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THE MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE OF THE
SINO-SOVIET BORDER IN CENTRAL ASIA

Jesse Wang

Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

19 March 1971

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THE MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SINO-SOVIET BORDER

IN

CENTRAL ASIA

AN INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT

by

Colonel Jesse Wang
Signal Corps

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ABSTRACT

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The sixteen armed clashes which occurred along the entire Sino-Soviet border in 1969 gave added significance to the decade-old Sino-Soviet dispute. This Individual Research Project involved the examination of the nature and development of the 1850 miles of that border located in Central Asia. The border is traced and the areas on both sides of it are described.

The development of the border during the period from 1853 to 1915 is discussed and part of its history for the period ending in 1970 is presented. Finally the border is examined in terms of three questions:

1. Is the border or adjacent area a cause of conflict or of incidents leading to armed conflict?
2. Is the area of such value as to warrant armed conflict?
3. Is the area suitable for joint military operations?

It is concluded that the answers to the first two questions are positive, with incident-prone areas located mainly along the geometric and compound northern portion of the boundary. With reference to the third question, it is considered that operations across the border in either direction by forces up to the size of a Soviet combined arms army or larger force, with air support, would be inhibited but not precluded by local conditions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

sixteen armed clashes were reported to have occurred between Chinese Communist and Soviet forces in 1969 along the 4150 miles of the Sino-Soviet Border.¹ The intensity of the clashes as well as the open and specific accusations by both sides of border violations gave new significance to the decade-old dispute between the world's two largest Communist powers. Soviet casualties in the first reported incident on the Ussuri River in the Far East section of the border were reported to have been 31 dead and 14 wounded.² Later reports indicated that engagements involving forces up to regimental size had occurred in the same area. Despite the sensation caused in the press and other circles by these and later reports, the clashes and associated polemics should have come as no surprise. Communist China and the Soviet Union had long been hurling accusations, including border violation charges, at each other. In a People's Daily article on 8 March 1963, for example, Communist China mentioned nine treaties, several of them with Russia, which former Chinese governments had been forced to sign, and raised the question of unequal treaties and a general settlement.³

¹Strategic Survey 1969 (London: The Institute for Strategic Studies, 1970), pp. 69, 100, 101.

²Ibid., p. 66.

³"A comment on the Statement of the Communist Party of the U.S.A.," Peking Review, 15 March 1963, p. 61.

In a statement issued on 21 September 1963, the Soviet government alleged that Chinese servicemen and civilians had been systematically violating the border, and that in 1960 alone over 5,000 Chinese violations of the border had been recorded.⁴

Although the history of Sino-Russian boundary disputes actually goes back about three centuries, what made the 1969 clashes potentially more dangerous than previous conflicts was the rumored willingness of the Soviet Union to use its large nuclear capability in the struggle.⁵ Communist China, on the other hand, had a fledgling nuclear capability with most of its nuclear manufacturing and test installations located in north and northwest China fairly close to its borders with the Soviet Union and Mongolia.⁶

With the change in the Free World view of the world Communist movement which had been regarded as monolithic in nature, and with the interest generated by Sino-Soviet border disputes, it may be useful to examine the border area in terms of its military significance--its value and its nature as a source or cause of military conflict. Inasmuch as the entire length of the Sino-Soviet border--4,150 miles--is too long to treat in one paper, this research project deals only with the 1,350 miles of the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia. This portion of the border separates China's Sinkiang (Hsin-chiang) Uighur Autonomous Region (formerly Sinkiang or Hsin-chiang

⁴The Sino-Soviet Disputes, Keesing's Research Report 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 111.

⁵Strategic Survey 1969, p. 67.

⁶Ibid., p. 68 (map).

Province) from the Soviet Union's Tadzhik Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), Kirghiz SSR, and Kazakh SSR. This section of the frontier was also the locale of eight of the sixteen armed clashes reported in 1969.⁷

RESEARCH TECHNIQUE

The research technique used in this report will include the definition of some basic terms required for adequate and understandable discussion of the border and the areas adjacent to it. These definitions will be covered later in this chapter. They will be followed in Chapter II by the tracing of the border and a brief description of the areas on both sides of the border. Chapter III will discuss the development of the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia in terms of significant events, treaties, and agreements. In Chapter IV, the military significance of the border will be discussed in terms of parts of the border area used or traversed by military units, whether the border or adjacent areas are bases for or causes of incidents leading to armed conflict, whether the border area is of such value as to warrant armed conflict, and finally whether the area is suitable for joint military operations. The suitability of the area for joint operations will be examined primarily in terms of historical examples and some current data on climatic conditions and transportation.

⁷Strategic Survey 1969, pp. 69, 100, 101.

DEFINITIONS

The normal dictionary terminology regarding borders and borderlands is not precise enough for more than a passing reference. For example, Webster lists both "boundary" and "frontier" as synonyms of "border." Prescott, a geographer, however, uses the term "boundary" to indicate a line and the term "frontier" to indicate a zone or area.⁸ For the purposes of this report, the terms "border" and "boundary" will be used for the actual dividing line between two countries whereas the terms "frontier," "border area," and "borderlands" will be used to describe the land area adjacent to the border on either side.

For boundary terminology other than the above, S. Whittemore Boggs, in his International Boundaries, published in 1940, established a body of terminology to describe and discuss borders and to help determine their significance.⁹ His definitions which apply to this report will be listed in this chapter and used in subsequent chapters when necessary to describe the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia and to assess its importance.

According to Boggs, a boundary is a line defined from point to point in a treaty, arbitral award, or boundary commission

⁸J.R.V. Prescott, The Geography of Frontiers and Boundaries (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965), p. 30.

⁹S. Whittemore Boggs, International Boundaries: A Study of Boundary Functions and Problems (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), pp. 18-32.

report. The oldest classification of boundaries divided them into two types--natural and artificial or conventional. This classification was attacked by later geographers.¹⁰ Boggs stated that the fact that a line is marked by nature does not imply that it is natural to use it as a boundary or that it may be a desirable line of separation.¹¹ He suggested a more precise method of classifying boundaries. The classes he used were physical, geometric, anthropogeographic, and complex or compound. Examples of these classes which are pertinent to the discussion of the military aspects of the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia are listed in Appendix 1.

It must be noted that the above four classes of boundaries are not mutually exclusive. A boundary in a desert or swamp may be a straight line or other geometric type of boundary.¹² Related to this are comments made by another geographer which are significant in that much of the border under consideration in this paper passes through or near desert or uncultivated areas. He notes that, although the barrier characteristics of deserts make them possible borderlands, the nonlinear character of deserts

¹⁰ Stephen B. Jones, Boundary Making: A Manual (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of International Law, 1945), p. 7.

¹¹ Boggs, p. 23.

¹² Ibid., pp. 25-26. Boggs' classification of boundaries was adopted and used, with little comment, but Jones (Jones, pp. 9-10, 105). Prescott takes issue with parts of Boggs' work (n.9 above) but not with the portions used as references for this report (Prescott, p. 22).

differentiates them sharply from such border features as water partings, rivers, and some mountain systems. There can be desert frontiers and boundaries in deserts but no "desert boundaries."¹³

Boggs defines delimitation as the choice of a boundary site and its definition in a treaty or other formal document. Demarcation is defined as the marking of a boundary on the ground.¹⁴

A tripoint, triple point, or trijunction point is where the territories of three states meet. A boundary, unless it ends at a coastline or at a limit or marginal sea, extends between two tripoints.¹⁵ The Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia extends between two tripoints.

Having noted that Sino-Soviet conflict has occurred in connection with the border under consideration, and having discussed the research technique and necessary terminology, attention may now be turned to the border itself and the area through which it passes.

¹³Jones, p. 105.

¹⁴Boggs, p. 32.

¹⁵Jones, p. 160.

CHAPTER II

THE BORDER

The Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia will be described in two major steps. First the border will be traced from the Afghan-Chinese-Soviet tripoint in the southwest to the Chinese-Soviet-Mongolian tripoint in the northeast (Appendix 2). Then the areas on both sides of the border will be discussed in general terms.

The border under consideration begins at the Afghan-Chinese-Soviet tripoint on the edge of the Pamirs which, with elevations reaching 16,000 to 18,000 feet, are often referred to as "the roof of the world."¹ A physical boundary at the outset, the border follows the crest of the Sarykol Range northward along the eastern edge of the Pamir Plateau.² The sparsely populated Pamir region is of strategic importance inasmuch as it overlooks Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor to the south. The corridor was established in 1895 to separate Russian Central Asia from what was then British India. Beyond the Afghan Corridor is Kashmir, the subject of India-Pakistan disputes. South of the Kizil Jik Dawan (Pass), the boundary has not been delimited by Sino-Russian or Sino-Soviet

¹US Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the Geographer, International Boundary Study No. 64: China-USSR Boundary (Referred to hereafter as I.B.S. 64), (Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, 14 February 1966), p. 1.

²Ibid., pp. 1, 7; Prof John A. Morrison, retired, formerly of the University of Pittsburgh, letter to author, 20 January 1971.

agreement. Although the Soviets apparently consider the border settled, Chinese maps either show the boundary as undefined or hundreds of miles to the west.³

The southwestern portion of the border separates the K'a-shih Special District (Chuan Ch'ü) of the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region (SUAR) on the Chinese side from the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (Oblast) of the Tadzhik SSR on the Soviet side.⁴

Beyond the Pamir plateau, the boundary extends through the Trans-Alay Ranges to a broad upland valley drained primarily to the west by the Kizilsu (Kyzylsu) River. Here the Sino-Soviet border turns east into the T'ien Shan ("Heavenly Mountains") to follow the crest of the K'ök Shal Tau Range, a minor drainage divide.⁵ The T'ien Shan Range generally cuts through the frontier on both the Chinese and Soviet sides of the border. South of the T'ien Shan on the Chinese side lies the Great Tarim Basin which takes up over one-half of the area of Sinkiang. With peaks up to 20,000 feet in elevation, the T'ien Shan Range has been described by Owen Lattimore as the geographic key to Sinkiang.⁶ This portion

³W. A. Douglas Jackson, The Russo Chinese Borderlands (2d ed.; Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1968), p. 8. Chung-hua Jen-min Kung-ho-Kuo Ti-t'u (Map of the Chinese People's Republic, 12th ed., Peking: Map Publishing Agency, 1962).

⁴James S. Gregory, Russian Land, Soviet People (New York, Pegasus, 1968), p. 828. US Central Intelligence Agency, Communist China Administrative Atlas (Referred to hereafter as Admin Atlas. Washington, D.C.: US Central Intelligence Agency, March 1969). MAP 58654.

⁵I.B.S. 64, p. 7; Jackson, p. 11.

⁶Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China (New York: American Geographical Society, 1951), p. 151.

of the Sino-Soviet Border separates the Kizil-Su Kirghiz Autonomous District (Chou) and the A-k'o-su (Aksu) Special District (Chuan Ch'ü) on the Chinese side from the Kirghiz SSR on the Soviet side.⁷

Passing through the glacier region of Khan Tengri in the central T'ien Shan Range, the boundary turns north and what has been a physical boundary for about 650 miles becomes a complex or compound boundary with many geometric segments. After the northward turn just mentioned, the border follows ridge lines for about 25 miles before turning eastward to follow the Tekes (T'e-k'o-ssu) River and its tributary the Sumba for about 25 miles. The boundary now becomes a geometric one to cross the "Ili River Corridor," that is, it follows a line across ridges and some lower land toward the Ili River, which it crosses at the confluence of the Ili with the Khorgos (Horgos) River. This portion of the border has been demarcated and about 12 markers are shown on 1:1,000,000 topographic maps.⁸ It separates the southernmost section of the Ili Kazakh Autonomous District of China's SUAR from the Alma-Atinskaya Region (Oblast) of the Soviet Union's Kazakh SSR.⁹

The boundary next follows a physical feature, the Khorgos River, northward across the Boro Horo Uula or Borokhoro Range into a local divide. It then turns generally eastward along the

⁷Jackson, p. 11; Admin Atlas, Map 58654.

⁸I.B.S. 64, p. 7.

⁹Admin Atlas, Map 58654; U.S.S.R. and Adjacent Areas, Administrative Map, scale 1:8,000,000, Series 5103 (Ed. 2-GSGS; London: British War Office and Air Ministry, 1960).

Dzungarian Alatau to the "Dzungarian Gate" or A-la-shan-k'cu, a deep, low, flat depression 46 miles long, 6 miles wide at its narrowest point, and bounded on the north by the Barlik and Maili Ranges.¹⁰

The land to the south and east of the Dzungarian Gate is occupied by the Boro Tala (Po-erh-t'a-la) Mongol Autonomous District which is surrounded by the Ili Kazakh Autonomous District on the northeast, east, and south, and the Alma-Atinskaya Region of the Soviet Union's Kazakh SSR on the north.

After crossing the Barlik and Maili ranges, the border runs generally northward for about 100 miles in a series of straight line segments to the Tarbagaytay Range north of Chuguchak (T'a-ch'eng),¹¹ the scene of several Sino-Soviet armed clashes which occurred in 1969. The border then follows the crest of the Tarbagaytay Range (altitude about 9,800 feet) generally eastward for about 125 miles. To the southeast of this point and due east of the previously mentioned "Dzungarian Gate" is the Dzungarian Basin which is lower in elevation and somewhat smaller (270,000 square miles) than the Tarim Basin south of the T'ien Shan Range.¹²

Leaving the Tarbagaytay Range, the boundary turns north to cross the Valley of the Black Irtysh (Chernyy Irtysh or Kara

¹⁰Jackson, p. 15; I.B.S. 64, p. 7; Prof Morrison letter. Also see App. 2.

¹¹I.B.S. 64, p. 7. Also see App. 2.

¹²US Central Intelligence Agency, Communist China Map Folio (Referred to hereafter as CIA Map Folio. Washington, D.C.: US Central Intelligence Agency, October 1967), Map 54927.

Irtish) River (O-er-ch'i-ssu Ho) for about 100 miles. This stretch of the border is geometric and has little to do with physical features. Practically all of the Dzungarian Basin lies to the south of the Black Irtysh.

