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Dear Mr. Rogers:

Lanchow, the largest (204,000 population) and most strategic city in Northwest China, is the official capital of Kansu Province and the unofficial capital of the whole Northwest. Here Governor Kuo Chi-ch'iao runs his provincial administration governing a population of 7,250,000 scattered all along the wierdly-shaped Kansu corridor from the border of Sinkiang to the border of Shensi. Here also General Chang Chih-chung maintains his Northwest Headquarters (Northwest Political and Military Authority) which is the ultimate authority in the four provinces of Kansu, Sinkiang, Chinghai, and Ninghsia. General Chang is an urbane, intelligent (one might say shrewd), and conciliatory leader who has a rare reputation in many quarters in China for his middle-of-the-road politics. He has done much of the Central Government's negotiating with the Chinese Communists, and although at present he holds one of the highest political posts under the Central Government he apparently is still respected by the Communists - which may be one factor helping to explain the fact that the four Northwest provinces under his authority have been rarely molested by the Communists.

Although General Chang Chih-chung is not plagued at present by Communists attacks or pressure, however, he has his share of problems. The most critical of these are the unsettled Ili Revolt and Peitashan Incident in Sinkiang ("no prospect of a solution is in sight", he told me). In addition, he is also confronted with certain problems which are endemic to Northwest China. One of these is the problem of relations between the Chinese Muslims and the Han Chinese. Officially, General Chang, who is a cautious man, asserts that these relations present "no problem". In actual fact, however, the relations between the Muslims and the Chinese have constituted a serious problem for centuries. Although relations between the two groups are currently relatively amiable, the existence of a Chinese Muslim belt through Ninghsia, Kansu, and Chinghai is one of the most vital political facts of life in the region. It is a fact which definitely does present problems to the Chinese Central Government and its representatives, for the Muslims are politically the most aggressive and militant group in the region, and they are dominant in two of the four provinces under General Chang's authority. The regimes which they maintain in these two provinces, Chinghai and Ninghsia, are

authoritarian local governments with many unique features. They are, in fact, semi-autonomous states whose relations with the Central Government and Chang's Northwest Headquarters can be described more accurately as political alliance than as complete political integration.

The Chinese Muslims are an extremely interesting group from an ethnic point of view. They are a racial mixture combining Chinese blood with that of various Muslim groups which migrated to China centuries ago from the West, from various parts of the region which lies between Arabia and Afghanistan. Some of these Muslims are scattered over East and Southwest China; they are mainly the descendants of Arab traders who reached China by sea. Probably the major concentration, however, is in the Muslim belt in Northwest China, and these people trace their blood ties to groups which migrated to China via Central Asiatic routes.

Religiously speaking, the majority of the Muslims in the Northwest are "good Muslims". They are strict about following the religious taboos, such as the ban on pork. As a rule they do not drink or smoke, and they always wear their skull caps. Mosques are located wherever there are Muslim settlements, and festivals such as the New Year Fast are universally observed. Arabic is generally used in religious services and in ecclesiastical schools. And generally speaking, although they are not as sensitive or aggressive about their religion as Muslims in many parts of the world, the Chinese Muslims in the Northwest have not allowed their religion to be appreciably diluted, even though in most secular matters their cultural assimilation by the Chinese has been almost complete.

In appearance these people are clearly distinguishable from other Chinese. The men's skull caps and the women's hoods are identifying marks, of course, but their facial features are quite recognizable also. Their noses are larger and their eyes rounder than those of the typical Chinese, and the men wear luxuriant beards which are distinctive because of their bushy sideburns. Some of these Muslims have features and coloration which are so Occidental that they are startling in a remote Oriental setting.

