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Communism, Islam and Nationalism in China

By John M. H. Lindbeck

ON January 19, 1950 the People's Republic of China established "a regional coalition Government" in Northwest China, embracing the five provinces of Shensi, Kansu, Ninghsia, Chinghai, and Sinkiang.¹ This region is of special importance to China because of its strategic position at the nexus of Central Asia where Russian, Chinese and Pan-Islamic interests meet. The political orientation of the people in this area is of fundamental concern to the government of China.

Moslem communities are scattered throughout China, but the largest concentration of these is in China's Northwest. In this region under the present jurisdiction of the Northwest Military and Administrative Committee, having its seat of government at Sian, appear to be about half of China's Moslems.² Within the region they represent something less than half the total population of about 23 million. The place of the Moslem communities in the Northwest Region determines in part its character and strength, for without the cooperation and loyalty of its Moslem groups, the region is politically weak and a constant strategic danger to Chinese authority and integrity in Central Asia.

Does the establishment of the Northwest Regional Government resolve the conflict between China's territorial claims and the interests of her largest "national" minority, the Moslems? The answer depends in large part on China's approach to inter-racial and inter-religious problems as they affect the Moslems. The effectiveness of any policy toward the Moslems will, in turn, depend on its recognition of two essential features of China's Moslem population: their religious and communal particularism and their racial and cultural diversity.

The Moslem religion produces not simply a ritual or formal distinction, but also a fundamental social demarcation dividing the Moslem from the non-Moslem Chinese. Islamic exclusiveness based on

¹ This was announced over the Peking Radio Station on January 22.

² The estimates of China's Moslem population are completely unreliable. Two Japanese surveys in the 1920's put the number at about 10 million. See Yang Ching-chih, "Japan—Protector of Islam!" *Pacific Affairs*, Dec., 1942, p. 474. Some Chinese Moslems claim a following of 48 million (*China Handbook*, 1937-1945, p. 27), but Man Ying-keng is reported to have reached the conclusion that Moslems constituted only 1 per cent of China's population (Alexandra David-Neel, "Mohammedans of the Chinese Far West," *Asia and the Americas*, Dec., 1943, p. 677). There are perhaps 8 to 10 million Moslems in the five provinces of the Northwest: roughly 3.5 million in Sinkiang, 3 to 4 million in Kansu, Ninghsia and Chinghai, and over 1 million in Shensi.

claims of absolute religious truth and social values is variously perpetuated by an absolute prohibition against marriage outside the faith, aloofness from the religious and social activities of their neighbors, adherence to their own religious calendar, daily public profession of faith at the call to prayer, a self-segregated pattern of social life centered around the mosque, and a well-developed sense of solidarity and communal self-sufficiency which is openly demonstrated in communal institution, legislation, and organizations to meet the social, educational, economic, and political needs of their members.³

This aloofness makes friendly cooperation between Moslems and the Chinese possible only on Moslem terms. But such aloofness is detrimental to China's national unity and modernization. In order to carry through national programs of reform, education and reconstruction and to meet external ideological and military threats the activities of all groups in China need to be and are being collectivized and brought under national control.⁴ Under the Manchus, and increasingly since then, Moslem particularism has been under attack as the need for national solidarity and integration has been felt more and more by the Chinese.

The majority of China's Moslems, whether or not linguistically and culturally Chinese, do not regard themselves as of the same race as the Chinese.⁵ This consciousness of racial distinctiveness reinforces the Moslem sense of religious exclusiveness. This does not mean, however, that the Moslems are one racial minority. They present a racial problem because they are made up of a number of diverse racial and cultural groups. United by religion, they are divided by race and cul-

³ See Robert B. Ekvall, *Cultural Relations on the Kansu-Tibetan Border, passim*; Shin-oku Iwamura, "The Structure of Moslem Society in Inner Mongolia," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, Nov., 1948, pp. 34-44.