After leaving the valley of Black Irtysh, the boundary for the most part follows the Alkabek and Alkaba streams to the Chinese-Soviet-Mongolian tripoint in the Mongolian Altai Range.¹³ Also called the "Mongolian Tripoint," this juncture is formed by the Kuitun Ula (mountain) mentioned in the Sino-Mongolian Boundary Treaty of 1962.¹⁴

Administratively the portions of Sinkiang along the border and north of the Boro Tala Mongol Autonomous District include the T'a-ch'eng and A-le-t'ai Special Districts of the Ili Kazakh Autonomous District, and the Karamai (K'o-la-ma-i) Municipality, the last of which is surrounded by the T'a-ch'eng Special District. On the Soviet side of the border is the Semipalatinsk Region of the Kazakh SSR. The final approximately 15 miles of border is shared by the Gorno-Altayaskaya Autonomous Region of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) with the Chinese Ili Kazakh Autonomous District.¹⁵

¹³I.B.S. 64, p. 7.

¹⁴Sino-Mongolian Boundary Treaty, 26 December 1962, Art. I, in Jen-min Jih-pao (People's Daily, Peking), 26 March 1963, p. 3; Prof. Sechin Jagchid, Director, The Institute of China Border Area Studies, National Cheng Chi University, Taipei, Taiwan, letter to author, 4 December 1970.

¹⁵Admin Atlas, Map 58654; U.S.S.R. and Adjacent Areas Admin Map.

From the above tracing of the border, it can be seen that, from the standpoint of classifications of boundaries, the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia can be considered as consisting two types of boundary: a southern mountain boundary which is primarily physical, and a northern geometric and compound boundary. The divider between the two types of boundary is the T'ien Shan Range, which coincides roughly with the administrative internal boundary between the A-k'o-su Special District and the Ili Kazakh Autonomous District on the Chinese side and the administrative internal boundary between the Kirghiz SSR and the Alma-Atinskaya Region of the Kazakh SSR on the Soviet side.

With the general trace of the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia established, and with the administrative divisions on both sides of that border in mind, we can proceed to discuss the areas on both sides of the border. This in turn will set the stage for later discussion of the development and military significance of the border.

The full significance of a border is also determined by what lies deeper in the territory. For example, does the border enclose wealth or resources? Does it deny a country access to certain resources or facilities? Answers to these and similar questions, added to the characteristics of the northern and southern sections of the border, should help explain why incidents have occurred. With reference to such questions, attention may now be directed

to areas farther back from the border, first on the Chinese side, then on the Soviet side.

THE CHINESE SIDE OF THE BORDER

A discussion of the Chinese side of the border must briefly consider the entire SUAR which has one-sixth of China's total land area and about one-hundredth of its population. Urumchi (Ti-hua), the capital as well as a major communication and trade center, is about 370 miles east-southeast of the Dzungarian Gate. A point just west of the capital is the western end of the only known railway line in Sinkiang.¹⁶ Sinkiang's economy is chiefly agricultural. Cultivation is sustained primarily in and around the oases ringing the Tarim Basin in the south and the Dzungarian Basin in the north as well as in the fertile Ili Valley. These areas will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Grain and cotton are planted extensively and fruits are an additional product of the oases.¹⁷ Forests are most abundant in the Mongolian Altai Range,¹⁸ where gold is also extracted. Animal husbandry,

¹⁶Before the Sino-Soviet split, there had been a plan to join Kazakhstan with Sinkiang by rail via the Dzungarian Gate. Although the Soviet Union constructed a line to the gate from Aktogay on the Turkestan-Siberia (Turk-Sib) Railway, the Chinese Communist regime has not extended the Lanchow-Sinkiang rail line beyond the point mentioned (Jackson, p. 15).

¹⁷Niu Sien-chong, "Sinkiang: the 'New Frontier' of China," (NATO's Fifteen Nations, Vol. 14, No. 2, April-May 1969), pp. 90-95; Jen Yu-ti, A Concise Geography of China (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1964), p. 210. Also see App. 4.

¹⁸Natural Conditions in the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region (Trans. as J.P.R.S. 18,689; Washington, D.C.: US Department of Commerce Joint Publications Research Service, 15 April 1963), p. 275; W. J. Drew and LTC Geoffrey Wheeler, "Sinkiang in the Modern World," Royal Central Asian Journal (February 1969), p. 48.

particularly in the uplands, has long been an occupation of such peoples as the Tadzhiks, Kirghiz, and Kazakhs. Both the Tarim and Dzungarian Basins are rich in oil reserves but only Dzungaria has seen any significant development. Other mineral resources include low grade iron, coal, barite, copper, gold, lead, molybdenum, tungsten, zinc, and uranium.¹⁹

The frontier on the Chinese side of the border will next be discussed in terms of the two major basins, each of them adjacent to one of the two sections of the border. Located adjacent to the southern (physical) section of the boundary is the Tarim Basin. North of the T'ien Shan Range and adjacent to the northern (geometric and compound) section of the boundary is the Dzungarian Basin which will include the Tekes, Ili, and Black Irtys River valleys for discussion purposes.

The Tarim Basin Area

The Tarim Basin has a road net in the west near the border which separates into a rough oval of roads linking the oases around the Taklamakan Desert which takes up over 142,000 square miles of the basin. The southern half of the oval was known as the Silk Road.²⁰ The northern half of the oval which follows the southern foothills of the T'ien Shan is called by the Chinese the Road

¹⁹ Jackson, p. 19; T. R. Tregear, A Geography of China (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1955), pp. 151, 155, 158.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

South of the T'ien Shan or T'ien Shan Nan Lu.²¹ The eastern end of the oval permits access to the heart of China via the Kansu Corridor.

Cotton has been described by Owen Lattimore as the most important commercial crop.²² Silk, for which the Yarkand Oasis is most noted, supports local raw silk manufacturing and is exported to the Soviet Union and India.²³

Kashgar (K'o-shih), about 110 miles from the border, with a population of over 100,000, is the largest city in West Sinkiang as well as a road center. One road leading south continues into Tibet by way of the Aksai Chin area which has been disputed with India. Like Yarkand, Aksu (A-k'o-su or Wen-su), and Khotan (Ho-T'ien), Kashgar is situated in an oasis--the largest in Sinkiang.²⁴ It is also a growing industrial center which includes a cotton mill and a farm tool plant among its facilities.²⁵ Being located near a secondary oil field adds to its industrial potential.²⁶

Uranium deposits are reported to exist in this general area (Pamirs and northeast of Aksu).²⁷ A nuclear test site is located in the vicinity of Lop Nor, a lake at the eastern end of the basin.²⁸

²¹Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China, p. 173.

²²Owen Lattimore, Pivot of Asia (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950), p. 168.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 157, n. 12.

²⁵Jackson, p. 13; Jen, p. 211.

²⁶Niu, p. 90.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Strategic Survey 1969 (London: The Institute for Strategic Studies, 1970), p. 69.

The Dzungarian Basin Area

The first part of the frontier encountered north of the T'ien Shan Range is the Chinese portion of the broad and fertile Ili River Valley. Bounded by the Narat and Borokhoro Ranges of the T'ien Shan, the valley is shaped like a giant funnel, with the largest part in the Soviet Union. The Ili River also drains into Lake Balkhash on the Soviet side. There is only one road to the north over the Borokhoro mountain range to link the valley laterally with the Dzungarian Basin farther north. Access to other regions on the Chinese side of the border must be gained by using the road net at the eastern end of the valley. The Ili River is navigable from April to October and has carried up to 35,000 tons of agricultural machinery, cement, iron ore and oil annually.²⁹

Kuldja (I-ning), on the Ili River and on a road into the Soviet Union, is the capital of the Ili Kazakh Autonomous District, its largest town (population over 110,000), and the center of the transportation net at the western end of the Chinese portion of the Ili Valley. As is the case with several other large oases, springs irrigate rice fields. Kuldja exported grain to Urumchi, 400 miles away, as early as 1950.³⁰ Kuldja is also the center of a pastoral region which exported a significant number of sheep to Russia even before World War I.³¹ Coal deposits exist near the

²⁹Jackson, p. 15.

³⁰Lattimore, Pivot of Asia, pp. 161, 171.

³¹Ibid., p. 174.

city.³² By virtue of being geographically in the T'ien Shan Range, the Ili Valley, with an annual rainfall of 10 inches, has been called the richest region in Sinkiang.³³

The Dzungarian Basin itself has a less severe climate than the Tarim Basin in the south, and the central, desert portion of Dzungaria is neither so large nor so forbidding as the Taklamakan Desert in the Tarim Basin. The periphery of the Dzungarian Basin is traversed by a loop of roads. A road center is at Karamai, the largest city in the area, which is an independent municipality. Karamai, like Tu-shan-tzu in the south, is in a major oil field.³⁴ Spring wheat and sugar beets are grown in cultivated areas of the Dzungarian basin, and the area generally supports a greater pastoral population, and hence more livestock, than does the Tarim Basin.³⁵

The Population of Sinkiang

With a population of about eight million,³⁶ and a land area of 635,829 square miles,³⁷ which barely exceeds 11 persons per square mile, the SUAR is one of the most sparsely populated areas in China. Here approximately one per cent of China's population occupies more than 17 per cent of its land area and includes 12

³²CIA Map Folio, Map 54939.

³³Lattimore, Pivot of Asia, p. 274.

³⁴Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China, p. 153; CIA Map Folio, Map 54938.

³⁵Jackson, pp. 16, 20.

³⁶Drew and Wheeler, p. 43.

³⁷CIA Map Folio, opp. Map 54932.

ethnic groupings besides the Han Chinese.³⁸ The map at Appendix 5 gives some idea of the distribution of these minorities who made up two-thirds to four-fifths of Sinkiang's population in 1965.³⁹ Among those which, because of their cross-border distribution, have caused and may continue to cause Sino-Soviet disagreement, are, from southwest to northeast along the border, the Tadzhiks, Kirghiz, Uighurs, and Kazakhs.

The approximately 18,000 Tadzhiks along the edge of the Pamir region are related to the Iranians. Most of them are settled cultivators. Some are upland pastoralists.⁴⁰ Tadzhiks also live in the Tadzhik SSR across the border.

About 85,000 Kirghiz live mainly in western Sinkiang, speak a Turkic language, and have been at least nominal Muslims. Predominantly upland pastoral nomads, they also engage in agriculture, some of it based on irrigation.⁴¹

Some 4,400,000 Uighurs represent at least one-half the population of the SUAR. Occupying some border areas to the north of the Kirghiz, the Uighurs are found all around the Tarim Basin as well as throughout the inhabited areas of Sinkiang. Like the Kirghiz, they speak a Turkic language and generally follow the

³⁸Jackson, p. 18.

³⁹Jackson, p. 19; Drew and Wheeler, p. 43; George N. Patterson, "The Chinese Land Frontier" in Guy Wint (ed.), Asia Handbook (Rev. ed.; Baltimore, Md.; Penguin Books, Inc., 1969), p. 191.

⁴⁰Lattimore, Pivot of Asia, p. 138; Jackson, p. 13. Population figures in this and succeeding paragraphs are based on 1961 estimates in Table I, "Population of Sinkiang" in Jackson, p. 18.

⁴¹Lattimore, Pivot of Asia, pp. 132-134.

Muslim religion. Although some Uighurs live by animal husbandry, most of them are oasis farmers or have occupations subsidiary to agriculture, predominately in the oases of the Tarim Basin.⁴²

The estimated 600,000 Kazakhs of Sinkiang share a common Turkic language with approximately three million Kazakhs in the Soviet Union.⁴³ Until modern times, they shared a common history. Nominally Muslims, the Kazakhs have been lax in observing Islamic religious practices.⁴⁴ Predominantly pastoral nomads, some of them have engaged in agriculture in summer.⁴⁵ Recently many of them have been forced to settle and take up farm work. Kazakh tribes have moved freely across the border, particularly in times of crisis. An example was the reported flight of 50,000 to 70,000 Kazakhs into the Soviet Union in 1962 to escape Chinese Communist collectivization or communization. Others were reportedly moved back from the border by the Chinese Communists to permit colonization and settlement of the area by Han Chinese.⁴⁶

Other less numerous non-Chinese ethnic groups include approximately 23,000 Tungusic (Manchu) Sibos who live mainly in the Ili River Valley and less than 170,000 Mongols who live in isolated areas mainly in the north of the SUAR. The number of Han Chinese in the SUAR may have increased from 300,000 in 1953 to over three

⁴²Ibid., pp. 126-127.

⁴³Jackson, pp. 16, 22.

⁴⁴Jackson, p. 17.

⁴⁵Lattimore, Pivot of Asia, p. 130.

⁴⁶Jackson, p. 17.

million by 1967 as a result of large-scale resettlement programs first announced by Communist China in 1950.⁴⁷

Having looked at the area immediately adjacent to the border on the Chinese side in terms of internal routes of communication, natural resources, large cities, and population, attention may now be directed to the other side of the border which lies in Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

THE SOVIET SIDE OF THE BORDER

Soviet territory adjacent to the border being discussed includes two Soviet Central Asian Republics, (the Tadzhik and Kirghiz SSR's) the eastern part of the Kazakh SSR, and a minor portion of the Altayskiy Kray of the RSFSR.

For the purposes of this report, the Kazakh SSR is considered part of Soviet Central Asia. The basis for this is provided in the following passage by Geoffrey Wheeler:

Strictly speaking the term Soviet Central Asia refers only to the area which in Tsarist times was known as Russian Turkestan and which today consists of the Soviet Socialist Republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan and Kirgizia. What in Tsarist times was known as the Steppe Region (Stepnoy Kray) and is now broadly speaking the Republic of Kazakhstan has always been treated by both Tsarist and Soviet geographers as a separate area. Justification for treating all five republics together

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 19; National Minorities in China: 20 Years of Chinese Communism (Unattributed British Government publication, December 1969), p. 14; Jackson, p. 80. Early in 1963, Communist China ordered that 900,000 young Hans be settled in Sinkiang (Niu, p. 92).

for modern, if not for ancient, historical purposes can be found in their ethnographical and cultural affinities, a fact generally recognized by Soviet writers.

Soviet geographers divided Central Asia and Kazakhstan into four regions: The steppe, constituted by northern Kazakhstan, or what is now known as the Tselinnyy Kray or Virgin Lands Region; the semi-desert consisting roughly of the rest of Kazakhstan; the desert region lying to the south of the semi-desert and reaching the Persian frontier in the west and the Chinese frontier in the east; and the mountain region of which the main features are the Pamirs and the Tien-Shan.⁴⁸

On the Soviet side of the border, as on the Chinese side, the frontier can be viewed in two different sections corresponding to the two sections of the border--the southern mountain or physical boundary and the northern geometric and compound boundary. The southern section of the frontier is the mountain region mentioned in the second paragraph of the above quotation. The area on the Soviet side adjacent to the border and north of the T'ien Shan Range includes parts of the desert and semi-desert regions mentioned in the same quotation.