Within the Northwest belt there are several different Muslim groups. The Salar are one group. They originally came sometime about the 12th Century from Samarkand in Central Asia (now in the Soviet Union) and settled in the region of the Yellow River bend near the present provincial border of Kansu and Chinghai. Another group is composed of the Tung Hsiang, or "East Country" Muslims, in Kansu. This group is somewhat of an ethnological curiosity, for they speak a language which is clearly Mongolian and probably, therefore, are of Mongol stock. The most important group, however, is the Muslim concentration in Hochow, a region in South Kansu which was once a single administrative unit but is now divided into several Hsien.

Hochow is often called the Mecca of Chinese Mohammedanism, for it is the home and homeland of Muslims who have spread throughout

Northwest China to become the most energetic, virile, and politically active group in the whole region. The Hochow Muslims trace their ancestry, at least partially, to Arab mercenaries who served under the Chinese T'ang Dynasty - and came overland to China sometime around the 8th Century.

During recent decades, until a few years ago, politics in Kansu were dominated by Hochow Muslims, and at present the leadership in the adjoining provinces of Chinghai and Kansu (both of which were formed on January 1, 1929, from parts of Kansu Province joined with adjacent border territory) is provided by Hochow Muslims who still retain close ties with their home district.

Strictly speaking, however, there is no one Muslim center within China, and although there are no well-defined ties with Mecca Chinese Muslim pilgrims are among those who make the long journey every year from all parts of the world to the Muslim Holy Land. Religious organization within China is largely on a regional basis, and in many places each mosque has autonomy under its own Ahung. (An Ahung is a priest - the equivalent of Mullahs elsewhere. In the Chinese Muslim belt of Northwest China Mullah is the title applied to student priests.) There are also several regional centers of religious importance, such as Sining in Chinghai, Chin Chi Hsien in Ninghsia, and Hochow in Kansu, where ranking leaders in the Muslim religious hierarchy are located.

Although it is not really a religious Mecca, however, Hochow is nonetheless a center which many Muslims all over Northwest China consider home and revisit periodically. In a sense, therefore, it is a unifying element which holds the group together.

The history of political relations between these Chinese Muslims and the Han Chinese has at times been bitter and violent. This was particularly true during the latter half of the 19th Century when numerous Muslim revolts against the Peking Government and its local representatives flared up throughout China. The revolts in the Northwest were important factors in helping to undermine the already weakened Ch'ing Dynasty.

In the light of this historical background, present relations between the Muslims and the Chinese can be described as relatively friendly and peaceful. On the village level there appears to be very little communalism or friction between the two groups. In political affairs, however, the normal (in other regions) relations between the Chinese and minorities is reversed. Instead of the Han Chinese being politically dominant over the minority, the Muslim minority is politically dominant over the Chinese - except in Kansu. In Kansu, the Muslims, who constitute less than nine percent of the total population, have been relegated in recent years to a position in keeping with their numerical importance, and at present in this economically and strategically important place a provincial regime under firm national supervision has completely replaced local Muslim minority rule. However,

in Chinghai, where the Muslims constitute 40 percent of the total population of 930,000 (the Han Chinese are 41 percent), and in Ninghsia, where the Muslims constitute only 25 percent of the population of 760,000 - excluding the Mongols in the province (the Chinese are 74 percent), political control is in the hands of Hochow Muslims. To be more specific, it is in the hands of two Hochow Muslim leaders - General Ma Pu-fang and General Ma Hung-kui.

Chinghai and Ninghsia are definitely not as desirable areas to control as Kansu is, from the point of view of ambitious leaders, but the Ma's (who incidentally do not maintain very close relations with each other even though they are related and both maintain family ties with Hochow) have had no alternative in view of the importance placed upon Kansu by the Central Government. In terms of territory, the major portions of both Chinghai and Ninghsia are pastoral and are inhabited by minorities who are neither Han nor Muslim. In Chinghai the western part of the province and the southern part are occupied mainly by Tibetans, with a scattering of other minorities, and the agricultural Muslims and Chinese are concentrated in the valleys of the Sining and Yellow Rivers in the North and East. In Ninghsia, most of the province, West of the Ho Lan Mountains (sometimes called the Alashan Mountains), is the territory of two autonomous Special Banners of Mongols directly under the Central Government rather than the provincial administration, and the Muslims and Chinese are concentrated in a small area of 13 Hsien in the East and Southeast of the province in the valley of the Yellow River. These two small areas of intensely-cultivated, irrigated, agricultural land are the centers of power of the Generals Ma.