⁴ This was evident, for example, in the Draft Plan for the Development of Sinkiang drawn up by a committee formed by the Executive Yuan on Feb. 20, 1934. An outline of this appears in C. Y. W. Meng's, "Nanking's Elaborate Plan to Develop Sinkiang," *China Weekly Review*, Jan. 5, 1935, p. 194. Also see Hubert T. M. Soong, "Promoting Mohammedan Education in the Development of China's Northwest," *ibid.*, March 28, 1936, pp. 116, 117. The Moslems' need for fuller integration into China's national life was recognized by Moslems in the Chinese Islamic National Salvation Federation headed by General Pai Chung-hsi as well as by the others. See John Kim, "Chinese Muslims View Pakistan," *Asia and the Americas*, March, 1943, pp. 155-57; Ma Chien, "Views of a Chinese Moslem," *Moslem World*, Jan., 1936, p. 73.

⁵ Ma Chien, *loc. cit.*, p. 77. This apparently is also true of the Tung-kan Moslems of Kansu, Ninghsia and Chinghai and the Han Hui (Chinese Moslems) who are Chinese linguistically, culturally and, predominantly, in race. With the exception of 90 to 100 thousand Tung-kan Moslem immigrants, Sinkiang's Moslems are non-Chinese in language and culture.

ture. Yet this dual aspect of China's Moslem population is a major point of difficulty for the Chinese policy makers. Moslems can not be treated merely as a religious minority, as the Kuomintang has tried to do, nor reduced to a simple "national," or racial minority, as the Communists at one time hoped to do.⁶

Control of China's Northwest has now fallen to China's Communists. Through the years in which they have tried to build a stable independent base in China, the Communist Party has tried to work out an effective policy toward the Moslems, especially towards the Tungkan Moslem whose organized power dominated the provinces of Kansu, Ninghsia and Chinghai,⁷ which would give it control of the Northwest and the support of China's Moslems. This policy was not developed in isolation but in competition with the Kuomintang and, to a lesser extent, with Japan. Moreover, it was developed within the broader framework of overall Communist aims and policies, of which it was made a contributory part.

The initial encounters of the Moslems and Communists in Kansu and Shensi were incidental and haphazard. The first Red Army in the Northwest was organized by Liu Tzu-tan in Shensi in 1931.⁸ It operated as a peasant-bandit group in an area which suffered from numerous social and economic tensions arising as an aftermath of devastating famines. In the base area of this force the first Shensi Soviet was organized in 1933. The combination of bandit activities and ruthless class-struggle tactics brought it into disrepute among both the Chinese and Moslems in the area. Only the pressing needs of livelihood enabled this Soviet to recruit support from the rural dispossessed. No special appeals were made to China's minority groups; the primary appeal was

⁶ For a discussion of these views, as well as other positions, see Owen Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia*, pp. 108-115.

⁷ The Tungkan Moslems were largely organized by a family of Ma's from Hochow (Linhsia), the center of Chinese Islam. Ma Pu-fang was governor of Chinghai, his cousin, Ma Hung-kuei was governor of Ninghsia, and his elder brother, Ma Pu-ch'ing, controlled the Kansu corridor. Another relative was Ma Chung-ying who attempted to use Tungkan Moslems to gain control of Sinkiang in the early thirties with the encouragement of Japanese agents. See Aitchen K. Wu, *Turkistan Tumult*, pp. 236-237. Relatives, friends and neighbors of the Ma's from the county of Linhsia, Kansu, had positions of importance throughout the Northwest as governors, divisional corps commanders, officials and ahungs. See Y. P. Mei, "Stronghold of Muslin China," *Moslem World* (reprinted from *Asia*), April, 1941, pp. 178, 183; Harrison Forman, "China's Moslemia," *Canadian Geographic Journal*, September, 1948, p. 143.

⁸ See Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (Modern Library Edition), pp. 220-232, for an account of the Shensi Soviet and its growth.

to the poverty stricken and socially homeless. This brought a few Moslems into the group.

In the following years this Soviet underwent a major change. The mounting pressure of the Chinese Government against Communist groups in Kiangsi and elsewhere dislodged them from their bases and forced them to move. The Northwest seemed to offer the most promising place to make a new stand for these hard-pressed units: a Soviet base was already in existence where the various Communist units could converge and consolidate their position; it was remote from the chief centers of Kuomintang power; there was the possibility of linking this base with Russia through pro-Russian Sinkiang and Outer Mongolia, thus securing outside support; and there seemed to be a real opportunity of an alliance with a strong Moslem minority with its promise of a large-scale accession of power to the depleted Communist forces. In 1934 the Communist units from Honan reached Shensi; in 1935 the Kiangsi units reached Kansu and Shensi. The Northwest, linked with Sinkiang, was to be turned into the new center of Communist power in China.