As in the case of the discussion earlier in this chapter on the Chinese side of the border, a brief mention of the characteristics of the overall region comprising Soviet Central Asia and

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Wheeler, The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1964), p. 1. Also see App. 6 for locations of SSR.

Kazakhstan (the Kazakh SSR) is needed to put the immediate frontier into perspective. The area comprises more than one-fifth of the total Soviet land area of 1,507,338 square miles.⁴⁹ Soviet Central Asia produces over three-quarters of the entire Soviet cotton crop. The fertile oases and river valleys produce fruit, wine, and silk. Various nonferrous minerals are found in the region and an industrial complex has grown up in the Fergana Valley. This fertile valley is shared by the Uzbek, Tadzhik, and Kirghiz SSR's. Kazakhstan has over half the copper ore reserves of the Soviet Union, over three-quarters of the lead reserves, one-half of the zinc, and two-thirds of the silver. The Karaganda coal basin is the third largest in the USSR.⁵⁰

The Mountain Region of the Frontier

The Southern mountain region of the frontier--from the T'ien Shan Range south--is administratively divided between the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (AR) of the Tadzhik SSR and the Kirghiz SSR. The Gorno-Badakhshan AR of the Tadzhik SSR consists of the sparsely settled Pamir highland region where the main occupation of the people is animal husbandry. Some spring wheat, potatoes, fruit, and vegetables are grown in the deep valleys of the western Pamir.

⁴⁹ Gregory, pp. 823, 827, 836, 838, 853.

⁵⁰ Kenneth R. Whiting, Background Information on the Soviet Union (US Air Force, Air University, Aerospace Studies Institute, Documentary Research Division, 1970), pp. 8, 9.

Motor roads, which cross the mountains at altitudes of over 10,000 feet, such as those linking Murgab, on the Aksu River near the border, with Khorog in the west and with Sary Tash to the north, may be blocked by snow in the winter.⁵¹

The Kirghiz SSR is almost entirely a highland state (Appendix 2), but the mountains are not so high as those of Tadzhikistan and contain more sloping valleys. A road circling Issyk-Kul (Lake) joins Rybach'ye on the west shore of the lake with Przheval'sk to the east. Another road links Rybach'ye with Naryn to the south. A road and railway net serves the Kirghiz SSR's portion of the Fergana Basin to the southwest across the Ferganskiy Range. A branch of the Turkistan-Siberian or Turk-Sib Railway runs through Frunze, the administrative center of the SSR, and connects it with Rybach'ye. Frunze, north of the Kirghiz Range by the headwaters of the River Chu, has a population of 360,000; modern engineering works; a meat-packing plant; cotton-spinning, hemp, and jute mills; factories producing leather, shoes, knitted goods, and flour; and rice mills. The Kansk cement factory nearby has a capacity of a million tons per year.⁵²

Osh, in the Fergana Valley in the southwest, is the center of a region of 1,071,000 inhabitants, where 65 per cent of them cultivate cotton, fruit, and grapes, and rear silkworms.⁵³

⁵¹Gregory, pp. 829, 833, 836. Also see App. 2.

⁵²Ibid., p. 838.

⁵³Ibid., p. 835.

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⁵¹Gregory, pp. 829, 833, 836. Also see App. 2.

⁵²Ibid., p. 838.

⁵³Ibid., p. 830.

Kirgizia's mining output includes the largest coal output (3,200,000 tons) in Soviet Central Asia, as well as lead, tin, tungsten, and molybdenum. Industry is concentrated in the Fergana and Chu valleys, and includes cotton-textiles, sugar-refining, as well as the processing of hides, wool, meat, and tobacco. Large-scale irrigation has brought thousands of acres of new land into cultivation--2,750,000 acres were irrigated by 1965. In addition to large-scale livestock and wool production, fruit and other crops such as wheat, soya beans, sago, and hemp are cultivated.⁵⁴

The Desert and Semi-desert Region of the Frontier

North of the main mass of the T'ien Shan Range is the desert and semi-desert region of the frontier which is adjacent to the northern compound and geometric section of the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia (Appendix 2). Administratively, this portion of the frontier consists of the Alma-Atinskaya and Semipalatinskaya Regions of the Kazakh SSR. In the southern portion of this section of the frontier is the Soviet portion of the fertile Ili Valley.

Transportation and communications in the Ili River valley area are provided by road and rail. The Turk-Sib Railway runs parallel to the border as far south as Alma-Ata, the capital of the SSR, and thence to the west. In addition to a fairly good road net in

⁵⁴ibid., pp. 837, 838.

the valley, there is also the Ili River which has been used for transportation in the past. Alma-Ata, with more than 625,000 inhabitants, precominantly Russian in origin, commands the western approach to the upper Ili.⁵⁵

Products of the Ili River valley area include livestock from the semi-desert areas and foothills and mountain pastures. Irrigated farming produces grapes, vegetables, tobacco, sugar beets, rice, and wheat.⁵⁶

Immediately to the north of the Ili River valley and bounded roughly by the Dzungarian Range on the south, Lake Balkhash on the northwest, and the Tarbagaytay Range on the north, is a relatively low-lying area. This area is served by the Turk-Sib Railway and its feeder lines as well as by a good road net. (Appendix 2).

In the foothills, plains, and valleys in the southeast in the Dzungarian Gate region, wheat, barley, rice and sugar beets are intensively cultivated and combined with cattle raising on irrigated lowlands. Factories in the administrative center of Taldy-Kurgan process agricultural products, using power from a hydro-electric station nearby. Coniferous forests grow in the Dzungarian Range, while lead and zinc mines are located in the same area.⁵⁷ North of the Tarbagaytay Range is the valley of the

⁵⁵Jackson, p. 14.

⁵⁶Gregory, p. 790.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 791, 792.

Black Irtysh (Chernyy Irtysh), an extension of the same valley on the Chinese side. The river drains into Lake Zaysan which occupies the center of this subregion. The area is served by a road net which connects towns on the Turk-Sib Railway with towns to the east up to the Sino-Soviet border. The Black Irtysh was also an important transportation route from Sinkiang.⁵⁸

According to James S. Gregory, the geographer, neither the agricultural possibilities in the fertile valleys in this region nor the great timber reserves of the forests of the Altai Range in the northeast have been exploited. There is an abundance of copper, lead, and zinc along the edge of the Altay highlands as well as great reserves of hydro-electric power. Deposits of tungsten, molybdenum and polymetallic ores are also found in the same locale. Some gold mining is done in the southern Altay region. Mountain meadows are used to raise livestock.⁵⁹

The Population of Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan

Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan, with more than one-fifth of the Soviet Union's land area, have a population of 32,804,000,⁶⁰ or less than one-seventh of the total Soviet population. The area's population is about 67 percent Asian and 33 percent European (mostly Russian and Ukrainian).⁶¹ The Europeans form

⁵⁸Jackson, p. 16.

⁵⁹Gregory, pp. 784-785.

⁶⁰Whiting, pp. 16, 18.

⁶¹Jackson, pp. 21, 22.

large minorities, if not outright majorities, in the major cities which are administrative or industrial centers.⁶² The Asian proportion of the population on the Soviet side of the border is similar to the minority nationalities proportion of the population on the Chinese side (between two-thirds and four-fifths). The Asian population on the Soviet side of the border consists largely of peoples speaking Turkic or Iranian languages shared with the non-Chinese inhabitants of Sinkiang (Appendix 5).

The approximately five million Uzbeks, the largest non-Slavic ethnic group in the USSR, live in wealthy and populous Uzbekistan, which is well back from the immediate frontier of concern. There are 2,158,000 Turkmen in the Turkmen SSR, also well back from the border.

About two million Tadzhiks living in the Tadzhik SSR are related to the 18,000 mentioned earlier in this chapter as living on the Chinese side of the border.⁶³

The Kirghiz comprised about one-half the population of the Kirghiz SSR according to the Soviet Union's 1959 census (955,191 out of 2,065,837).⁶⁴ Although the Kirghiz SSR was reported to have a total of 2,993,000 inhabitants in 1970, the number of Kirghiz was not revealed.⁶⁵

⁶²Geoffrey Wheeler, "Russian Central Asia" in Asia Handbook, p. 118.

⁶³Whiting, p. 17; Jackson, p. 21.

⁶⁴Jackson, Tables II and III, pp. 21, 22.

⁶⁵Whiting, p. 17.

The Kazakhs numbered 3,232,403 out of a total of 8,309,847 inhabitants of the Kazakh SSR according to the 1959 Soviet census.⁶⁶ The 1970 census indicated a total population of 12,850,000 in the SSR.⁶⁷ The expanse of geometric border between the Kazakh SSR and China's SUAR permits relatively free movement across the border.

There are 100,000 Uighurs who are related to the most numerous ethnic group across the border in Sinkiang. A number of the Soviet Uighurs live between Alma Ata and the Sino-Soviet border in settlements established in the late nineteenth century.⁶⁸ These people also move freely back and forth across the border.⁶⁹

Other less numerous non-Slavic ethnic groups in the area include about 15,000 Dungans and several thousand Baluchis.

The distribution of ethnic minorities adjacent to the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia, the kinship between the minorities on both sides of the border, the nomadic nature of many of such peoples, and the relative ease with which the border may be crossed along much of its length, provide considerable potential for propaganda, competition for the allegiance of the minorities, and jurisdictional squabbles.

⁶⁶Jackson, Table II and III, pp. 21, 22.

⁶⁷Whiting, p. 18.

⁶⁸Jackson, p. 14.

⁶⁹Whiting, p. 16.

From the brief discussion of the frontier on both sides of the Sino-Soviet border in this chapter, it is evident that Soviet Central Asia (including Kazakhstan) has progressed farther than the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region on the Chinese side. This includes the developments in the fields of agriculture, transportation, and industry. Despite the increase of land under cultivation on the Chinese side from about three million to eight million acres between 1949 and 1967, one author-geographer doubts that Sinkiang could ever be self-sufficient in foodstuffs, given present technology and assuming continued migration of Chinese to the area.⁷⁰ Another authority, on the other hand, states that Sinkiang has always been able to feed itself, and, even allowing for a real large increase in population, is likely still to be able to do so, barring any unforeseen natural calamity.⁷¹ With the emphasis being placed on the development of Sinkiang by the Chinese Communists, as expressed in a number of monitored broadcasts, the latter authority's view may have greater validity under the present circumstances.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The tracing of the border from the Afghan-Chinese-Soviet tripoint in the southwest to the Chinese-Soviet-Mongolian tripoint

⁷⁰Jackson, p. 20.

⁷¹Drew and Wheeler, p. 47. Also see Jackson, p. 93, ". . . by 1960, Sinkiang produced 500,000 tons of grain, said to be more than enough for its population."

in the northeast indicates that the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia is divided into two sections by the T'ien Shan Range. The southern section is a physical, mountain boundary whereas the northern section is a geometric and compound boundary, which in some places has little relation to physical features.

On the Chinese side, adjacent to the southern section, is the great Tarim Basin with its circumferential road net linking the oases. To the north, adjacent to the geometric and compound boundary, are distinguishable geographic subregions--the Ili River valley and the Dzungarian Basin. The latter includes the Irtysh River valley.

On the Soviet side and adjacent to the physical, mountain boundary in the south is a mountain region rather than the great basin found on the Chinese side. In the north, the desert and semi-desert region breaks down into recognizable subregions similar to those found on the Chinese side. Those on the Soviet side are the Western Ili River valley, the relatively low-lying area north of Lakes Balkhash and Alakol and roughly opposite the Dzungarian Basin, and the lower Black Irtysh River valley which is, like the upper Black Irtysh valley on the Chinese side, bounded on the north by the Mongolian Altai Range.

The natural resources on both sides of the border are similar. Although the Soviet side has been developed to a greater extent than the Chinese side, significant unexploited resources remain on both sides.

Minority races of China and the Soviet Union live on both sides of the border. In the area being considered, however, members of these minorities outnumber the dominant races, the Russians and Chinese. In addition, with respect to ethnic background and religion, these minority peoples--Tadzhiks, Kirghiz, Uighurs, and Kazakhs--frequently have more in common with members of minorities on the opposite side of the border than they have with those of the dominant peoples on either side. This, and the ease with which much of the northern section of the border may be crossed, have been and may continue to be sources of problems.

The information provided in this chapter on the border itself and the areas on both sides of it provides background for the discussion in the next chapter on how the border developed.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BORDER

The development of the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia will be discussed in this chapter primarily in terms of events having a direct effect on the evolution of that border to its present state. In this connection, however, it should be borne in mind that (1) Chinese power had, during certain periods in history, extended far beyond the present border,¹ and (2) the development of the present border was mainly a result of Russian expansion to the east and southeast to meet China's borders or to

¹W. J. Drew, in W. J. Drew and LTC Geoffrey Wheeler, "Sinkiang in the Modern World," Royal Central Asian Journal (February 1969), p. 42. Describes the traditional Chinese attitude to frontiers and frontier zones as "never susceptible of precise definition in the modern sense. They usually lay out on the fringes of empire, far from the stable and settled parts of it. They were the line at which, or the zone within which, the power of the empire to maintain its position against the outer barbarians reached its fullest extent and beyond which it was not effective.... Sinkiang, though, is but a part of a much larger entity known as Hsi Yü--the Western Regions--in which China through long periods of her history, has had an interest or exercised varying degrees of suzerainty." He goes on to state that Sinkiang as now precisely defined represents the minimum Chinese position--reduced to its present limits, in China's view by aggressive external forces operating against her in the nineteenth century. Owen Lattimore, Studies in Frontier History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 165-167, also discusses the concept of the "twilight zone" in frontiers between two different cultures such as the Chinese and Russian.

delimit and demarcate the Sino-Russian or Sino-Soviet boundary.² Another motivating element in the case of the Russians has been the fear of invasion from the east.