The regimes in Chinghai and Ninghsia control relatively small numbers of people, and neither would be of great importance under normal circumstances. The authoritarianism, militarism, and autonomy in both of these two provinces, however, make them of more importance and interest politically than their population would warrant. There are a good many points of dissimilarity between the two places, though, and to be accurately described they should be described individually.

Ma Pu-fang, a trim, soldierly man with a very Muslim-looking beard, is the third member of a local family dynasty which has controlled Chinghai for the past two decades. His father, Ma Ch'i, became provincial chief in 1929, about a year after Chinghai was made into a province. Ma Ch'i was succeeded by his brother, Ma Ling, and then in 1938 Ma Pu-fang inherited the governorship from his uncle.

Ma Pu-fang's provincial regime is one of the most efficient in China, and one of the most energetic. While much of the rest of China is bogged down, almost inevitably, by Civil War and discouragement, Chinghai is attempting to carry out small-scale but nonetheless ambitious development and reconstruction schemes on its own initiative.

Three things have almost become trade marks of the authoritarian Muslim government in Chinghai: worn fly swatters, green tree saplings, and stocky horses.

The streets of Sining, the provincial capital, present the curious spectacle of venerable, bearded, muslim gentlemen vying with small boys in a never-ending battle with fly-swatters against the common house fly. As part of its sanitation program, the Provincial Government periodically announces daily quotas of dead flies which must be handed into the authorities by everybody, regardless of age, sex, or occupation. As a consequence, the streets of the city are among the cleanest and most fly-less streets in China. There is even a black market for dead flies, the current quotation being CNY\$50,000 a hundred.

The smooth, crushed-rock highways in Chinghai all are lined with green willow and poplar saplings. An intensive program of tree-planting and reforestation has, in fact, made the valleys of East Chinghai among the most verdant agricultural valleys in China. Young trees dot the neat farms, cluster in the stream beds, and climb upward on the surrounding hills. Chinghai doesn't have an Arbor Day; it has an Arbor Fortnight. For two weeks each Spring, everyone in the province goes into the countryside and plants trees. During the past ten years, 61 million trees have been planted, an average of over six trees per year per man, woman, and child in the province.

"Ma", which means "horse" in Chinese, is the most prevalent surname among the Chinese Muslims, and in Chinghai it is appropriate. The Chinghai horses - and Chinghai cavalrymen- are famous in China, and at present General Ma Pu-fang's troops are among the best soldiers in the country. The bivouacs and camps of these troops are spotless, and the soldiers themselves are well-dressed and disciplined. One sees these troops throughout the eastern districts of the province, and they help to make the general atmosphere a martial one.

Other interesting features characterize the Chinghai administration.

Irrigation projects have been pushed on a scale which is impressive when one considers the relatively small amount of cultivable land available (most of which is used and produces the food needs of the population plus a small surplus). Within the past year alone, five new canals irrigating about 7,000 acres have been completed.

Hospitals and medical facilities are gradually being introduced. Before Ma Pu-fang became Governor, Chinghai did not have a single modern hospital or health center to serve a population badly infected by syphilis, trachoma, and many other diseases. Now, although medical facilities are still pitifully inadequate, the Provincial Health Bureau has ten qualified modern doctors, runs a modern 100-bed hospital, and maintains seven health stations.