A crucial element in these plans for rapidly building a Communist base and linking it with Russia was the attitude of the Moslems,⁹ especially those of Ninghsia, Kansu, and Chinghai who separated the Communists from Sinkiang in a broad, continuous territorial strip. The Communists set out to organize Soviets in the areas they could conquer and control. In 1935 and 1936 intensive efforts were made to build up village Soviets in Moslem communities. In September 1936 over 300 delegates from village soviets in Ninghsia, Kansu and Shensi were brought together to form a provisional Moslem Soviet Regional Government.¹⁰

The Platform of the Communists, patterned after the general program of the Russian Communists toward national minorities, had two main features: a racial policy leading to political self-determination and autonomy for the Moslems, and a social policy of class revolution. The first policy was an appeal to race, to a segregated minority, promising them equality with the Chinese, freedom from the Chinese oppression, the opportunity to develop their own cultural and religious institu-

⁹ First (Red) Army Corps, Political Department: company discussion Materials, "The Mohammedan Problem," p. 2 (June 2, 1936), quoted in Snow, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

¹⁰ See N. Wales, *Inside Red China*, p. 154, and Snow, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

tions,¹¹ the right and power to defend their interests by developing a Moslem army, and the realization of their racial and cultural destiny through union with fellow Moslems in Sinkiang, Russia and Outer Mongolia.¹² The second was an appeal to the poor, especially the peasants, promising them the leading place in the new Moslem order. This was to be accomplished through the class-struggle: the poor were to seize power and establish their own local governments; the traditional system of rents, debts, interests, taxes, was to be reformed; and wealth, primarily land, redistributed.¹³ The communist strategy was to convert the poor into a class-conscious political group through which they could exercise control over the Moslem communities.

This program failed to win Moslem support. Only in areas held by the Chinese Red armies were there any Moslem Soviets. These disappeared with the withdrawal of the Communist armies. In fact, instead of winning Moslem support Communist activities mobilized the Moslem communities in the Northwest against them and finally led to a major military defeat of the Communists at the hands of the Moslems in January and February, 1937,¹⁴ despite the fact that the Comintern's United Front program of 1935 had by that time already modified Communist policy by exchanging class dictatorship for class cooperation with groups outside the Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party.¹⁵

By January 1937, the Red Armies were moving into position to seize the route through Kansu to Sinkiang. There was no danger of attack from government armies in their Shensi rear, for they had already worked out an anti-Japanese United Front program with the troops of Chang Hsueh-liang and Yang Hu-cheng, which now stood between them and the armies under Nanking's direct control.¹⁶ In Kansu, other than the Moslem forces, they had to deal only with the 40,000 troops of the Central Government under the command of Generals Hu

11 Religious liberty did not become a part of the Communist program until it began to develop the United Front program in 1936. Religious liberty was then granted to Moslem troops which joined the Red Army and to students in political training. Chou Enlai explained this shift in policy to a group of church and missionary representatives in Sian in the early part of 1937. See George Young, *The Living Christ in Modern China*, p. 182.

12 Snow, *op. cit.*, p. 384.

13 Speech of General P'eng Teh-huai, September 6, 1936, quoted in Snow, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

14 Wales, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

15 Wang Ming (Chen Shao-ju) *Fifteen Years of Struggle in China*; also see reference to Wang Ming's interpretation of the United Front in David J. Dallin: *Soviet Russia and the Far East*, p. 129.

16 See James M. Bertram, *First Act in China, The Story of Sian Mutiny*, pp. 205 ff., *passim*.

Tsung-nan and Mao Ping-wen. Communist troops had advanced within 300 miles of the Sinkiang border when they were halted by Moslem forces from Ninghsia, Kansu and Chinghai working in combination. The Communists were driven out of the Kansu panhandle by the Moslem cavalry of Ma Pu-ch'ing, based at Liangchow, Kansu, with the help of Ninghsia troops under Ma Hung-K'uei and the Chinghai Moslems of Ma Pu-fang, under the command of Ma Yuan-hai.¹⁷ It has been reported that the Communists regarded these defeats as the most cruel and punishing they had suffered up to that time.¹⁸ Instead of serving as a link to Sinkiang and Russia, the Tung-kan Moslems became an effective barrier to converting all of Northwest China and Sinkiang into a Communist base connected with Russia.