With the exception of some Cossack settlements, Russian influence did not begin to operate in the steppe region of Kazakhstan until the eighteenth century and had no measurable impact on Turkestan to the south--the Soviet Central Asian region covered in this report--until the second half of the nineteenth century.³

Beginning in 1853,⁴ the Russians launched a two-pronged drive south into what is now Soviet Central Asia. The western prong was oriented generally southeastward from Orenberg in the north, passing to the east of the Aral Sea.⁵ The eastern prong

²According to Geoffrey Wheeler, "Russian Central Asia" in Guy Wint (ed.), Asia Handbook (Rev. ed.; Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books Inc., 1969), pp. 119-120, "The Russian advance to the frontiers of China, Afghanistan and Persia and the establishment of Russia in Central Asia were motivated by political, economic and military considerations: it was desired to establish frontiers with 'properly constituted states', e.g. Persia, as distinct from the semi-barbarous khanates; the Russian Government and commercial firms wished to exploit the economic resources of the region and particularly its cotton, and to deny it both economically and militarily to Britain, whose hold on India and influence in Afghanistan were regarded as a threat to Russia."

³LTC Geoffrey Wheeler, The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1964), p. 6 and Map, "Russian Conquests in the 19th Century," p. 252.

⁴Richard A. Pierce, Russian Central Asia 1867-1917 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), p. 19.

⁵See Orientation Map, Appendix 2.

pointed southward from Semipalatinsk, passing east of Lake Balkhash.⁶ By 1854, the eastern prong of the drive had brought the Russians into the lower Ili River valley. They had also founded what is now the city of Alma-Ata.⁷

The first delimitation of the current Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia followed the Russian drive into the area and was covered in the Treaty of Peking which was signed in November 1860. Among other things, it provided that the boundary would be the existing line of Chinese pickets, vaguely delimited the boundary from Shaban-Dabeg "southwestward along the mountains south of Issyk-kul (Ala Tau) - Kök Shal Tau to the limit of the possessions of Kokand" and created a commission for detailed delimitation of the border.⁸ The treaty in effect gave Russia title to the area south of Issyk-kul Lake to the T'ien Shan, and was a major reduction in territory previously claimed by China (Appendix 3).⁹

⁶W. A. Douglas Jackson, The Russo-Chinese Borderlands (2d ed., Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1968), Fig. 5. Also see n. 5 above.

⁷Jackson, p. 48.

⁸US Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the Geographer, International Boundary Study No. 64; China-USSR Boundary (Referred to hereafter as I.B.S. 64. Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, 14 February 1966), p. 10. At the time, Kokand was an independent khanate, the Eastern border of which extended roughly to the current Sino-Soviet Border adjacent to the present Tadzhik SSR and Southern Kirghiz SSR (See Appendix 2 and Pierce, p. 54 and endpaper map).

⁹Harry Schwartz, Tsars, Mandarins, and Commissars (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1964), p. 55. See Appendix 3, which lists the Chinese claim as 170,000 square miles.

In 1864, Chinese and Russian representatives met at Chuguchak (Tarbagaytay) in fulfillment of the Treaty of Peking and delimited the boundary from what is now the Mongolian People's Republic (Outer Mongolia) southwestward to approximately 40°15' North Latitude and 70°40' East Longitude, the limits of Kokand. Although the major water divide in Central Asia served as the border, the boundary in the north extended along the shore of Lake Zaysan to the Black Irtysh River which became the boundary upstream to a point approximately where the current border crosses the Black Irtysh. Many points were still left vague and undefined.¹⁰ The boundary as delimited generally followed the trace of the present border but was somewhat to the west of it--the closest point on Lake Zaysan is about 30 miles from the present border. The document recording this action is referred to as the Tarbagaytay (T'a-ch'eng or Chuguchak) Treaty (or Protocol).¹¹

In the year in which the Tarbagaytay Protocol was signed, as the Russians continued to extend their control southward in what is now Soviet Central Asia, Muslim uprisings occurred in the Dzungarian and Tarim Basin areas. These uprisings culminated in the triumph of Yakub Beg, a chieftain from Kokand (modern Fergana), who established himself in 1865 as the dominant power in both basins, and set up a separate state which lasted until

¹⁰I.B.S. 64, p. 11.

¹¹Ibid. Also see Appendix 2.

his death in 1877.¹² Other Muslim rebels in eastern Sinkiang overran the adjacent province of Kansu, penetrated Shensi Province, and went as far as Hupei Province in Central China.¹³ Tso Tsung-t'ang, a Chinese Confucian scholar-official who had distinguished himself as a military commander against the T'ai-p'ing rebels, was designated to lead an expedition against the Muslim rebels and to recover the Sinkiang area. For eleven years (1867-1878), Tso and his force of over sixty thousand men covered over 1500 miles, conducting a brilliant, if at times brutal and bloody, campaign which involved lengthy sieges (up to more than two years) and season-long halts to grow grain with which to feed the force.¹⁴ On 18 November 1884, an imperial edict issued on Tso's recommendation made Sinkiang a province.¹⁵ Sinkiang (Hsin-chiang) may be interpreted as "New Frontier," "New Dominion," or "New Territory."

In 1871, while the Yakub Beg rebellion and Tso Tsung-t'ang's recovery campaign were in progress, Russian troops occupied the Tekes and upper Ili River valleys, including Kuldja (Appendix 2). The occupation was ostensibly on a temporary basis to maintain order and safeguard the river which had been used as a trade route. The negotiations which followed Tso Tsung-t'ang's recovery of

¹²Owen Lattimore, Pivot of Asia (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950), pp. 32, 35.

¹³Hosea Ballou Morse, International Relations of the Chinese Empire (3 Vols. London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1918), Vol. II, p. 330.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 330-333.

¹⁵Lattimore, p. 50.

Sinkiang resulted in the Treaty of St. Petersburg being signed and ratified in 1881. The treaty provided for evacuation of Russian troops from the Ili and Tekes River valleys, as well as from the main T'ien Shan ridge for about 200 miles. A small sector in the western part of China's Ili Valley was ceded to Russia for settling voluntary Chinese emigrants. In the north, near Mongolia, China ceded the territory around Lakes Zaysan and Markakol. China lost about 15,000 square miles by this transaction, besides paying nine million metallic (silver) rubles to Russia.¹⁶ Subsequent implementing protocols signed between August 1882 and December 1893 resulted in the border being delimited and demarcated (in part) as far south as Kizil Jik Dawan (Pass).¹⁷ That portion of the border between Kizil Jik Dawan and the Afghan-Soviet-Chinese tri-point is still marked as indefinite on Chinese maps.¹⁸

¹⁶I.B.S. 64, pp. 5, 11; Morse, Vol. II, p. 338. Also see Appendix 2. In September 1879, Chinese Ambassador Chunghow had signed the Treaty of Livadia, by which the western, richer and larger part of the Ili valley area; the passes through the T'ien Shan, especially the Muzart Pass for the military road between Kuldja and Aksu; and five million rubles for occupation expenses were to be given to Russia. The returning Ambassador Chunghow was nearly executed by the angry Manchu court which refused to ratify the treaty. Much maneuvering took place among European powers who did not wish Russia to gain too much of an advantage in China. Russia and China went to the brink of a border war before Marquis Tseng Ki-tse (Tseng Chi-Tse), a replacement ambassador, negotiated the Treaty of St. Petersburg (Morse, Vol. II, pp. 332, 333, 337-339). Appendix 3 ("Border History and Claims" Map) notes that the Chinese yielded 27,000 square miles, including other areas.

¹⁷I.B.S. 64, pp. 11, 12. Also see Appendices 2 and 3.

¹⁸Chung-hua Jen-min Kung-ho Kuo Ti-t'u (Map of the Chinese People's Republic, 12th ed. Peking: Map Publishing Agency, 1962). Also see Appendix 2.

Besides establishing the Afghan Wakhan Corridor, the Anglo-Russian Agreement Concerning Spheres of Influence in the Region of the Pamirs, which was signed on 11 March 1895, made (peak) Povalo Shveikovski (Kokrash Kol), the easternmost point on the Anglo-Russian boundary surveys of 1895, the Afghan-Chinese-Russian tri-point. Although the boundaries forming the Wakhan Corridor were drawn without Chinese participation, the Afghans and Communist Chinese used the same peak as the northern point on their common boundary in 1964.¹⁹

The only agreement affecting boundary alignment entered into after the overthrow in 1911 of the Ch'ing or Manchu Dynasty in China was the (Russo-Chinese) Protocol of Delimitation Along the River Horgos (Khorgos) of 12 June 1915. This Protocol delimited the boundary along the Horgos (Khorgos) River from where it leaves the mountains to its confluence with the Ili River.²⁰ A statement

¹⁹I.B.S. 64, p. 12, para P. Dr. Robert D. Hodgson, the Geographer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, letter to author, 24 November 1970, made the following comment: "Since (Communist) China has negotiated treaties with Pakistan which accept this (Wakhan Corridor) line, we can say that the tripoint is probably valid. One can imagine however, a boundary, situated to the west, which would not make the tripoint at the specified peak (Povalo Shveikovski)."

²⁰I.B.S. 64, p. 13. Although Jackson, p. 48, states "Finally in 1870, the Boundary Treaty of Uliassutay completed the delimitation (sic) of the Inner Asian boundary, . . .," I.B.S. 64, p. 11, para M notes that the Russo-Chinese Boundary Treaty of Ulaishai, 1870, "has been cited in several secondary sources as completing the unfinished work of the Tarbagaytay Protocol." I.B.S. 64, p. 5 notes that the Sino-Mongolian Boundary Treaty, 26 December 1962 (Jen-min Jih-pao (People's Daily, Peking), 26 March 1963, p. 3), had the effect of confirming the common tripoints of the Mongolian, Chinese and Soviet boundaries.

made by Leo Karakhan, the Soviet Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, on 25 July 1919, the Karakhan Declaration, aroused Chinese hopes of the abrogation of the "unequal treaties" by which China had given up territory previously claimed. The most pertinent portion of the declaration is quoted as follows:

The Soviet Government has renounced the conquests made by the Tsarist Government which deprived China of Manchuria and other areas. Let the peoples living in those areas themselves decide within the frontiers of which State they wish to dwell, and what form of government they wish to establish in their own countries.²¹

The only direct result of the Karakhan Declaration up until the Chinese Communist seizure of power in China in 1949 was some embarrassment for the Soviet Union.

FROM THE CHINESE REVOLUTION TO WORLD WAR II

At the beginning of the chapter, it was noted that the development of the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia was essentially the result of Russian expansion in the direction of China. From the overthrow of the Ch'ing Dynasty in 1911 until the Chinese Communist takeover in 1949, Soviet military power was frequently projected across the border into China's Sinkiang Province. The reverse was not the case, although Chinese occasionally sought refuge in the Soviet Union. In addition, the situation on the

²¹Allen S. Whiting, Soviet Policies in China 1917-1924 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), p. 270.

Soviet side was politically and militarily much more stable. For these reasons, the history of the Sino-Soviet frontier in Central Asia during this period is the history of Sinkiang.

From the revolution until 1944, there were three different governors in Sinkiang. They varied in degrees of effectiveness, honesty, and tolerance toward Soviet influence in the province. One feature which their regimes had in common was that each, after having seized power, was "confirmed" by the Chinese Republican or National Government.²²

The first two post-revolutionary rulers of Sinkiang, Yang Tseng-hsin and Chin Shu-jen, had been members of the feudal bureaucracy during the Ch'ing Dynasty. Before the revolution, Yang had been Intendant of the Circuit (Taot'ai) of Aksu and later of Urumchi and Barkul. In 1912, disturbances caused the incumbent Governor to resign and designate Yang as his successor. Yang quickly quelled the disturbances by negotiation and suppression.²³ He has been described as a suspicious autocrat, alert, cunning, ruthless in dealing with plots against him, and extremely independent of the Republican or National Government. On the other hand, he has been considered the best administrator among the three governors.²⁴ With only ten thousand troops under his command,

²²Lattimore, p. 81.

²³Ibid., p. 54.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 52-56.

he frequently had to resort internally to divide-and-rule methods while maintaining good relations with neighboring warlords as well as with the Soviet Union to the north and west and with the British to the south. Lattimore quoted a Swiss traveller attesting to corruption in Sinkiang, but also noted that Yang was honest and competent by old Mandarin standards.²⁵ According to Kuang Lu, a Chinese native of Sinkiang, who worked for Yang and who is now a member of the Government of the Republic of China on Taiwan, Yang was considerate of his subordinates; accessible to the people; a clever, decisive and meticulous administrator who read documents at genius speed; and a firm believer in maintaining China's hold on the province. The same authority also credited Yang with informing the Chinese National Government of all dealings with Russia or the Soviet Union. The only deficiency Kuang ascribed to Yang's regime was the failure to develop the province.²⁶

After Yang Tseng-hsin was assassinated on 7 July 1928, Chin Shu-jen, a subordinate, was chosen by other Sinkiang Government officials to succeed Yang. Chin was also a bureaucrat of the old school but lacked Yang's wisdom and ability. The administration was corruption-riddled and Chin himself was weak and avaricious. Inflation became rampant. Chin was threatened in 1931, shortly after the Japanese aggression in Manchuria, by Ma Chung-Ying, a Chinese Muslim warlord with Japanese advisors and support from

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 59-61

²⁶ Kwang Lu, Kuang Lu Hui-i Lu (Memoirs of Kuang Lu); Taipei, Taiwan: Chuan-Chi Publishers, 1 August 1970), pp. 52, 53, 56, 57, 111.

local Muslim rebels. To obtain Soviet arms and increase Soviet trade with Sinkiang, Chin signed an agreement with the Soviet Union. This agreement was signed without authorization from the National Government in Nanking, and without its being reported to that government. The agreement reduced customs duties on Soviet goods and authorized the opening of eight Soviet trade agencies at Khotan, Yarkand, Kucha, Aksu, Kashgar, Kuldja, Chuguchak (Tarbagaytay or T'a-ch'eng) and Urumchi.²⁷

In April 1933, Chin fled to the Soviet Union after his White Russian mercenaries mutinied and joined local Muslim rebels in an attack on the provincial headquarters. He later returned to China where he was tried and imprisoned for the unauthorized and unreported agreement he had made with the Soviet Union.²⁸ The overthrow of Chin led to the accession of power of Sheng Shih-ts'ai, a recently assigned military officer of the National Government.²⁹

The Regime of Sheng Shih-ts'ai

During the twelve years of Sheng Shih-ts'ai's rule in Sinkiang, Soviet influence in the province increased to levels far beyond any that had existed under his predecessors. Details of Sheng's presiding over Sinkiang's transformation into a disguised satellite

²⁷Lattimore, pp. 65, 57.