Industrialization is a completely new idea in Chinghai. During the Sino-Japanese War, however, General Ma built small factories which included in their operations wool washing, match making, leather tanning, metal working, pottery making, and chemical manufacture. These plants did not amount to a great deal, but they were a start. Some of the plants have been forced to close down or reduce the scale

of their operations since the end of the war, but General Ma is now soliciting outside technical assistance (he has the capital) to get the ball rolling again. He is also trying to install a sewage system in Sining, and if he is successful he will have the only sewage system in Northwest China.

Perhaps the most impressive development, however, has been in the field of education. The Provincial Government has set up many new educational facilities and has greatly reduced illiteracy. The 1057 primary schools and 13 middle schools in Chinghai now have an enrollment of approximately 94,000 primary school students and 4,500 middle school students, all of whom are provided with free school uniforms as well as books and other needed equipment. In Sining, roughly one-third of the total population goes to school. As yet there is no institution of higher learning in the province, but between 200 and 300 students are subsidized by the Provincial Government in colleges and universities elsewhere.

The most unique educational project is a special system of schools called the Kunlun Schools. These schools include every level from kindergarten through middle school. Their 7,000 students are provided with all their needs, including food and clothing, free. Theoretically, it is a private school system supported financially by the local Muslim Educational Promotion Committee, but actually the schools receive strong moral and financial support from the Governor. The student body is 87 percent Muslim, and the main objective of the schools, which teach Arabic as a required course for Muslims in the primary classes, is "to raise the standard of Muslim education". In a sense, the Kunlun Schools are producing an educated Muslim elite under the aegis of a strongly Muslim Governor (who is said to be influenced to a considerable degree by a religiously devout wife). They are also, however, providing an excellent education for the 7,000 children who are selected as students.

Ma Pu-fang's whole Government has a strong Muslim flavor, and by far the majority of important posts are filled by Hachow Muslims, many of them named Ma (some relatives, and some not).

The Government appears to be supporting itself to a large extent by a trade and industrial monopoly rather than by very high taxes. During the first half of this year the provincial expenditures amounted to 600 billion CNC dollars of this only 50 billion was received in taxes and 120 billion in Central Government subsidies, according to published figures, and the rest came from "loans" extended by the Huang Chung Industrial Company and the Chinghai Commercial Bank, established or reorganized in 1946 and 1947 respectively. The Huang Chung Co. theoretically is privately-owned, but actually it is a semi-governmental organ controlled by Governor Ma and a key group of supporters. It makes its profit by exporting wools, hides, and furs (obtained principally from the Tibetan and Mongol regions of the province) and importing tea, cloth, and other manufactured articles.

Land taxes, as well as most other taxes, do not seem to be oppressively heavy in Chinghai, and the farmers (the majority of whom are owner-cultivators who till farms of reasonable size - for China) appear to be quite well off.

The price for these constructive policies and developments, however, is a stern authoritarianism which leaves very little room for personal freedom. In addition, conscription imposes a heavy burden on the people. (Although in regard to conscription a system of "a horse for a man" is sometimes followed to relieve the burden on small families. Under this system, small families are allowed to give a horse instead of a son to fill their conscription quota.)

The penalties for disobeying provincial orders or bucking the regime are severe. All important political decisions, furthermore, are made by one man, General Ma Pu-fang himself, and the impetus for change and progress is entirely from above rather than from below.

Nonetheless, General Ma seems to enjoy a considerable amount of popular support, because of the visible improvements which his regime has made. Many of the usual marks of an authoritarian regime, such as constant police registration and the use of travel passes, are relatively unobtrusive, even though they are present. It is interesting, also, that one does not hear accusations of graft or personal corruption levelled against Ma Pu-fang.

