, when Russian troops converged upon Kalgan (in Chahar) in a four-pronged drive against the Japanese, Meng-Chiang shared the fate which the end of the war brought to all of Japan's puppet regimes. Prince Teh first sought refuge in Peiping,

and then later conferred with Chiang K'ai-shek in Nanking, and managed to avoid collaborationist charges. At present he is living in retirement in Peiping and refuses to cooperate with the Chinese Central Government until he receives pledges of Inner Mongolian autonomy which satisfy his demands.

With the Russians in 1945 came troops representing the estimated one to one and a half million Mongols in the Soviet satellite Mongolian People's Republic (Outer Mongolia) and the Soviet Buriat Mongol Republic (East of Lake Baikal). These Mongol troops were well-fed, -trained, and -equipped and favorably impressed many of the Mongols in Inner Mongolia.

As a consequence, some of the former Meng-Chiang leaders set up an Inner Mongolian Provisional Government with Russian and Outer Mongolian encouragement. When Russian troops were withdrawn from Kalgan they left this new political organization behind them and took with them an estimated "several thousand" Mongols, including 200 to 300 educated young men (one of them was Prince Teh's son) to the Soviet Union for training.

When the Russians moved out of Kalgan the Chinese Communists moved in. The Inner Mongolian Provisional Government was reorganized into the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Association under the tutelage of a man named Yun Tse, a Moscow-trained Mongol who is the main Chinese Communist agent among North China's Mongols. The Mongols who would not cooperate under the new Communist auspices were purged, and the Autonomous Association gradually increased its following among Chahar and Suiyuan Mongols on the basis of a program of local autonomy and the abolition of the special rights and hereditary privileges of all Mongol Princes.

These developments, however, did not directly affect the region where the majority of all Mongols are concentrated, namely Western Manchuria and the adjacent province of Jehol. At the end of the Sino-Japanese War Mongol groups in this region (which is estimated to have a combined Mongol population of almost two millions) sent out three feelers: one to the Chinese Central Government, one to the Outer Mongolians, and one to the Chinese Communists. The Central Government was not sympathetic to their demands for an autonomous regime and didn't let their delegates come beyond Peiping. The Outer Mongolians treated their delegates well but promised no help, perhaps because they were afraid of compromising their own newly-recognized (1945) independence. The Chinese Communists responded most warmly and were willing to offer help.

In April, 1946, Yun Tse went to Chengt'eh, capital of Jehol, and negotiated with Mongol representatives there. Soon thereafter, an autonomous Mongol regime was set up at Wang Yeh Miao, about 200 miles West of Harbin in Manchuria.

In the Fall of 1946, General Fu Tso-yi reoccupied Kalgan for the Central Government and drove the Communists out of Suiyuan and Chahar. Yun Tse and the Mongol leaders of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Association fled from Kalgan to Wang Yeh Miao, and in

early 1947 the Inner Mongolian and Manchurian autonomy movements merged to form the Mongol Autonomous Government with Wang Yeh Miao as its capital and Yun Tse as President. This new Government began to cooperate actively with the Chinese Communist forces in Manchuria, and its cavalry carried out numerous raids against territory controlled by the Central Government. Some of the raids have harmed Mongol groups in North Chahar and Suiyuan, and it is reported that some Mongols in those regions have developed a sort of counter-revolutionary attitude toward the Government set up in Manchuria. This Mongol Government continues to function, however, and it is said to receive Russian support in the form of arms and ammunition in return for horses, sheep, and silver, although these reports obviously cannot be definitely verified. Other reports, also unconfirmed, claim that the Wang Yeh Miao regime is having a difficult time, and that Yun Tse's popularity recently has waned considerably among many Mongols.

The Mongol situation in Manchuria is further complicated by reports that in the far North another semi-independent regime has been set up under the leadership of a man named Irkimbata. This regime is said to print its own money and to maintain separate relations with both Wang Yeh Miao and Ulan Bator.

Not all of China's Mongols have been involved in these complicated autonomy movements, however. The present situation of the Ninghsia Mongols has already been described. The Chinghai Mongols are an extremely small group far removed from the major conflict areas in China and under the strict control of General Ma Pu-fang's Chinghai administration. The Sinkiang Mongols are also a small group. Although a few of them have been enlisted in the army of the autonomous Ili Government in Northwest Sinkiang, there is no Mongol autonomy movement in the province, and many of the Mongols there have remained loyal to the Central Government.