²⁸Allen S. Whiting and General Sheng Shih-Ts'ai, Sinkiang: Pawn or Pivot? (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1958), p. 13.

²⁹Lattimore, pp. 69, 70; Whiting and Sheng, p. 12.

of the Soviet Union are beyond the scope of this report. Certain military, economic, and political aspects of Sheng's rule, however, will be discussed in this chapter to give some idea of Soviet penetration, to include the stationing of Soviet Armed Forces in the province.

At the outset of his regime, Sheng announced his intent to institute reforms but more immediate problems were Japanese and British interest in his province as well as armed opposition from Ma Chung-ying and his Muslim cavalry.³⁰ By agreement with Sheng, two brigades of Soviet G.P.U. troops with air support were sent into Sinkiang in January 1934 to clear the roads, lift the siege of Urumchi by Ma's forces, and end the rebellion. The Soviet troops were later withdrawn. The Soviet Union granted asylum to Ma whom Soviet troops had just helped defeat! This was apparently to keep Soviet options open by having another candidate for governor available in case Sheng should prove intractable.³¹

Soviet armed assistance was again forthcoming in 1937, the year of the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war and of improved relations between China and the Soviet Union. General Ma Hu-shan, brother-in-law of Ma Chung-ying, with 15,000 hard-fighting cavalry, was leading a Muslim revolt in the Kashgar area, where establishment

³⁰Whiting and Sheng, pp. 22, 23, 35, 36.

³¹Ibid., p. 26. Also see Alexander Barmine, One Who Survived (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1945), p. 231.

of the "Eastern Turkistan Republic" was announced. The Red Army moved 5,000 troops, an air unit, and an armored regiment to reinforce Sheng, who had "more than 10,000 infantry, cavalry, and artillery troops, with more than ten planes and one company of tanks and armored vehicles."³² In 1938, after order had been restored, a self-contained task force later known as the "Red Army Eighth Regiment" stayed at Hami until Sheng finally broke with the Soviet Union in 1943.³³ Possible explanations for the force's remaining in Sinkiang were to defend against a possible Japanese motorized raid through Inner Mongolia and to guard the route followed by equipment furnished by the Soviet Union and destined for the interior of China via Lanchow in neighboring Kansu Province.³⁴ This Soviet "military assistance" was provided in addition to arms, ammunition, equipment, advisors, and instructors provided for Sheng's troops.³⁵

Significant as the military aid and the Soviet troops were to Sheng, it was in the economic area that Soviet influence and exploitation seemed most obvious. On 16 May 1935, Sheng signed a loan for five million gold rubles. The loan was to be paid off over a five-year period with products of Sinkiang.³⁶ Although

³²Whiting and Sheng, p. 50.

³³Ibid., pp. 51, 90, 91.

³⁴Ibid., p. 62; Lattimore, p. 80.

³⁵Kuang Lu et al., Sheng Shih-ts'ai Tsen-yang T'ung-chih Hsin Chiang (How Sheng Shih-ts'ai Controlled Sinkiang; Taipei, Taiwan: Chinese Frontier Administration Society, July 1954), p. 16; Whiting and Sheng, p. 27.

Sheng had informed the National Government of the loan during negotiations, he did not provide the government with a copy of the draft agreement, and signed the Soviet draft agreement without authorization. This was done in spite of repeated protests to the Soviet Union by the Chinese ambassador in Moscow and by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Soviet ambassador.³⁷

The Soviet Union also used its position to drive out British competition in Sinkiang. In 1938, Sheng banned all trade with India.³⁸ Whiting states, however, that the major Soviet economic goal was the exploitation of resources. This seems to be borne out by the terms of the "Tin Mines Agreement" secretly signed by Sheng and the Kremlin's representatives on 26 November 1940. The agreement gave the Soviet Union a fifty-year monopoly over the prospecting, inspecting, and exploiting of tin and its ancillary products. The main theme running through practically all 17 articles of the agreement was complete freedom of Soviet personnel and the Soviet "Sin Tin" enterprise from control, inspection, audit, supervision, or any other type of interference by the Sinkiang Government. The "Sin Tin" corporation had the right to requisition any land it required for any purpose, leaving to Sheng's government the responsibility for evicting anyone residing on such land. All Soviet equipment and supplies were to enter Sinkiang without payment

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., p. 65.

of duty. Article 15 provided that all land, facilities, and structures of the enterprise would be turned over to the Sinkiang Government without compensation at the end of 50 years. Article 2, however, provided that all equipment and material imported into Sinkiang could be moved back to the Soviet Union at any time during the fifty-year period without interference, customs, or taxes. The agreement even provided fishing rights for "Sin Tin" and its employees!³⁹ Kuang Lu noted that the agreement involved "everything other than air." In view of the unilateral (Soviet) rights and unilateral (Sinkiang Government) obligations provided for by the agreement, he described it as being worse than any of the humiliating "unequal treaties" ever imposed on China.⁴⁰

Sheng's political policies and maneuvering which provided the background for his military and economic dependence on the Soviet Union were of such variety that Owen Lattimore termed him a "Chameleon Warlord."⁴¹ After taking over the government in 1933, Sheng announced his "Eight Points for Sinkiang" which were: equality among races or nationalities, religious freedom, immediate rural relief, financial reform, administrative reform, extension of education, encouragement of self-government, and judicial reforms.⁴² In 1934, he promulgated his "Six Great Policies" with

³⁹Kuang Lu et al., p. 21-26.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 27.

⁴¹Lattimore, p. 69.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 70, 71; Sheng in Whiting and Sheng, p. 165.

which to implement the "Eight Points." The six policies were anti-imperialism (Japanese and British), friendship with the Soviet Union, racial or national equality, clean government, peace, and reconstruction.⁴³ In August 1938, Sheng visited the Kremlin for conferences with Stalin and was admitted into the All-Union Communist Party.⁴⁴ In 1938 he received a number of Chinese Communist advisors, including Mao Tse-Min, the brother of Mao Tse-Tung. During this period (1933-1940), Sheng ran the province smoothly, generally adhering to his announced policies.

In 1941 and 1942, Sheng changed from the pro-Soviet stance which had made his province virtually a Soviet satellite to one leaning on the National Government of China.⁴⁵ This change may have been impelled by Soviet difficulties in the war with Germany and the termination of Soviet aid to Sinkiang. At the same time, Sheng changed from a policy of relative racial tolerance to authoritarian repression of non-Chinese national groups and arrested liberal Chinese as well as Communists such as Mao Tse-Min.⁴⁶

As the Soviet fortunes changed in Europe and it looked as if the Soviet Union would again be in a position to influence Sinkiang, Sheng made an attempt at rapprochement with the Soviet Union. In the process he purged some 200 officials who had been dispatched

⁴³Lattimore, pp. 72, 73.

⁴⁴Sheng in Whiting and Sheng, pp. 191, 192, 203, 206.

⁴⁵Lattimore, p. 76.

⁴⁶Lattimore, pp. 77, 78; Whiting and Sheng, pp. 82, 83.

to Sinkiang by the National Government after the rapprochement of 1942.⁴⁷ It was later reported that Sheng had asked Stalin to incorporate Sinkiang into the Soviet Union, but that Stalin had refused.⁴⁸ After Sheng's switch of allegiance to The National Government in 1942, the Soviets had been negotiating with that government's foreign ministry to salvage what they could from Sinkiang.⁴⁹ On 11 September 1944, Sheng finally left Urumchi permanently to accept a National Government sinecure in Chungking.⁵⁰

THE BORDER FROM WORLD WAR II UNTIL 1970

From the departure of Sheng Shih-ts'ai in 1944 until the Chinese Communist victory in 1949, the National Government appointed four successive chairmen of the Provincial Government, the last two being members of minority nationalities.⁵¹ After minor outbreaks in 1943 and 1944, a major anti-Chinese revolt centered at Kuldja (Ining, hence the reference to it by Chinese as the "Ining Affair") broke out uniting Uighurs, Kazakhs, and Kirghiz. Another "Eastern Turkistan Republic" was established in the area shown on the map

⁴⁷ Han Hai Ch'ao (Desert Tides), Urumchi, January 1947, p. 19; Shanghai ed., January 1947, p. 19, cited in Lattimore, pp. 80, 81.

⁴⁸ Dispatch from Christopher Rand, Urumchi, 22 September 1947, in New York Herald Tribune, 23 September 1947, cited by Lattimore, p. 81.

⁴⁹ The negotiations began on 20 August 1942. On 21 February 1944, Soviet engineers turned over capped oil wells and empty buildings to the Chinese. Su Lien Tui Hsin-chiang ti Ching-chi Ch'in-lueh (Soviet Economic Aggression Against Sinkiang); Taipei, pp. 76ff, cited in Whiting and Sheng, p. 86.

⁵⁰ Lattimore, p. 81.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 85, 90, 96, 101.

at Appendix 3. The revolt also had Soviet assistance and support notwithstanding the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance of 1945 in which, among other things, the Soviet Union pledged to respect Chinese sovereignty in Sinkiang.⁵² Events which transpired during Soviet mediation efforts between the dissidents and Chinese National Government representatives indicated considerable Soviet influence over the rebels.⁵³ Soviet influence was also suspected in the Sarakol Revolt which lasted for about one year beginning in August 1945 in the area around Tash Kurgan near the border in the southwest near the Pamirs (Appendix 3). A foreign observer living in southwestern Sinkiang voiced the opinion that most of the fighting had been done by troops from the Soviet republics across the border in the Pamirs. The timing of the revolt indicates that it may have been an effort to divert the Chinese authorities' attention from the previously mentioned Kuldja or Ining Revolt.⁵⁴ In 1947, a Kazakh dissident group in the Altai mountain region in the north (Appendix 3) split from the "Eastern Turkistan Republic."⁵⁵

⁵²Whiting and Sheng, pp. 104-106, 120 (n.20), 121 (n.21).

⁵³Ibid., p. 106.

⁵⁴A. Doak Barnett, China on the Eve of Communist Takeover (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1963), pp. 265-266, notes that little was known about the revolt other than what is provided in the text plus information to the effect that the "revolting" forces threatened Kargalik, Yarkand, and to a lesser extent, Kashgar. The observer also believed that the "rebels" antagonized the Tadzhiks and Kirghiz living in southwestern Sinkiang by destroying their crops. The name "Sarakol" probably refers to the Sarykol (Sarikol) Range, the crest of which is the border in the Pamir region (Chapter II).

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 111.

The advance of Chinese Communist troops into the province in 1949, the peaceful surrender of remnant National Government troops,⁵⁶ and the final occupation of the entire province ended the Republican period with Sinkiang under Chinese Communist control and with no loss of territory.

The Chinese Communist Period

The Chinese Communist Government was inaugurated at Peking (Peiping) in October 1949. In March 1950, the Chinese and Soviets agreed on the establishment of joint-stock companies to exploit oil and non-ferrous materials in Sinkiang. The capital, control, and profits were to be shared for 30 years.⁵⁷ Almost simultaneously, Communist China announced a large-scale program to settle Chinese in Sinkiang.⁵⁸ Later, as a result of the Khrushchev mission to China in 1954, it was agreed that Soviet shares in the joint-stock companies in Sinkiang would be transferred to the Chinese Communists. This transfer began in 1955, with the companies being reorganized as Chinese state enterprises.⁵⁹ The Chinese Communists also redesignated Sinkiang Province as the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region in recognition of the Uighurs who represent at least one-half the population. Notwithstanding Chinese eagerness to establish full sovereignty over the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region (SUAR),

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 118.

⁵⁷Jackson, p. 80.

⁵⁸Ibid. Also see Chapter II, n. 47 of this report.

⁵⁹Jackson, p. 81.

the period from 1949 to 1955 was one of Sino-Soviet cooperation and assistance.⁶⁰ During this period, Soviet assistance in areas other than Sinkiang included foreign policy support (Soviet sponsorship of Communist China for United Nations membership), military aid for use in Korea, and nuclear development assistance. Economic aid included long-term credit in the amounts of 300 million and 520 million rubles.⁶¹ Although the Soviet Union and Communist China began to drift apart after 1956 and open controversy began to develop in 1960, it was not until 1963 that the Soviet and Chinese statements such as those in Chapter I of this report publicly indicated that border violations had occurred.⁶² On 6 September 1963, for example, Communist China's People's Daily claimed that Soviet agencies and personnel had engaged in "large-scale subversive activities in the Ili region and incited and coerced several tens of thousands of Chinese citizens into going to the Soviet Union."⁶³ Reports from Moscow, on the other hand, indicated that "riots had occurred in Sinkiang among Kazakhs, Uighurs and other nationalities, who resented Chinese attempts to suppress their religion and languages, and that between the middle of 1962 and September 1963 about 50,000 Kazakhs and other bribesmen had fled into the USSR."⁶⁴

⁶⁰The Sino-Soviet Disputes, Keesing's Research Report 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 1.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 2-5.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 7, 110, 111. Also see page 1 of this report.

⁶³The Sino-Soviet Disputes, p. 111.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 112.

Unsuccessful boundary negotiations took place in Peking between February and May 1964. The Soviet delegation had apparently put forth proposals for the "clarification" of certain sections of the border. The Chinese delegation, on the other hand, claimed 1,500,000 square kilometers (580,000 square miles) of Soviet territory but stated that such claims would not be pressed at the time. According to the Chinese, the Chinese delegation offered to take the Treaties of Aigun and Peking as a basis for determining the alignment of the boundary, with the understanding that the treaties were "unequal." The Soviet delegation reportedly rejected the Chinese proposal.⁶⁵

The border controversy was apparently revived by Mao-Tse-tung in a statement on 10 July 1964 in a conversation with a Japanese Socialist Party delegation:

There are too many places occupied by the Soviet Union Some people have declared that the Sinkiang area and the territories north of the Amur River must be included in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is concentrating troops along its border.⁶⁶

Nikita Khrushchev, chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, gave an interesting reply in a statement to a Japanese Parliamentary delegation:

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Excerpts from "Chairman Mao Tse-tung Tells the Delegation of the Japanese Socialist Party that the Kuriles Must be Returned to Japan," Sekai Shuhō, Tokyo, August 11, 1964, quoted in Dennis J. Doolin, Territorial Claims in the Sino-Soviet Conflict (Sanford, California: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, 1965), p. 43.