The Chinghai Provincial Government, because of its excellent cavalry, is the strongest local regime in Northwest China. During the past few years, however, despite its real autonomy it has been working militarily in close alliance with the Central Government. This is partly because of a virulent dislike and fear of Communism and partly because Ma is entirely dependent upon the Central Government for military supplies. Ma Pu-fang has provided a large percentage of his estimated 70,000 to 80,000 cavalry and infantry troops to the Central Government for defense against the Communists and for border defense. These have included the 82nd Division, 8th Cavalry Brigade, 30th Mixed Brigade, and 5th Independent Cavalry Regiment sent to Kansu and the 6th and 7th Cavalry Brigades sent to Sinkiang. Although these Chinghai troops are usually conscripted on a lifetime basis, they receive excellent training and treatment, and their morale is high. Their commander, who is the Governor's son, brilliant, 28-year-old General Ma Chi-yuan, is worshipped with something approaching pure adoration by the Muslims in Chinghai.

The Chinghai units stationed in Lung Tung, or East Kansu, have really been the main defense for the whole Northwest against the Communists, for other Central Government forces in the region are limited. And although the Communists have not made any really important attacks on the Northwest, Ma Chi-yuan's victory over them at Pingliang this past Summer when they were moving from South to North Shensi was one of the most important (and one of the few) Nationalist military successes of the year. Chinghai itself is completely free of Communists, and has not been bothered with them since they were given a drubbing in East Chinghai on their celebrated Long March from East China to Shensi over a decade ago.

Ma Hung-kui, a 240-pound, roly-poly man of 56 who looks more Chinese than Muslim, is also the heir to a family tradition of local rule which has dynastic characteristics. His father, Ma Fu-hsiang, was a military leader in the Northwest under both the Ch'ing Dynasty and the early Chinese Republic. During part of his career he was military commander in the area which is now Ninghsia Province but at that time was a part of Kansu. The first two governors of Ninghsia, immediately after it was established as a province, were not members of the family, but the third was Ma Feng-ping, the older brother of the present Governor. Ma Hung-kui was next in the line of succession.

The Ninghsia Provincial Government is less thoroughly Muslim than the administration in Chinghai, however, and Ma Hung-kui has the reputation of treating Muslims and Han Chinese without discrimination. It is nonetheless riddled with relatives of the Governor and other Ma's. The Secretary-General is a Muslim named Ma (not a close relative), two of the four principal commanders of the Provincial Peace Preservation Corps are relatives of the Governor (Ma Ch'uan-chung and Ma Ni-chung), and the two principal military commanders of the regular army troops under Ma Hung-kui are his sons. His first son, Ma Tung-hou, is head of the 10th Cavalry Brigade and leader of all the Governor's cavalry. His second son, Ma Tung-ch'in, heads the 18th Infantry Division and is leader of all the Governor's infantry. Other posts of importance are also held by the Ma clan. The 81st Division (a unit in South Ninghsia which is the only important military organization in the province not composed of Ninghsia troops and not directly under the Governor's command) is under one of Ma Hung-kui's nephews, Ma Hsun-ch'in, and the Governor's 10th Provisional Infantry Brigade is commanded by a Hochow compatriot, Ma Yin-ts'ai. The tentacles of the Hochow Ma clan reach throughout the regime, particularly in the military sphere, therefore, even though the regime for various reasons seems to be less consciously Muslim than the one in Chinghai.

Many features of the Chinghai provincial administration are common to Ninghsia, but there are also important differences between the two places. The differences might be summed up in an oversimplified way as follows: in Ninghsia the good is not quite as good and the bad is considerably worse than in Chinghai. In both Chinghai and Ninghsia the regimes are strict and authoritarian, but the emphasis (and overall impression upon an outsider such as myself) in Chinghai is upon reconstruction, while in Ninghsia it is upon law, order, and control.