There were a number of reasons for this Communist failure. A serious Communist misinterpretation of the nature of Islam contributed in a major way to the organized resistance of the Moslems at this time. Even after abandoning their anti-religious policy, the Communists did not acknowledge that Islam was not merely the collection of religious ideas of a racial group, but a universal religion which transcended not only race, but also class divisions. The faithful follower of Allah could not admit, as the minority policy of the Communists implied, that his religion was a racial or cultured peculiarity,¹⁹ for it obviously was not, and if racial and linguistic differences were used to draw lines between the faithful, China's Moslems would lose what religious unity they had. Furthermore, Islam was a way of life, a communal social order with its own economic, political and cultural prescriptions and patterns of a positive and exclusive kind.²⁰ The Communists apparently did not, or could not, appreciate the distinctive religious sanctions behind the economic and social order of the Moslem communities, nor the legal, political and social role of the mosques and their official repositories of local authority.²¹ The revolutionary economic, political and social order of the Soviets transferred all local power to mass organiza-

17 A composite of items from Central News Agency reports.

18 Wales, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

19 An illustration of this tendency, if not policy, of reducing Islam to a racial or cultural characteristic of the Moslem peoples was the requirement that non-Moslem Chinese recruits observe the religious rituals and customs of the Moslems while serving in Moslem Army units: this was a denial of Islam's religious claims. See Gunther Stein: *The Challenge of Red China*, p. 244.

20 See Louis Massignon, quoted by H. A. R. Gibb, *Whither Islam?* pp. 378, 379; and Robert B. Ekvall, *op. cit.*, pp. 15ff.

21 See Shinobu Iwamura, "The Structure of Moslem Society in Inner Mongolia," *loc. cit.*, pp. 39ff.

tions which were outside the context of Islamic religious institutions. This was a basic and positive denial of the authority of the Koranic order.²²

Secondly, the Communists were handicapped by the anti-religious reputation they had acquired during the Kiangsi period.²³ Every effort of the Communists to dispel this fear by avoiding all religious offense and giving special recognition to the position of the religious leaders failed to win either the Moslem leaders or the masses. Unhappy accounts of Communist religious oppression from their eighteen million co-religionists in Russia, who were being treated as a racial-cultural minority and not a religious group, probably heightened Moslem suspicions of the Chinese Communists.

A third short-coming in the Communist program for the Moslems was the hidden premise in their main appeal: minority autonomy. The Tung-kan Moslems, in particular, had achieved on a segregated basis a high order of cultural adaptation to their Chinese environment. Segregation was, however, on a communal and not a territorial basis, except in limited areas and in Sinkiang. Despite a certain degree of economic and vocational specialization, the Moslems were a part of the local rural and urban economies where they lived.²⁴ Although resisting Chinese assimilation, the Moslems both desired and needed cooperation with their Han Chinese neighbors in the spheres of economics and politics. Under these circumstances, the Communist offer to convert the pattern of Moslem communal segregation into political and economic segregation or independence threatened to destroy the basis of Moslem livelihood, and political security.²⁵

Promises from Chinese sources of minority independence and a pan-Islamic state, moreover, were not taken seriously. The Moslems were too aware of Chinese cultural imperialism, or Pan-Hanism, which aimed at the assimilation of all distinctive minority groups,²⁶ to accept such promises at face value. Proof of Communist insincerity seemed to be embodied in the Fifth Red Army Corps which was being used to

²² See Mohammed Hussian, *Islam and Socialism*, Lahore, 1947; Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East*, pp. 40-41.

²³ Ekvall, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²⁴ Ekvall, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁵ The utter impossibility of Moslem independence or autonomy has now been recognized by the Communists. See below.