In Suiyuan Province, on the edge of the disturbed Civil War regions of North China, there is a group of Banners which remained loyal to the Chinese Central Government throughout the Sino-Japanese War and set up headquarters at Djassek in the Ordos Desert in South Suiyuan instead of joining Teh Wang and his puppet government. These Mongols, who total about 250,000, are now organized as the Mongolian Self-Government Political Committee, with headquarters at Kung Miao, about 40 miles South of Paotow. Through this organization they deal jointly with the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission instead of dealing with the Commission individually. The Kung Miao Committee is strongly anti-Communist, but it is in favor of a united autonomous Mongol governmental organ. The Central Government has not agreed on this principle, for it favors separate autonomous Mongol administrations in various regions. Some friction with the Central Government also takes place due to an unsolved controversy over arms. These Mongols want the Central Government to provide them with arms for self-defense purposes, particularly against Communist raids (most of their good arms were taken away from them by the Russians in 1945-1946), but so far the arms have not been forthcoming. These problems are reported to have

discouraged some of the Mongols in this region, and a few, particularly the younger ones, are said to be leaning more and more toward the Chinese Communists or the Mongol autonomous movements as a result. In the South of the Ordos Desert (Ikh Chao area), particularly, this discouragement, combined with a severe famine and starvation, has undoubtedly abetted the partially successful Communist efforts at proselytizing among the Mongols there.

These facts add up to a situation which, like the general situation in China, defies generalization. If one generalization is possible, however, it is that the Mongols in China want some form of real cultural and political autonomy. In Alashan Territory, which is geographically removed from the Civil War zones and where autonomy exists to a fairly high degree, peace, stability, and loyalty to the Central Government prevail. In many other areas where effective autonomy has never been granted the Mongols, taking advantage of the prevailing chaos and encouraged by other groups such as the Chinese Communists, the Russians, and the Outer Mongolians, have merged their own struggle for autonomy with the already complicated issues which make up the current military and political conflicts in present-day China.

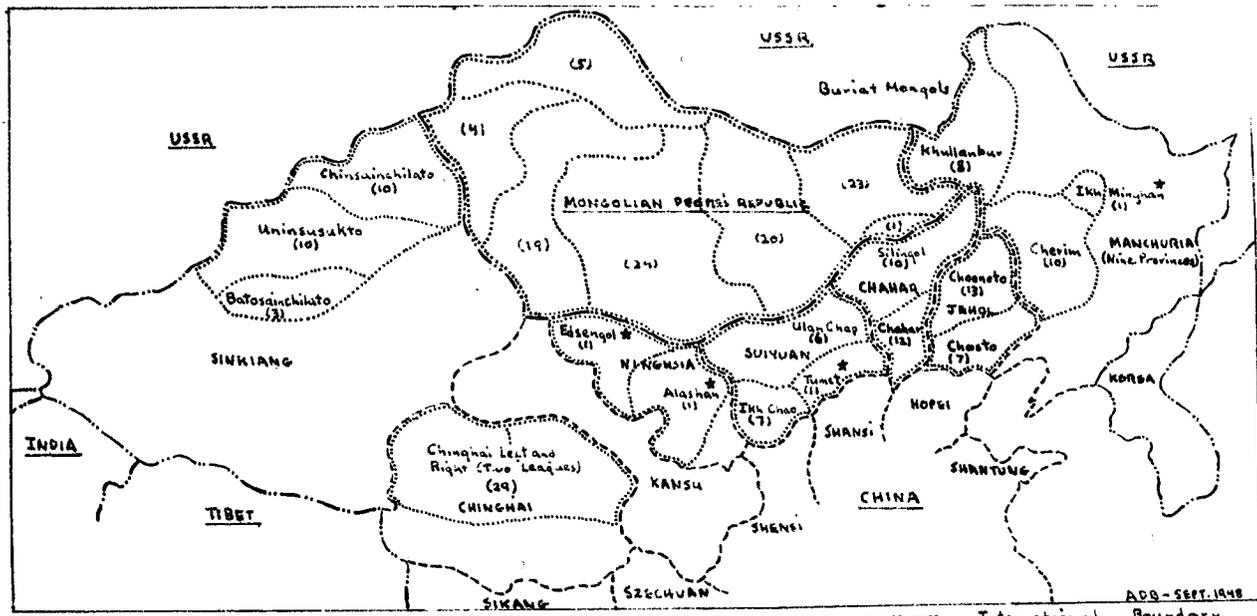
Sincerely yours,

Doak Barnett

Doak Barnett,

Received New York 10/11/48.

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..... Major Mongol Group - - - - Chinese Provincial Boundary - · - · - International Boundary

* Indicates Special Banner. All other Mongol Groups (small print names) are Leagues, and the number of Banners in the League is indicated (in brackets).

Chinese Province names are indicated by capital letters (not underlined). All national titles are underlined.

The information for this map was obtained from the Alashan Special Banner Government at Tingyuaning, Ninghsia.