In Ninghsia, as in Chinghai, there is efficiency, but it is combined with frequent ruthlessness. There is also a relative absence of corruption in the regime, but people slyly intimate that it is because "corruption is monopolized by one man", and Ma Hung-kui's reputation is not nearly so spotless in the public mind as Ma Pu-fang's seems to be. Ninghsia's extensive tree-planting and reforestation is also impressive, but the 40 million trees planted miss the Chinghai mark, and the general program in Ninghsia is considered to be not quite as good as in Chinghai. The 467 primary schools and 14 middle schools in Ninghsia (with an enrollment of 68,000 and 1,900 respectively) have reduced illiteracy, but the schools do not have a reputation for quality, and the educational enthusiasm evident in Chinghai is lacking in Ninghsia. Ma

Hung-kui has a monopoly commercial and industrial company (the recently-established Fu Ning Co., which is theoretically a joint private-government organization but is very similar in its function to the Huang Chung Co. in Chinghai), but general taxes, including the land tax, in Ninghsia seem to be much more burdensome upon the population than in Chinghai. The main highways in Ninghsia are reasonably good and are an accomplishment of considerable importance, for no roads existed in the region until a few years ago, but these highways are not as good as the ones in Chinghai. A hospital has been established in Ninghsia City, but it has a bad reputation, and even the government officials won't use it.

In short, the development and reconstruction activities of Ma Hung-kui's Government follow the same lines as in Chinghai but without the same degree of emphasis and without the same success. Furthermore, the methods used by Ma Hung-kui seem to be completely arbitrary, and it is obvious to anyone who talks with common people in the cities and in the country that these methods are found highly objectionable by a great many people. One example will indicate the type of methods which are used.

Within the past year and a half every city and large town in Ninghsia has undergone a complete face-lifting - with bricks. A new facade of grey brick (the largest producers of which are factories owned by relatives of the Governor) has been constructed on the front of every single building in these towns. As a result, the streets of the towns probably are among the most uniform and neat in appearance of any small town streets in China. They are also, however, among the most drab streets in China, despite considerable ingenuity in brick designing. This complete surface transformation of the urban centers in the province has been accomplished with relative ease, from the Government's point of view. Ma Hung-kui simply issued a series of orders stating that by such-and-such a date all occupants of buildings in such-and-such a district would complete the construction of brick fronts to their buildings. The problem of financing this major operation was left up to the individual. Every house occupant had to "figure a way out". If he could think of no way, and the construction work could not be financed out of personal savings or by personal loans, the house occupant could apply for special one-year loans from the Provincial Government. But in the last analysis, the financing of this project was shifted entirely to the average citizen in a most arbitrary way without any consideration of ability to pay.

The authority backing up provincial orders is so great, and so absolute, that these orders have a magic effect - compared with the effect of governmental orders in some parts of China where the relation between the average citizen and his government is casual, to say the least. One thing people in Ninghsia are instructed to do, for example, is to keep the mud roads in front of their property smooth. This is a constant process, and in any street of the province at almost any time of the day one can see gowned businessmen squatting beside street urchins smoothing out the ruts with small spades.

Most of the public works projects carried out by the Government are accomplished by unpaid, forced labor. This is true to a certain extent in Chinghai as well, but in Ninghsia the gangs of laborers which one sees along the roads and elsewhere are a particularly bedraggled-looking group. Young men are almost completely lacking among the dirty, ragged civilian gangs, and old farmers, many of them with white beards, predominate. One also sees young men in uniform working in other labor gangs, however, for the provincial troops are employed as a labor force when they are not involved in training or other military duties.

As has been mentioned already, the main emphasis in Ma Hung-kui's regime is placed upon control, and Governor Ma's chief boasts are that "complete peace and order prevail" and that "there are no Communists in the province". Fear and hatred of Communism are fundamental in almost everything the Government does, and they appear to be real emotions and not just superficial rationalization for a predilection for authoritarianism, although the latter apparently exists also. The proximity of Ninghsia to Communist areas in Shensi may well be one of the most important factors explaining the overall difference in the character of the Ninghsia regime compared to that in Chinghai, which is more remote from Communist regions. The elaborate system of governmental control and military mobilization in Ninghsia affect virtually all facets of the life of the people, and both Communist infiltration and desertion to the Communists are almost impossible.

These are some of the specific techniques of control and mobilization employed in Ninghsia, by a Governor who asserts feelingly that what contemporary China needs above all else is "strict law".