²⁶ See Chiang Kai-shek (Philip Jaffe, ed.), *China's Destiny*, p. 39, for an authoritative statement of "Ta Han chu-i." Earlier expressions of such assimilative views were frequent.

open the road to Sinkiang. Its men were none other than those of Feng Yu-hsiang's former Kuominchun who had ruthlessly suppressed the Moslems in Kansu in 1926-1928.²⁷

Some Moslems accepted the Pan-Islamic and minority propaganda of the Japanese, but few gave credence to such promises made by Chinese. Communist Pan-Islamic propaganda was abortive and may even have been a liability, for in trying to discredit the promises of the Japanese,²⁸ the Communists tended to weaken their own position on minority independence.

Fourthly, the ambiguities into which the Communists were led by their effort to use sectarian conflicts to undermine Moslem unity and win some support did not help their over-all cause. The Moslem communities of China fall into two major sectarian divisions, the Traditionalists (Lao Chiao) and the Reformists (Hsin Hsin Chiao).²⁹ The Traditionalists, who represent the large majority of China's Moslems, are divided into three subjects representing various degrees of conservatism and reform on matters of ritual, but who accept the essential features of the distinctive and traditional Chinese forms of Islamic organization and practice. The Reformists are in open opposition to such conservatism. They are trying to purge Islam of its Chinese accretions, to return to the essential spiritual principles of Islam, harmonized with modern scientific thought, and to revitalize and strengthen the Islamic social order by increasing the role of the mosque and the power of the clergy in the Moslem community. This reformist group, which included the political and military leaders in the Northwest, tended to be Pan-Islamic in outlook. The Communists, however, in their effort to undermine the hostile military and political Moslem leadership which was Reformist, tried to attract the support of the Traditionalists, many of whose mosques had been attacked by their politically potent rivals.³⁰ But this alienated the group to which the Pan-Islamic appeals were addressed, and merely strengthened their Kuomintang orientation.

Finally, the alliance between the Kuomintang and the Moslem leaders in Kansu, Ninghsia and Chinghai was a conclusive obstacle to

²⁷ Nym Wales, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

²⁸ For Japanese efforts to win the support of the Moslems and use them, see G. E. Taylor, *Struggle for North China*, pp. 84, 85; Yang ching-chih, "Japan—Protector of Islam!" *Pacific Affairs*, Dec., 1942, pp. 471-481.

²⁹ See George Young, *op. cit.*, pp. 137, 138; S. Iwamura, "The Structure of Moslem Society in Inner Mongolia," *loc. cit.*, pp. 42, 43; E. Snow, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

³⁰ Snow, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

Communist success when taken in conjunction with other factors.³¹ The Kuomintang, lacking the power to ensure its authority against local Chinese warlords or to prevent the rise of local Moslem military power, first gave recognition to the political claims of Moslem leaders in the early 1930's in an effort to draw the Northwest into its political orbit.³² This early alliance, dictated by Kuomintang weakness and Moslem ambitions, was deepened and extended in the following years. With the extension of Japanese and Communist activities in the Northwest, the Kuomintang became more dependent on the Moslems to maintain its influence.³³ In 1936 the unreliability of Chang Hsueh-liang and his Manchurian troops and the other military leaders as opponents of the Communists became apparent. Following this the Moslems, because of their anti-Communism,³⁴ were further encouraged by the Chinese Government as allies against the Communists even though they were a minority group.

Despite the failure of the Communists to make any real headway with the Moslems, they did seem to register some local successes, especially after their main appeal became a united front of local forces against Japan.³⁵ A few hundred Moslems joined the Red Army to escape poverty. Not many of these were married and settled members of their home communities. Several thousand captured Moslem troops were prevailed upon to enlist in the Red Army on a segregated basis. This permitted them to avoid religious compromises. Very few be-

31 Ekvall, *op. cit.*, p. 25, says that Moslem public opinion supported cooperation with the Kuomintang because of the Communists' anti-religious propaganda.

32 Ma Hung-k'uei was first drawn into cooperation with the Kuomintang in 1930 when Feng Yu-hsiang broke with Chiang K'ai-shek.

33 In 1934 and 1935 the Kuomintang established branches of the Central Political Institute in Chinghai, Ningsia and Kansu. In 1936 Moslem units of Ma Pu-ch'ing and Ma Pu-fang were formally incorporated into China's National armies as the 7th Cavalry Division and the 2nd Army respectively.

34 After the "Sian Incident" Ma Hung-k'uei sent Nanking a message urging the necessity of suppressing the Communists rather than joining them in a united front.