The Russian Czars waged wars of aggrandizement. And what were the Chinese Emperors doing? They also waged wars of aggrandizement and plunder as the Russian Czars did. Chinese Emperors tried to conquer Korea, and they seized Mongolia, Tibet, and Sinkiang.

Let us take Sinkiang, for example. Have the Chinese been living there from time immemorial? The Sinkiang indigenous population differs sharply from the Chinese ethnically, linguistically, and in other respects. They are Uighur, Kazakh, Kirghiz, and other peoples. Chinese emperors conquered them in the past and deprived them of their independence.

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The bulk of the Kazakh people live in the USSR, and most of the territory on which the Kazakh people live forms part of the Soviet Union. On this territory, the Kazakh people set up the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. This is the sovereign state of the Kazakh people, and, according to the constitution, the Kazakh people have the right, if they wish to, to secede from the Soviet Union. Some of the Kazakhs and the territory they occupy form part of the Chinese state.⁶⁷

Border tension increased from 1966 to 1968 during the Cultural Revolution in Communist China. Western sources estimated that nearly 40 Soviet divisions, and between 50 and 60 Chinese divisions (over 600,000 men) were stationed along the entire Sino-Soviet Border. The entire Sino-Soviet Border includes the more critical and more closely guarded 2300-mile border around China's Manchuria. It was also reported from Moscow on 21 February 1967 that all

⁶⁷Excerpts from a dispatch from Tass International Service, Moscow, September 19, 1964, quoted in Doolin, pp. 70, 71.

Chinese troops and civilians had been withdrawn 100 miles from the Soviet borders, leaving only frontier guards.⁶⁸

The Damansky (Chen-pao) Island fighting on the Sino-Soviet Border in the Far East on 2 and 15 March 1969 marked the beginning of the sixteen incidents mentioned in Chapter I of this report. From 16 April to 13 August, eight armed clashes occurred along the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia, all of them on the northern, geometric, and compound portion of the border, and all north of the Dzungarian Gate. Three clashes took place near Yu-min, four to the north near T'a-ch'eng (Chuguchak) and one just north of the Irtysh River. Dates of the clashes are shown at Appendix 3. According to a Soviet Kazakh-language newspaper account, the action which took place on 13 August involved Soviet border guards with armored cars as well as helicopters. Soviet casualties were two killed and eleven wounded. Chinese losses were two prisoners and about ten killed.⁶⁹

The armed clashes took place against a backdrop of propaganda, Soviet offers to negotiate a settlement, and news of troop movements. A Pravda editorial of 28 August was interpreted as implying possible use of nuclear weapons. There were also rumors to the effect that a Soviet air strike might be directed at the Chinese

⁶⁸The Sino-Soviet Dispute, p. 114. Other information, such as that in Chapter IV, indicates that a minor portion of these forces, e.g. about six on the Chinese side, are located along the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia.

⁶⁹Tel'man Zhanuzakov, "Combat on the Border," Qazaq Edibiyeti (Organ of the Board of the Union of Writers of Kazakhstan), 23 August 1969, (Trans.: New York: Radio Liberty Committee, n.d.)

nuclear installations. In November it was found that the Soviet Union was establishing a new Central Asian Military District. The Chinese also appeared to be preparing for war. From 20 October until 13 December, secret talks were held in Peking at the Deputy Foreign Minister level.⁷⁰

During 1970, the border was relatively quiet. In January 1971, a newsmen cited "reliable intelligence reports" as saying that forces were being increased on both sides of the border.⁷¹

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Sino-Soviet Border in Central Asia developed and was delimited and demarcated for the greater part of its length during a period of 62 years beginning about 1853. The border developed as a result of Russian expansion to the east and south toward China. The treaties of Peking and St. Petersburg were the basic treaties delimiting the border as it exists today. By these treaties with Russia, Imperial China gave up its historical claims to approximately 197,000 square miles of territory. Today, Communist China considers such treaties unequal. The portion of the border in the Pamirs was agreed upon by the Russians and the British but not the Chinese, thus justifying Chinese claims to about 8,000 square miles in a region where uranium is available.

⁷⁰The Institute for Strategic Studies, London, Strategic Survey 1969 (1970), pp. 67,70.

⁷¹Stanley Karnow, Washington Post News Service, "Border Tension Builds," The Patriot (Harrisburg, Pa.), 20 January 1971.

During the republican period in China, up to World War II, the governors of Sinkiang, having few of their own resources and receiving little assistance from the National Government, were extremely independent. This independence from the national government was facilitated by dealing with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union took advantage of the situation and acquired special privileges and advantages in the province by dealing directly with the governors rather than through the National Government. Soviet involvement and privilege reached its greatest extent under Sheng Shih-ts'ai. Although the National Government regained control of the appointment of governors late in World War II, anti-Chinese revolts by Kazakhs, Uigurs, and Kirghiz with Soviet support in effect denied the western portion of the province to the National Government. Before reconciliation could be achieved, the Chinese Communists had completed their takeover of Mainland China.

The Communist takeover brought Sinkiang under a central government. For approximately six years, Sino-Soviet cooperation and assistance prevailed. The two Communist states drifted apart after 1956, but there were no indications of specific border violations until 1963, and it was not until 1969 that actual armed clashes were reported between April and August along the northern section of the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia.

With the background on the border and adjacent areas provided in Chapter I, knowing how the border developed, and with some of the more recent history of the border in mind, a discussion of the military significance of the border will now be undertaken in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

THE MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BORDER

The military significance of the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia will be discussed in this chapter using as a basis the information in previous chapters as well as certain historical military actions or troop movements involving the border area. The analysis of the border area itself will initially involve consideration of selected historical examples of the use or passage of the border area by significant military forces. The next part of the analysis will involve the answers to three questions:

1. Is the border or adjacent area a cause of conflict or of incidents leading to armed conflict?
2. Is the area of such value as to warrant armed conflict?
3. Is the area suitable for joint military operations?

The answer to the last question will draw upon previously mentioned examples of the use or passage of the border area. Thus the determination of the suitability for joint military operations will be mainly from the standpoint of historical examples and some current data on climatic conditions and transportation.

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF THE USE OF THE BORDER AREA

The historical examples of the use or passage of the border area by significant military forces to be discussed in this section predate and supplement those already discussed in connection with the development of the border. Consideration of such examples is

necessary to illustrate the use of certain areas or routes in the border area. The two selected examples cited hereafter will be discussed briefly as to the purpose of or reason for the military action or expedition, the forces involved, routes used, the locale of military actions, and the results or significance.

The Expedition of Li Kuang-li to Fergana

During the Han Dynasty (BC 206 - AD 263), an envoy was sent to request horses from Ta Wan, a state in what is now the Fergana region in the Uzbek S.S.R. The request was refused and the envoy killed and robbed. The emperor dispatched General Li Kuang-li on a punitive expedition. Initially unsuccessful, Li left Tun-huang in Kansu Province about 101 BC with 60,000 infantry and cavalry, 100,000 cattle, and 30,000 horses, excluding pack animals. Apparently following the route south of the T'ien Shan (T'ien Shan Nan Lu, which follows the northern rim of the Tarim Basin), Li captured the town of Lun-t'ai (Appendix 2) which put up strong resistance. Proceeding westward apparently by way of Kashgar and across the present border near Irkeshtam, the force marched toward the capital of Ta Wan. Li's force put to flight an enemy force before besieging the capital. Victorious after a long siege, Li placed a person friendly to China on the throne.¹ According

¹Wang Hsien-ch'ien, Han Shu Pu Chu (History of the (Former) Han Dynasty with Supplementary Notes; 2 Vols. Taipei, Taiwan: Yi-wen Publishers, n.d.), Chapter 61, pp. 1242, 1243. Names and locations of both Lun-T'ai and Fergana (Ta Wan or Wan Kuo) were verified by reference to a Chinese dictionary and a gazetteer of ancient and modern Chinese place names. Both are listed in the Bibliography.

to the historian Kenneth Scott Latourette, more than ten embassies went from the country to China during the Emperor's reign.² Li's expedition traversed over 1600 miles of inhospitable terrain and has been described by Latourette as a military feat ranking with those of the Romans in Europe and North Africa a few decades before.³

Campaign Against the Western Mongols

In 1754, the Manchu Dynasty sought to gain control over Dzungaria. The opportunity presented itself when a struggle over succession of leadership of the Eleuths, a Western Mongol tribe, brought Amursana, an Eleuth leader, to the Manchus.⁴ Bringing 20,000 followers, Amursana requested assistance in his struggle. The Manchu Emperor's armies launched an expedition along two separate routes.⁵ One route passed through Hami and Urumchi toward Kuldja in the Ili Valley, and the other through the Western part of Outer Mongolia and then southwest into Dzungaria, passing generally east of Tarbagatai (Chuguchak or T'a-Ch'eng.)⁶ The

²Kenneth Scott Latourette, The Chinese: Their History and Culture (4th ed., 1964), p. 80.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 257.

⁵Chang Ta-Chun, Hsin-Chiang Shih (History of Sinkiang; Taipei, Taiwan: Commission on Mongolia and Tibet, October 1964), p. 238.

⁶Albert Herrman, An Historical Atlas of China (New ed., 1966), pp. 48, 49. This map refers to the Mongols in question as Kaimuks, which is the name that certain Western Mongols acquired after they settled in Russia. Also see Martin R. Norins, Gateway to Asia: Sinkiang (1944), p. 87.

two forces met at the Boro Tala River and proceeded to Kuldja where Amursana was installed as ruler in 1755.⁷ The size of Amursana's force, plus the fact that he needed assistance, indicates that a force at least greater than 20,000 men was employed in the campaign which centered on Dzungaria in Northern Sinkiang and terminated in the Ili River Valley.

With these two historical examples added to the background provided in preceding chapters, answers to the previously mentioned three questions may be developed to determine the military significance of the border.

FIRST QUESTION: IS THE BORDER OR ADJACENT AREA
A CAUSE OF CONFLICT OR A CAUSE OF INCIDENTS
WHICH MAY LEAD TO ARMED CONFLICT?

This question is essentially related to what Boggs called the function of the boundary. The stated purpose of boundaries is generally to delineate or show the limits of national territory. In addition, a boundary often is, or should be, a military barrier

⁷Chang, p. 238; Latourette, p. 257.

to block access or check invasions.⁸ To answer this question then, the function of the border as a limiting line or military barrier will be considered. This will be done by relating border incidents or known examples of the use of or passage through the frontier to the type of boundary involved, be it physical, compound, or geometric.

The use of the southern, physical section of the border has generally been for passage. Li Kuang-li's expedition had an objective well beyond the crossing at Irkeshtam. The same applies in the case of other expeditions launched in the direction of the Oxus and Jaxartes valleys, which are well beyond the border or frontier in question. It is true that the band of men which included Yakub Beg came into Sinkiang in 1864 from Kokand via

⁸S. Whittemore Boggs, International Boundaries; a Study of Boundary Functions and Problems (1940), pp. 21-22, states ". . . The commonsense view, therefore, is simply that a good boundary is one which serves the particular purpose for which it is designed, with a maximum of efficiency and a minimum of friction. On the principle that a good boundary is one which functions well and a bad boundary is one which functions poorly, a scientific study of boundary principles should be based upon the actual working of all types of boundaries, and should correlate all geographic factors with the actual purpose which the boundaries serve and the degree of success with which they function . . ." On page 11, he also states that international boundaries are intended to serve protective functions of various kinds. There are geographers such as J.R.V. Prescott, The Geography of Frontiers and Boundaries (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965), pp. 22-23, who do not accept the view that boundaries have functions, saying that how well a boundary serves its purpose depends on the people on both sides of it as well as their policies and actions. On the other hand, an impassable or nearly impassable barrier, such as a high mountain range, can do much to inhibit the people on either side of it insofar as large-scale invasions are concerned, regardless of the arduousness on either side for war and conquest.

the Irkeshtam crossing to take over the leadership of the rebellion in the Tarim Basin. They were, however, actually taking advantage of an opportunity presented by a Muslim revolt in Chinese territory rather than being involved in a border incident or conflict.⁹

The Sarakol or Sarykol Revolt (1945-1946) mentioned in Chapter III may have been a local revolt against the Chinese government, an externally supported revolt, or disguised Soviet aggression against Chinese territory. If either of the last two were the case, it could be considered a frontier or border incident.

Looking to the northern section of the boundary, which is compound and geometric, there are several broad valleys and gaps in the mountain ranges which are part of the boundary. Inasmuch as these broad, low-lying valleys are traversed by primarily geometric boundaries, chances for misunderstanding are much greater than in the south. The convenience of access to the border from both sides, the proximity of more people to the border on both sides (often of common ethnic background), and the greater desirability of such areas as the Ili and Tekes River valleys, add to potential problems. The Russian occupation of the Ili and Tekes River valleys from 1871 to 1881 during the Yakub Beg rebellion, published reasons notwithstanding, can only be construed as a Russian attempt to acquire all or part of this fertile region adjacent to the border. Another example is the apparent Soviet

⁹Owen Lattimore, Pivot of Asia (1950), p. 33. Also see Chapter III of this report.

support and control of the so-called "Eastern Turkistan Republic" which ruled the Ili-Tekes Valley area plus considerably more territory to the north and east during the period from 1946 to 1949.

Although no recent incidents have been reported at the Dzungarian Gate, it has been termed a "historical invasion or migration route." Being flat and six miles wide at its narrowest point, the Gate could well be a site of border incidents.

North of the Dzungarian Gate in the vicinity of Yu-min (Appendix 3), where the boundary consists primarily of line segments, is the area where three of the eight incidents were reported to have occurred during 1969.¹⁰ About 50 miles to the north near Chuguchak, (Tarbagatay or T'a-ch'eng), where the border is still series of line segments, four more of the 1969 incidents took place. Finally, the location of another 1969 incident is in the Irtysh Valley, where the boundary is also geometric with little relation to physical features, as noted in Chapter II.

Inasmuch as this section of the frontier is where the Kazakhs are most numerous (Appendix 5), it is apparent that the reported flight in 1962 of 50,000 to 70,000 Kazakhs into the Soviet side of the border took place here. This is of course related to the fact that the Kazakhs live on both sides of the border and wander freely back and forth, plus the nature of the border that permits such wandering.