Almost all young men are drafted on a "lifetime basis" (that is, for the period of their military usefulness) into military service. Those best qualified are placed in regular army units, including the 18th Division, 10th Cavalry Brigade, 10th Provisional Infantry Brigade, and the Independent Artillery Regiment, all of which are nominally a part of the National Army but actually are provincial troops. The rest are mobilized as Provincial Peace Preservation Corps troops. All of these soldiers get rigorous training, including strenuous calisthenics and gymnastics. It is estimated that at present perhaps 100,000 men belong to the regulars and the four main Peace Preservation Corps units; this is roughly one out of every seven persons in the province, and is a much larger percentage of the male population. All other able-bodied men, old and young, are enlisted in the Self-Defense Corps (the theoretical age limits for which are 18 to 45 in Ninghsia). The Government estimates that these militiamen now number 120,000. They receive a minimum of training (including literacy instruction if they need it), and are used by the Government for local guards (every road bridge in the

province is guarded by them) and as labor gangs (without remuneration). The penalty for military desertion in Ninghsia could hardly be more severe; the penalty is death for the deserter, and it is said that if the deserter is not found his family must provide three male substitutes to take his place (or a set monetary equivalent if the males are not available). Conscription is rather crude in its methods; a man is usually taken from his home in the middle of the night (specific examples of this can be easily verified). Apparently there is a good deal of passive resistance to this arbitrary and widespread mobilization, or at least reluctance to cooperate with the Government fully, but there are not many successful draft dodgers. Almost the only persons who can get exemption are students. At the present time, the militia, or Self-defense Corps, are being put through an "intensive" training course carried out by regular army men specially trained by the Provincial Government.

Every citizen in Ninghsia possesses an identity card which carries either a photograph or a thumbprint. These cards are constantly checked at key points throughout the province (the visual check on finger prints sometimes being quite amusing). An official pass is required for any travel or movement, and it is fair to say that there is almost no freedom of movement in the province. There is, in fact, very little movement at all.

A complete land survey (which they claim is the first modern survey in China, and the best) and a thorough census have been carried out and are regularly checked by the Provincial Government. In the offices of the Commission of Civil Affairs are minute, detailed maps of every locality in the province. On these maps every single household is pin-pointed. Close track is kept of every family, and any John Doe can be located on a moment's notice.

At 6:00 A.M. every morning all able-bodied men in the province, both civilian and military, are mustered at a regular meeting place. The muster is followed by an indoctrination and training session, lasting anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour, during which the instruction is devoted primarily to methods of opposing or rooting out Communism.

Every ten to 15 households are organized into a reporting unit. Each day the heads of these households make a personnel report on their households (reporting additions or subtractions) to a designated member of the group. The group member receiving the report changes on a rotation basis. The reports received are consolidated and passed on to higher authorities.

Administration of justice in Ninghsia is swift, and punishments are severe. Flogging is a fairly common punishment and is sometimes even meted out to erring public officials. In Ninghsia City, hardly a day passes by when there isn't at least one execution carried out by the Provincial Government.

Price control is absolutely rigid and is applied to a long list of commodities which covers almost all necessities. This price control has kept prices in Ninghsia relatively very low, but in addition it has made commodities very scarce. Merchants divert goods elsewhere, and farmers often don't sell. The authorities are quite proud, however, and with some justification, of the fact that there is no black market.

It is not surprising that a regime of this sort imposes a strain on the population, both economically and psychologically, and it is not supported by much visible enthusiasm. Solemn, unsmiling faces are not always a reliable indicator of popular feeling toward a political regime, but I think it is significant that I saw more glum expressions in Ninghsia than I have in any other province which I personally have visited except Shansi. After spending a few days in Ninghsia one hears many whispered grumblings, always made a little furtively.