35 The united front program was initiated by the Comintern in the summer of 1935. It was not until the end of 1936 that the Chinese Communists were willing or able to extend it to include cooperation with the Kuomintang (See David I. Dallin, *Soviet Russia and the Far East*, p. 129). The changes in policy in the initial phase of the united front were manifest in a number of ways: a propaganda shift to anti-Japanese themes based on appeals to Chinese nationalism; attempts to organize comprehensive mass organizations of Moslems and others independent of Soviet class organizations; cooperation with indigenous secret and peasant societies, such as the Red Spears, which they had ruthlessly suppressed prior to this; and religious and cultural freedom for groups cooperating with or being attracted to the united front. Not until the summer of 1937 were the electoral laws introduced to implement a united-front democracy and to replace the Soviet system of party and class dictator.

came members of the Party. In a few of the poorer districts the Moslem soviets had some popular support. But these successes seem to have been due to fortuitous circumstances and appeals and not to a victory of Communist ideology and the Soviet program.

The "national minority" policy of the Chinese Communists, based on Leninist-Stalinist theory, failed, for want of realism, to attract Moslem support. Although the rural reform measures of the Communists attracted some of the poor peasants, Moslem Soviets had to be created by force. They seem to have won far less popular support among the Moslems than among the Chinese of other faiths. Fundamentally the failure of the Communists stemmed from their refusal to recognize the Moslems as a religious group and to respect the essential nature of Islamic institutions. The Moslems were unwilling to be reduced merely to a racial minority. Other terms of cooperation had to be found to elicit the voluntary support of China's Moslems.

In 1936 the Chinese Communists began to abandon their effort to build Chinese Soviets. The conflict between the followers of Marx and Allah was subordinated to the demands of China's national resistance to Japanese aggression between 1937 and 1945. Both groups were drawn into the war against Japan under the United Front. Comintern strategy and Chinese patriotism brought a radical alteration in the program of the Chinese Communists, whose primary intermediate aim became the defeat of Japanese imperialism. A by-product of this reorientation was a new domestic program which permitted the Moslems to cooperate with the Communists as the earlier Soviet policies had not.

In this new approach a form of political democracy based on village and district assemblies was substituted for Soviet dictatorships; group mobilization and solidarity replaced class-conflict tactics; popular agrarian reforms were adopted in place of revolutionary, class-based division, equalization and redistribution of land and wealth; and freedom and protection were given religious groups and institutions. The nationalism of Sun Yat-sen was reappropriated as the one expression of China's hopes in which all groups could join.³⁶ Under the pragmatic demands of a peasant-based war against Japan, the Chinese Communists

³⁶ The Communist attitude toward Sun Yat-sen has been highly opportunistic. In 1928 "The Programme of the Communist International," adopted by the Sixth Congress, and accepted by the Chinese Communist Party, stated that Sun Yat-senism had become a fetter on the revolution's further development and called for "opposition to the remnants of the Sun Yat-sen ideology." The unity statement of the Chinese Communist Party on September 22, 1937 declared: "The San Min Chu-I enunciated by Dr. Sun Yat-sen is the paramount need of China today. This party is ready to strive for its enforcement."

evolved a program which was realistic and successful in organizing rural resistance to Japan and her Chinese collaborators. The Party and the Red Army proved to be strong enough to carry out a major change in policy and tactics without disintegrating, and thus were able to provide centralized and disciplined leadership for guerrilla warfare. Most important, the relationship of the Communists to the Chinese people changed. From a corrosive and destructive force in the Chinese country-side, they became an accepted and disciplined body which integrated China's disorganized and isolated villages into a massive base for guerrilla war.

With this change the relations between Moslems and Communists also altered. Neutrality replaced hostility, for both were formally committed to a common struggle against an alien invader. The religious claims of Islam, and not merely the rights of Moslems, were recognized by the Communists, who even encouraged the building of a mosque at Yen-an. The Communists made no further effort to impose their control on Moslem areas to the West.