¹⁰ See Chapter III of this report.

From this brief review of the incidents or known examples of the use of the border or frontier for military purposes, it can be seen that the mountainous southern portion of the boundary, which presents a physical barrier with few crossing points or routes, has functioned well and that there have been few if any incidents involving the border or the immediate frontier. The northern, compound, and geometric section of the boundary, however, is apparently conducive to incidents and armed clashes. With the incident susceptibility of the two sections of the border established to the extent possible, the next question to ask is whether the area is worth fighting for.

SECOND QUESTION: IS THE AREA OF SUCH VALUE
AS TO WARRANT ARMED CONFLICT?

To answer this question, the value of the frontier should be discussed from the economic, strategic, and nationalistic viewpoints.

The economic value of the area on both sides of the border will be discussed by drawing on the information provided in Chapter II to determine in broad terms the value of the area's mineral and agricultural resources as well as industrial capacity or potential. The economic aspects may also affect the strategic value of the area.

The strategic value of an area often involves the perception of the area as a threat or as a means of threatening another power's territory. Discussion of the area's strategic value will also be

in terms of major approaches to access routes. Nuclear installations in Sinkiang will be mentioned.

Although less tangible than the economic or strategic aspects of an area, irredentism or nationalism is significant in that it may at times make a desolate or strategically useless area seem valuable. The irredentist or nationalistic value of the border area will be discussed in terms of current or historic statements and the effect of history on the views of both sides.

Economic Aspects

Soviet Central Asia produces over three-quarters of the Soviet Union's cotton crop, as was mentioned in Chapter II. To this must be added the industrial development and fertile and productive land of the Fergana Valley, which, with 17 percent of the area of the Uzbek Republic, contains two-thirds of the population. Adding to these over half of the copper ore reserves, over three-quarters of the lead reserves, and the third largest coal basin in the USSR, leaves no doubt as to the economic value of the area to the Soviet Union.

Although the Chinese side of the border is much less developed than the Soviet side, it holds great promise for the Chinese. Like Soviet Central Asia, Sinkiang produces grain, fruit, cotton, oil, and minerals. Besides silk and animal products, it has apparently always produced sufficient food for its population, and has significant oil reserves in both the Tarim and Dzungarian basins. Irrigation provides the capability of increasing the

amount of land under cultivation. As an example, a monitored broadcast from Urumchi, the capital of the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region (SUAK), mentioned that the Sinkiang Production and Construction Corps of the Chinese Communist People's Liberation Army gathered its first bumper crop harvest of grain, cotton, and livestock of 1970.¹¹ The broadcast went on to mention that reservoirs with capacities of 100 million cubic meters, canals, and waterways for irrigation had been completed in various districts along the Tarim River.

Strategic Aspects

The strategic value of the area can be related to approach routes. A well-known international relations text indicates three approaches which pass through or are accessible from this border area.¹² In the north is the Dzungarian Gate. South of it is a route passing south of Lake Balkhash in the direction of the Soviet Union's Aral Sea (Appendix 7). Farther south is the T'ien Shan South Route passing through the southern mountainous section of the border. A strategic area mentioned in Chapter II is the southernmost part of the border where the Pamir region overlooks the Wakhan

¹¹"Sinkiang Crops Harvest" (Urumchi, Sinkiang Regional Mandarin 1500 GMT, 22 December 1970, FBIS-Chi-70-253; Washington, D.C.: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 31 December 1970), Vol. 1, 31 December 1970. Other FBIS items in the Bibliography contain reports of local grain harvests, farming techniques, land reclamation and irrigation.

¹²Robert Strausz-Hupe and Stefan T. Possony, International Relations (1954), pp. 56-57, Maps "Middle East Approaches" and "Far Eastern Approaches."

Corridor, to the south of which is the Jammu-Kashmir area (Appendix 2).

Another strategic aspect of the border area is that possession of Sinkiang provides access through the Kansu Corridor to the east (Appendices 5 and 8) to the interior of China. Prior to the construction by the Chinese Communists of the Lanchou-Urumchi Railroad, Hami, Sinkiang's trade center nearest to the rest of China, was 1200 miles from the railhead at Paot'ou in Communist China's Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. That distance meant three months' travel by caravan or two weeks of rugged travel by motor vehicle. This situation had served to orient the province economically toward the Soviet Union.¹³

The strategic significance of the border area, Sinkiang in particular, can be seen from statements made by three historical personages, two Chinese and one Russian. Tso Tsung-t'ang, the intrepid commander of the Chinese forces which quelled the Yakub Beg rebellion mentioned in Chapter III, considered Sinkiang important to the security of Northwest China as well as Mongolia, which were in turn necessary to the security of the capital at Peking.¹⁴ Yang Tseng-hsin, Governor of Sinkiang from 1912 to 1928, said that Sinkiang was necessary to the preservation of Northwest China.¹⁵

¹³Allen S. Whiting and General Sheng Shih-ts'ai, Sinkiang: Pawn or Pivot? (1958), p. 5.

¹⁴Kuang Lu, Kuang Lu Hui-I Lu (Memoirs of Kuang Lu, Taipei, Taiwan: Chuan Chi Publishers, 1 August 1970), p. 2.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 57.

Jackson, noting that Jenghis Khan's Mongols came through the "corridor area" of Inner Asia, mentioned that boundaries crossing corridors, river valleys in particular, are militarily vulnerable.¹⁶ Jackson cited a statement of General A. N. Kuropatkin, Governor General of Russian Turkestan during World War I. The statement is quoted below:

As far as China is concerned, the future danger for Russia from this empire of 400,000,000 people is beyond all doubt. The most vulnerable part of the Russian frontier, as 800 years ago, remains that great gateway of peoples through which the hordes of Ghengis Khan poured into Europe.

So long as Kuldzha rests in the hands of the Chinese, the protection of Turkestan from China will remain very difficult, or will demand a great number of troops.

This gateway must not be left in the hands of the Chinese. A change in our border with China is urgently necessary. By drawing the border line from the Khan-Tengri range and the Tien Shan in a direct line to Vladivostok it will be shortened by 4,000 versts, and Kuldzha, northern Mongolia, and northern Manchuria will become a part of the Russian Empire.¹⁷

Inasmuch as General Kuropatkin was referring primarily to the Ili Valley, it may be useful to recall that it was mentioned in Chapter II, and earlier in this chapter, that the larger part of the Ili Valley was in Russia. The Chinese part was by the same token more accessible to Russia than to China because lateral

¹⁶W. A. Douglas Jackson, The Russo-Chinese Borderlands (2d ed., 1968), p. 14.

¹⁷"Vosstanie 1916 g.v. Srednei Azii," Krasnyi Arkhiv, XXXIV (1929), pp. 81-82, quoted in Richard A. Pierce, Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), p. 238.

routes to other portions of China's frontier traversed mountain ranges. Kuropatkin's statement also indicates that the Russians probably had intended to stay in the Chinese part of the Ili Valley when they occupied it in 1871 (Chapter III). Further, although Kuropatkin mentioned the Ili Valley and Kuldja (Kuldzha) specifically, his solution would have entailed, among other things, Russian acquisition of the Dzungarian Gate, the gap near Chuguchak (Tarbagaytay or T'a-ch'eng), and the Irtysh Valley corridor. The boundary was and is mainly geometric in those places (Appendix 2).

A final strategic factor related to the border is that the Chinese Communist nuclear weapons test center at Lop Nor is in the SUAR although it is beyond the border area under consideration. It has also been reported that a uranium ore processing plant is located at or near Urumchi.¹⁸ This is significant in that two strategic considerations appear to figure in Moscow's appraisal of the Sino-Soviet dispute: frontier security and nuclear strategy.¹⁹

¹⁸Ralph L. Powell, "Asia's Nuclear Fellow Travellers," Washington Post, 30 November 1970, Second Section. Another report from New Delhi, India, indicated that Communist China had begun to move to the Lop Nor installation in Tibet, about 300 miles to the south (Sidney H. Schanberg, "China Said to Be Moving Nuclear Plant to Tibet," New York Times, 13 September 1969). Another author mentioned the possibility of "taking out" nuclear installations by using air power and tactical nuclear weapons or, conventionally, by using airborne troops and armored columns with air cover (Tongchin Rhee, "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Balance of Power," Military Review, Vol. 50, November 1970, p. 28). Most of China's nuclear installations, including the more critical ones, are located farther to the east.

¹⁹Roman Kolkowicz, et al., The Soviet Union and Arms Control: a Superpower Dilemma (1970), p. 120.

Nationalistic Aspects

Irredentism, if it is present, can only be harbored by the Chinese inasmuch as the development of the border involved Russian territorial expansion and a corresponding Chinese contraction of claims or territory held or controlled. Although there are authorities who consider that the Chinese Communists do not think of Soviet Central Asia as irredenta,²⁰ certain Communist Chinese statements or propositions should be considered. It was noted in Chapter III that the Chinese Communist delegation negotiating with the Soviets in 1964 had offered to take the Treaties of Aigun and Peking as a basis for determining boundary alignment with the understanding that the treaties were "unequal." The Chinese Communists could have had, and may have, every intention of negotiating with the Soviets in good faith. On the other hand, with the stipulation on the record that the treaties are "unequal," there would be nothing to prevent the Chinese Communists from raising the question again, perhaps after they have acquired a significant nuclear weapons capability! Further, irredentism is one point, perhaps the only point, on which both Chinese Communists and Chinese Nationalists agree. For these reasons, the question of nationalistic feeling about the Sino-Soviet frontier in Central Asia should not be dismissed lightly. On the part of the Chinese, it would be the

²⁰Robert A. Rupen, "Peking and the National Minorities," in Communist China 1949-1969: A Twenty-Year Appraisal, ed. by Frank N. Trager and William Henderson (1970), p. 252.

feeling of having had to give up territory under duress. On the part of the Soviets, the feeling would be that the territory in Soviet Central Asia is rightfully theirs as indicated by the Khrushchev statement quoted in part in Chapter III. The statement quoted also mentions Kazakhs, Uighurs, and Kirghiz, minority peoples who live on both sides of the border, and whom the Soviet Union has been wooing by propaganda broadcasts.²¹

The above review of the economic, strategic, and nationalistic elements of the value of the frontier indicates that the economic value of the frontier is such as to warrant either side's taking a strong stand against any significant loss of territory. Strategically, the same answer holds in that the security of more than the immediate border area is involved. From the standpoint of nationalism, irredentism is appropriate and present on the part of the Chinese. On the other side of the border, the Soviets consider that Soviet Central Asia is theirs and apparently have no intention of giving up any major portion of it, if any portion at all. Briefly, then, both sides consider the frontier as warranting armed conflict if necessary.

²¹"Recent Soviet Comments on PRC Minority Problems Noted" FBIS-SOV-71-29, (Washington, D. C.: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 11 February 1971), Daily Report, Vol. III, p. A-29.

THIRD QUESTION: IS THE AREA SUITABLE
FOR JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS?

In discussing this question, "joint operations" will be construed as involving significant elements of two or more of the armed services.²²

In modern warfare, military operations can be undertaken almost anywhere, but some places are more suitable for military operations than others, and areas comparatively unsuitable for military operations may deter potential combatants. A detailed examination of the suitability of this area for military operations by a force or forces of a given size would itself be the subject of a major study. For the purpose of answering this question, then, certain historical precedents will be cited to give some idea of the size of forces which have been employed or stationed in the frontier area. Then some principal features of the environment will be discussed. After that, rail and road networks, to include lateral and cross-border routes, will be discussed briefly. Known locations of airfields will also be mentioned.

Expeditions and the Stationing of Troops

The expedition of Li Kuang-li about 101 BC, which was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, comprised over 60,000 troops plus mounts, cattle, and pack animals. The expedition

²²Also see Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1 August 1968).

followed the T'ien Shan South Road and moved to the Fergana region, probably crossing the mountain boundary near Irkeshtam by the Kashgar-Andizhan route. This was apparently the same route followed by Yakub Beg in the nineteenth century when he entered the Tarim Basin (Chapter III). In the year 742 AD Chinese frontier armies were said to total 490,000 with over 80,000 horses.²³ The Manchu expeditions of 1754 and 1755 into Western Mongolia and Sinkiang apparently consisted of well over 20,000 troops. Tso Tsung-T'ang, at the end of his campaign to recover Sinkiang in the nineteenth century (Chapter III), was estimated to have about 60,000 battle-hardened troops under his command when China was almost ready to go to war with Russia. Russia reportedly had over 90,000 troops in the vicinity of the Ili Valley at the time.²⁴

It was mentioned in Chapter III that in 1937 Sheng Shih-ts'ai had over 10,000 infantry, cavalry, and artillery troops, some dozen aircraft, and a company of tanks and armored vehicles. Soviet forces reinforcing Sheng's troops included 5,000 men, an air unit, and an armored regiment. This enabled Sheng to cope with the 15,000 cavalry of the rebelling Muslims.

At the end of World War II, there were about 100,000 Chinese Nationalist troops (12 divisions) in Sinkiang.²⁵ In 1970, there

²³Lattimore, p. 46. The garrisoned area extended to the west beyond Lakes Balkhash and Issyk-kul, in present-day Soviet Central Asia.

²⁴Hosea Ballou Morse, International Relations of the Chinese Empire (1918), Vol. 2, p. 333.

²⁵Lattimore, p. 84.

were estimated to be about four Chinese Communist divisions in Sinkiang. There are also estimated to be between two and three divisions of border troops there. The number of divisions is not great in view of the fact that Sinkiang constitutes about one-sixth of China's land area and that Communist China has a total of 118 line divisions available. Of course it is also true that the forces there could be reinforced with about 11 divisions from the Chengtu Wuhan, Tsinan, or Nanking Military Districts.²⁶ In addition to the regular and border divisions, there are about 300,000 Production and Construction Corps personnel in the SUAR.²⁷ Formed in 1954 mainly from demobilized soldiers, these units till land as well as construct reservoirs, irrigation facilities, and buildings. They are credited with much of the land reclaimed in the SUAR. Another estimate places the total of Chinese Communist troops at 700,000.²⁸ There are also indications that Chinese Communist troops stationed in the region include air force and armored units.²⁹

On the Soviet side, there are about 27 divisions along the entire Sino-Soviet border, which excludes Mongolia but includes

²⁶The Institute for Strategic Studies, London, The Military Balance 1970-1971 (1970), p. 7. Also see Appendix 9.