The Yellow River Valley in Ninghsia is a rich agricultural region. The Chinese have a saying, in fact, the gist of which is that the Yellow River is China's sorrow in most places but is the joy of Ninghsia. Extensive irrigation works hundreds of years old (but well maintained by the present administration) make the farmers independent of the weather. Land is plentiful. According to official figures, only about one-third of the cultivable land is used at present. Individual holdings are quite large, and most farmers own their own land. (Figures prepared on my request by the Land Administration Bureau state that 99.9 percent - ! - of the farmers are owner-cultivators. This figure seems rather absurd, but verbal estimates which I received placed the figure as high as 70 percent plus.)

Despite these facts the farmers in Ninghsia today are poor, and their poverty is very visible. The average farmer now is an old man. He is unassisted by his sons because they are in the armed forces. He often cannot cultivate all the land that he owns because he lacks assistance. Much of his time is spent on forced labor projects and in Self-Defense Corps duty. A very large percentage of his produce is taxed away by the Government to support the many men in uniform. It is true, however, that he lives in an area where there is "peace and order" and where "there are no Communists".

Ninghsia's military forces have been fairly successful in keeping the Communists out of the province. Despite some reports, of their excellence, however, and despite General Ma's boasts regarding them ("one of my soldiers can handle three Communist soldiers"), the Ninghsia troops are not considered first-rate by many ordinary people in the province. Their weakness (to whatever extent it exists) is generally attributed to bad morale. There is no doubt, whatever, their quality, that they do not constitute as formidable a fighting force as Ma Pu-fang's troops. Generally speaking, furthermore, they have been kept within the province and used for local defense, and they have not had many outstanding successes against the Communists to their credit - although

they claim much of the credit for the Nationalist victory over the Communists at Yulin in North Shensi, and they do have a few troops there now.

Ma Hung-kui's relations with the Central Government are analagous to those of Ma Pu-fang, and his reasons are roughly the same. In talking with Ma Hung-kui, however, one gets the impression that he feels a personal loyalty toward Chiang K'ai-shek but does not have a very high regard for the other high leaders of the Central Government, or for General Chang in Lanchow. (It is interesting to note, furthermore, that his support of Li Tsung-jen seems lukewarm, although Ma was often said to be supporting Li during the Chinese Vice-Presidential elections.)

To summarize, the regimes in Chinghai and Ninghsia in the North-west Muslim belt in China form a distinct region which is simultaneously a part of and apart from Nationalist China. The political peculiarities of this region make it dangerous to include it in any generalizations about China as a whole, for the combination of local autonomy and authoritarianism mean that it does not always fit the political pattern which may prevail in most other parts of Nationalist China.

There are at present a few somewhat ominous signs revealing more than ordinary stresses and strains in the relations between this region and the Central Government. It is difficult to judge whether these signs are really portentous or merely temporary phenomena, but the fact is worth mentioning because this region is one which bears close watching if any fundamental political reshuffle takes place in China (and there are some indications that such a reshuffle may be imminent). This is particularly true in the case of Chinghai. Chinghai, which has an abundance (relatively speaking) of both silver and gold bullion, has not given the Central Government enthusiastic cooperation, or anything like it, in connection with the recent Chinese monetary reform. General Ma Pu-fang, also, has been pouting like a small boy for almost a month and a half. During that period he has been completely inaccessible even to his own closest officials. It is explained, with a smile, that he has "stomach trouble", but it is universally known that his malady is political. The most credible explanations current in Sining are that (a) he is displeased by the lack of recognition he has received from the Central Government for his military aid to it - particularly his victories this Summer - and (b) that he is unhappy about the failure of the Central Government to grant his requests for military supplies. Both of the Ma's feel that they have been discriminated against in the distribution of military supplies, and this issue rankles in both Sining and Ninghsia City. Their freedom of action in relations with the Central Government is severely limited, however, despite their high degree of autonomy, by the fact that the Central Government is their only possible source of military supplies at the present time.

Sincerely yours,

Doak Barnett
Doak Barnett