During this war period Communist policy toward the Moslems seems to have had two major aims: one, a truce with Moslem military leaders in order to protect their rear and to avert the danger of being caught between the Moslems and the Japanese; two, the enlistment of available Moslem power against the Japanese, either under their immediate leadership, or that of the Chinese Government. In the first they were successful. In the second they had some success in their own area of operations. Moslems in the guerrilla areas were drawn into the border government on the basis of proportional representation, and guerrilla units through their own associations which had the same rights as parallel Chinese organizations. In the Army they were given special considerations by being allowed to have their own units governed by regulations modified to provide for the observance of their religious rituals and social habits to which even non-Moslem replacements, it has been reported, were required to submit.³⁷ By and large, Moslems in the border areas seem to have cooperated effectively with the guerrilla organizations.³⁸ The loyalty of the Moslems in the guerrilla areas to the Chinese cause was not undermined by the efforts of the Japanese to win their support by giving them a special status as citizens in the New Order. Outside the border regions the Communists

³⁷ G. Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

³⁸ See Harrison Forman, *Report from Red China*, pp. 60, 132; C. and W. Band,

appear to have had no influence, nor could they undertake campaigns to mobilize Moslem support in the unoccupied areas of China without arousing the opposition of Moslem leaders and the Chinese Government, which had its own program for enlisting Moslem support through the Islamic National Salvation Federation under General Pai Chung-hsi.³⁹

With the resumption of the civil war between the Communists and the Chinese Government in 1946 after nine years of partial truce, the Communists again took an active interest in the Moslem districts of Northwest China from which they had been expelled in 1937. But not until the latter part of 1949 were the Communist forces in a position to attack the Moslem troops in the Northwest. Earlier encounters had demonstrated that there still remained effective fighting units among the Moslems.⁴⁰ Yet when General P'eng Teh-huai led his First Field Army against the Moslem troops in the Northwest the anticipated resistance failed to develop.⁴¹ On August 26 Lanchow fell to the Communists; on September 5 Sining was taken; by September 21 all significant Moslem fighting units had either been broken up, captured, or had gone over to the Communists. Sinkiang was brought peaceably over to the Communist side by General Tao Chih-yueh on September 25. In one month's span China's Northwest fell to the Communists.

The absence of resistance from the Chinese-speaking Tung-kan Moslems was due to a number of factors. First and foremost was the collapse of the Chinese Government. China's Moslems were in no position to withstand the power of a reunited China, Communist or non-Communist. Their semi-independent political and military position in the Northwest had depended on a divided China. Only with outside support, or as a buffer between two or more rival groups, could they, as a minority, maintain their regional preeminence. But in April and May, 1949, their Kuomintang support vanished, and by the time Peng Teh-huai launched his attack, they were isolated.⁴² After the

Two Years with the Chinese Communists, p. 147.

39 For a general account of the Federation see John Kim, "Chinese Muslims View Pakistan," *Asia and the Americas*, March, 1943.

40 Communist troops were attacked and driven back in 1946 and 1948. See *United States Relations with China, 1944-1949*, pp. 313, 328.

41 The chronology of events is drawn from the reports of the *New China News Agency* and the *New York Times*.

42 On September 10 Suiyuan surrendered to the Communists. The telegram announcing Suiyuan's adherence was signed by 38 officials and representatives of various organizations, including the Moslem Association. For the text, see *China Digest*, Oct. 5, 1949,

Communist capture of Sian on May 21, General Hu Tsung-nan withdrew the bulk of Government forces in the Northwest, about 150,000 troops, into Szechuan to the South. Meantime upon the failure of the peace negotiations between the Government and the Communists, the chief of the Government delegation, General Chang Chih-chung, deserted to the Communists. His army of about 50,000 men garrisoned major portions of the Sian-Lanchow-Sinkiang Highway and could no longer be counted on by the Moslems to support the 125,000 regularly organized Moslem troops in Chinghai, Kansu and Ninghsia after the defection of their commander. Moreover, the Communists now possessed a superiority in armaments which they had not had in 1937. To make the Moslem position worse, there seems to have been no indication that the general Chinese population, not notably pro-Moslem or anti-Communist, would join in repelling the advance of the Communists.