²⁷"E-Mao Ch'ung-t'u Hsia ti Hsin-chiang" ("Sinkiang Under Mao-Russian Conflict"), Chung-Yang Jih-pao (Central Daily News) (Taipei, Taiwan), 27 August 1969.

²⁸Niu Sien-Chong, "Sinkiang: The 'New Frontier' of China" NATO's Fifteen Nations, April-May 1969, p. 92.

²⁹FBIS-CHI-71-1 (Washington, DC: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 4 January 1971), Vol. 1, No. 1, p. H-6; FBIS-CHI-71-13 (Washington, DC: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 20 January 1971), Vol. 1, No. 13, p. H 3.

the Soviet Far East (around China's Manchuria), the area of greater emphasis by both Soviet and Chinese forces.³⁰

Environment

The climate of the area can broadly be described as continental with hot summers and cold winters.³¹ On the Chinese side of the border, the climate is extremely dry. Annual precipitation varies from two inches or less in the Tarim Basin, five inches along the north edge of the T'ien Shan, to 10 inches in the Ili Valley. Precipitation is slightly more plentiful on the Soviet side of the border. Temperatures range from about a minimum of 19 degrees Fahrenheit in January to a high of about 100 degrees in July. Sand and dust storms and the severe temperature changes may affect both equipment and personnel.

In Soviet Central Asia, the temperature can be as low as minus 14 degrees Fahrenheit in January and as high as 113 degrees in July.³²

Roads at high altitudes, especially in the Pamir region, and those through high mountain passes may be blocked by snow in winter.

³⁰The Military Balance, 1970-1971, p. 6.

³¹Geoffrey Wheeler, LTC, The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia (1964), p. 4.

³²James S. Gregory, Russian Land, Soviet People (1968), p. 811.

Routes of Communication and Airfields

Inasmuch as road and rail nets have already been discussed in connection with the description of the border in Chapter II, only cross-border routes and significant lateral routes near the border will be discussed in this section.

The only known railroad on the Chinese side of the border stops at a point just west of Urumchi. Additional railroads are projected however, to circle the Tarim Basin and to link it with the Dzungarian Basin by lines to Kuldja as well as to Turfan east of Urumchi. Another lateral line in Dzungaria is projected to link A-lo-t'ai in the north with the Karamai oil field and Tu-shan-tzu which is farther south near Wu-Su (Appendix 2). Construction has been suspended on the previously projected rail line from Urumchi to the Dzungarian Gate to link up with a spur from the Turkestan-Siberia (Turk-Sib) Railway on the Soviet side.³³ Even if this portion should be constructed, however, the Soviet railways use broad-gauge track while the Chinese railways use standard-gauge track. This would necessitate truck-changing or other interfacing technique. The aforementioned suspension of construction brings into question whether a rail line projected to join Sui-ting west of Kuldja and Ching-ho near Ebi Nor (Ebi Nuur) to the northeast near the Dzungarian Gate will ever be constructed.³⁴

³³Jackson, p. 15.

³⁴US Central Intelligence Agency, Communist China Map Folio (October 1967), Map 54929 (referred to hereafter as CIA Map Folio).

On the Soviet side, the Turk-Sib Railway runs parallel to the border, and as close as a hundred miles from it, as far as Alma Ata. Spurs extend to the Dzungarian Gate and to Tekeli to the south. The Turk-Sib Railroad is shown on recent maps as being single-track.³⁵

Lateral and cross-border highways are shown on the map at Appendix 2. In the south, on the Chinese side, a highway parallels the border at distances as short as eight to ten miles after which the highway turns northeast toward Kashgar. On the Soviet side, a highway starting from Murgab in the Pamir region generally parallels the border as far north as Sary Tash but at a greater distance from it than the Chinese one in the south. The road on the Chinese side does not have to surmount passes whereas the one on the Soviet side crosses the Trans-Alai Range by the Kizilart Pass at an elevation of 14,000 feet.³⁶ From Sary Tash a cross-border highway passes Irkeshtam running eastward along the Kizil River valley to Kashgar. This is a portion of the major route between Soviet Central Asia and Sinkiang south of the T'ien Shan, the route followed by Yakub Beg (Chapter III), Li Kuang-li, and many expeditions and caravans travelling between Russia and China. Another route from Kashgar in Sinkiang across the Kok Shal Tau Range must surmount the Torugart Pass (Torugart Dawan) at an elevation of 12,700 feet.³⁷ There are other passes to the east

³⁵ ibid.

³⁶ John A. Morrison (retired Professor, formerly of the University of Pittsburgh), letter to author, 20 January 1971.

³⁷ Jackson, p. 11.

over the Kōl Shal Tau and T'ien Shan Ranges but apparently no roads pass through them. The Muzart Pass (Muz Art Dawan) across the Tien Shan into the Tekes River valley has an elevation of about 11,480 feet.

North of the T'ien Shan, the road systems are denser on both sides of the border and, except for the Ili and Tekes River valleys, are generally not obstructed by mountain ranges. Highways cross the border at Korghos (Ho-ch'eng) west of Kuldja, west of Chuguchak (T'a-ch'eng), and at Chi-mu-nai in the Irtysh River valley.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that roads or highways form the main transportation means in the border area, particularly on the Chinese side. Widths of these highways range from 15 to 25 feet. The surfacing is generally loose gravel or packed earth, both of which require constant maintenance and can be expected to break down under sustained heavy use such as passage by mechanized units, armored units, or heavy support traffic.³⁸ It is estimated that a gravel-surfaced road in relatively flat terrain which could accommodate two-way traffic could be traveled by 3,000 to 8,000 two-and-one-half or three-ton trucks daily. In other words, roughly between 7,500 and 24,000 tons of supplies could move daily on one such road. A similar road in a mountainous area could accommodate about one-half the aforementioned traffic. This is not a large

³⁸ CIA Map Folio, page opposite Map 54930 notes that much of the Chinese road network is low-grade by western standards and requires constant maintenance.

amount of traffic considering the numbers of vehicles in modern mechanized and armored units as well as their heavy fuel and ammunition requirements. Troop units would also need to carry considerable amounts of water in view of the dryness of much of the area. Dust storms and sandstorms in the summer, snow in the winter, and extreme temperature variations would also affect operations and maintenance.

To supplement and occasionally to replace highway transportation, it may be necessary to resort to air transportation in the area. Airfields in close proximity to the border are found at Yarkand, Kashgar, Aksu, Kucha, Kuldja, Wu-su, and A-lo-t'ai on the Chinese side and at or near Osh, Fergana, Andizhan, Frunze, Alma Ata, and Ust Bukhtarma on the Soviet side (Appendix 2). The sandy, gently rolling terrain of the semidesert and desert areas such as those in and around the Tarim and Dzungarian Basins favor airfield development and airmobile operations. Water supply and soil stabilization requirements would constitute limitations, however, on airfield construction.

The width of the Irtysch Valley corridor farther to the north (Appendix 2) is roughly the frontage of a deployed Soviet combined arms army, although, as in the case of the Dzungarian Gate, a lake lies in the corridor on either side of the border. In addition, the eastern portion of the Dzungarian Basin is similar in nature to the center of the Tarim Basin insofar as roads and human habitation are concerned (Appendices 2 and 5).

In answer to the third question, then, based on historical examples plus a brief overview of the border area, operations, possibly of Soviet combined arms army or larger size, with air and airmobile support, can be visualized. Terrain, weather, the road net, and length of lines of communications would impose severe limitations on such operations. Before dismissing this possibility, however, it may be useful to recall the Soviet-Mongolian-Japanese conflict at Nomonhan (Khalkhin-Gol) on the Mongolia-Manchuria border in 1939. There limited access routes were involved, as were desert terrain, water shortage, and distance from supporting railheads, all of them constituting severe inhibitions on mechanized or armor operations. Yet operations involving corps-size units with air support on both sides were carried out successfully over a period of several months. On the other hand, even at movement rates of up to 60 miles per day, it would take a Soviet force 10 days to traverse Sinkiang alone, which would still leave it a considerable distance from the heart of China.

Before making any assessment as to the suitability of the area for joint operations, it will be necessary to look at the general nature of the terrain on both sides of the border. South of the T'ien Shan Range, the mountainous nature of the frontier and the Soviet side and the limited cross-border roads would inhibit large-scale operations. On the Chinese side and farther in from the frontier is the Tarim Basin, the rim of which is

inhabited and has its ring of roads and oases. In the center, however, the situation is different:

. . . In the heart of the region is the Taklamakan Desert, a howling wilderness, true desert for the most part utterly devoid of life and vegetation, a place of desolation of sand and rock.³⁹

North of the T'ien Shan barrier, the Ili River valley has historically proved quite attractive for the Russians. The larger portion of the valley lies in the Soviet Union. On the Chinese side, the valley narrows toward the east, thus favoring a force moving westward.

To the north of the Ili River valley, the first opening in the Dzungarian Range is the Dzungarian Gate, a traditional route for migrating nomads. Its narrowest portion allows approximate frontage for a deployed regiment. Further, although entry into Sinkiang via the gate would put an invader into the heart of the Dzungarian Basin very quickly, Ebi Nor (Lake) is an obstacle right at the mouth of the gate. Chuguchak (Tatagaytay or T'a-ch'eng) to the north is also hemmed in by mountains and lakes. Generally speaking, forces could move across the Northern border in either direction with equal facility except in the Ili Valley, which would favor a force moving or attacking to the west.

³⁹T. R. Tregear, A Geography of China (1965), p. 286. Also see Appendix 5 of this report.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, after citing two historical campaigns as examples of the employment of large forces in the frontier area, the military significance of the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia was examined in terms of the answers to three questions relating to the incident-prone nature of the border or portions of it, whether the frontier was worth fighting for, and whether the border area was suitable for joint military operations. The conclusions developed from the consideration of these three questions are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several conclusions may be drawn from the development of the border which involved China's giving up territory, or claims to territory, at each step. This imparted an irredentist cast to Chinese views, or at least to Chinese statements, on the border. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, considers that it has a right to the territory on its side of the border. Both Communist China and the Soviet Union consider that the economic and strategic value of their frontier territories warrants armed conflict if necessary to protect their holdings.

On the basis of Sino-Russian and Sino-Soviet history since the development of the border, Sino-Soviet border disputes are not expected to erupt into full-scale war. Border clashes such as those which occurred in 1969 may be expected to recur. The major incident-prone areas along the border have been north of the T'ien Shan Range, including the Ili and Tekes River valleys where the boundary has been compound and geometric. Specific areas with a record of incidents or conflict have been the Ili and Tekes River valleys, the section of the border between the Dzungarian Gate and Chuguchak (Tarbagaytay or T'a-ch'eng), and the Irtysh River valley. Future border clashes can be expected to occur in these areas. Should such clashes lead to all-out Sino-Soviet hostilities, major military actions can be expected to take place at or near the

border in the Irtysh River valley, the Dzungarian Gate area, and in the Ili and Tekes River valleys.

Chinese forces of up to half a million men have been garrisoned or have operated in the area on both sides of the current Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia.¹ Modern large-scale military operations such as those involving forces the size of a Soviet-combined arms army or larger, with air support, are possible in either direction. Climate, terrain, routes of communication, water shortage, and other logistical problems, however, can be expected to inhibit such operations.

The Sino-Soviet polemics and armed clashes along the border have added to and reinforced evidence that the Communist states of the world do not constitute a monolithic bloc. Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, is reported to have said that the schism that has developed in the Communist world gives a greater degree of flexibility to our foreign policy.² In a report to the Congress delivered on 25 February 1971, however, President Nixon said:

Another factor determining Communist Chinese conduct is the intense and dangerous conflict with the USSR. It has its roots in the historical development of the vast border areas between the two countries. It is aggravated by contemporary ideological hostility, by power rivalry and nationalist antagonisms.

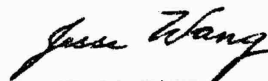
¹See Chapter IV, n. 23.

²Juan Cameron, "The Armed Forces' Reluctant Retrenchment," Fortune, (November 1970), p. 70.

A clash between these two great powers is inconsistent with the kind of stable Asian structure we seek. We, therefore, see no advantage to us in the hostility between the Soviet Union and Communist China. We do not seek any. We will do nothing to sharpen the conflict--nor to encourage it. It is absurd to believe that we could collude with one of the parties against the other. We have taken great pains to make it clear that we are not attempting to do so.

At the same time, we cannot permit either Communist China or the USSR to dictate our policies and conduct toward the other. We recognize that one effect of the Sino-Soviet conflict could be to propel both countries into poses of militancy toward the non-Communist world in order to validate their credentials as revolutionary centers. . . .³

The statement takes into account, among other things, that, in terms of available types of power, Sinkiang is accessible to the Soviet Union but not to the United States.⁴ The last paragraph in the quotation from the President's report however, indicates that attention should be directed to any further developments in Sino-Soviet border disputes, and to determine the significance of such developments, if for no other reason than to ensure the continuing soundness of United States foreign policy. Inasmuch as this is being done, recommendations to this effect would be inappropriate.



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³Richard Nixon, President of the United States, U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's, 25 February 1971, p. 106. A similar view was expressed in President Nixon's U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's, 18 February 1970, p. 142.

⁴Owen Lattimore, Pivot of Asia (1950), p. 3.

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APPENDIX 1

CLASSES OF BOUNDARIES¹

Physical boundaries follow some feature marked by nature.

- a. Mountains
 - (1) Crests
 - (2) Water divides
- b. Deserts
- c. Lakes, bays, and straits
 - (1) Median lines
 - (2) Principal navigable channel
 - (3) Bank or margin
- d. Rivers
 - (1) Median lines
 - (2) Thalweg
 - (3) Bank or margin
- e. Swamps
- f. Contour line, not the bank or margin, of a river or lake.

Geometric types include straight lines, areas of circles, and similar types of boundaries that disregard the physical geography and topography of the country.

- a. Straight lines (meridians and other great circles).

¹S. Whittemore Boggs, International Boundaries: a Study of Boundary Functions and Problems (1940), pp. 25-26.

b. Lines parallel to, or equidistant from, a coast or river.

Anthropogeographic types are related to the human occupancy of the land.

- a. Tribal boundaries.
- b. Economic boundaries.
- c. Historical boundaries.
- d. Cultural boundaries.

Complex or compound boundaries include compromise lines adjusted to many factors.