Not only were the Moslems isolated by the collapse of Government resistance but their will to resist also suffered. Although the Moslem leaders were resolved to fight the Communists⁴³ and made an effort, which the Communists acknowledged was partially successful,⁴⁴ to rally their people around them through racial and religious appeals, large numbers of Moslems either deserted their leaders or stood aside as neutral observers. This neutralization of Moslem resistance was partly the result of the United-Front strategy of the Communists which concealed the Communist character of their organization. By repatriating prisoners after a brief indoctrination and lenient treatment, the Communists undermined local Moslem resistance and advertised their non-discriminatory racial and religious policies.⁴⁵ These policies were strictly enforced among the advancing Communist armies who had also been briefed on proper conduct in Moslem communities.⁴⁶ The Moslem leaders could not offer much competition to these appeals. Many Moslems were hostile to the assimilative racial theories of Chiang K'ai-shek and the Kuomintang with which the Ma's were allied.⁴⁷ There also was a good deal of resentment against Ma Pu-fang after

p. 19. The collapse of Suiyuan's resistance opened Ninghsia to a flank attack. See *New York Times*, Sept. 21, 1949.

43 *New York Times*, April 8, 1949.

44 "Racial Prejudices," *China Weekly Review*, Oct. 1, 1949, p. 58; *Shih-chieh Wen-hua*, Sept. 2, 1949.

45 *China Weekly Review*, Sept. 3, 1949, p. 10.

46 *New York Times*, August 5, 1949.

47 Ma Chien, "Views of a Chinese Moslem," *loc. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

the war for using military force to push modern social reform.⁴⁸

Having gained control of the Northwest, China's Communists are still faced with the problem of defining the status of China's Moslems and reconciling their aspirations and interests with China's territorial claims in the region. The essential religious and communal grounds for Moslem opposition to the Chinese Communists remain. The Communists, however, refuse to recognize the unique role of religion,⁴⁹ which serves China's Moslems not only as a basis for communal life, but also as the critical differentiating factor between the Chinese-speaking Han or Tung-kan Moslems and other Chinese and as the primary unifying force among the culturally and racially diverse peoples in China who are adherents to Islam. Hence the Communists for ideological reasons are unable to offer the Moslems real religious freedom. They are willing to respect certain forms of religious beliefs and habits of individuals and groups, but they can not accept a religiously ordered society without forgetting the establishment of their own political and economic system. This they are unwilling to do. It is cultural diversity, not Islam, which the Communists are willing to champion.

The Communists have not been able to solve the problem of the status of China's Moslems because the primary aim of their policies has been to promote their own power.⁵⁰ At this point the inadequacy of Communist policies to win the voluntary support of China's Moslems clearly appears: they are not designed to advance the interests of the Moslems but to use the Moslems. Only if Communists were willing to frame a broader program to safeguard the religious unity and the racial diversity of China's Moslems, could they succeed in reconciling Moslem interests and China's national interests in the New Democracy. Minority autonomy provides no solution and, at best, is only applicable in Sinkiang. And there, if China's territorial claims are to be protected, autonomy is only possible after the Moslems have become loyal and participating members of the Chinese national community. If, as

⁴⁸ Marguerite Brown, "Emancipation by Decree," *Independent Woman*, March, 1949, p. 49.

⁴⁹ In 1944 Mao Tze-tung said: "Chinese Communists may form an anti-imperialist front politically with certain idealists and disciples of religions, but can never approve their idealism or religious teaching."

⁵⁰ Report of Mao Tze-tung to the Second National Soviet Congress, 1932: "The point of departure for the Soviet national policy is the capture of all the oppressed minorities around the Soviets as a means to increase the strength of the revolution. . . ."

it is now stated,⁵¹ the Communists are not really interested in race relations but primarily in class relations and the proletarian revolution, then there is no place in China's New Democracy for China's Moslems.

Having failed to "capture" the Moslems and thus bring them under control, the new regime in China is forced, as the defender of China's national interests, and the leader of the Chinese revolution, to ensure its authority over the Moslems in other ways. The Regional Government in the Northwest is for the time being an essential feature of this new policy. First of all the establishment of a regional government means the abandonment of the promise of Moslem autonomy in any real sense. Minorities are assured proportional representation in local and regional governments through their own "autonomous" organizations,⁵² but by using religion as a criterion for race among the Chinese-speaking Moslems and some definition of race as a criterion for a minority among the non-Chinese-speaking Moslems concentrated in Sinkiang, as now seems to be the case, the basis for Moslem unity is destroyed.⁵³ The two great forces of race and religion which have given China's frontier its dynamic character are used, in a traditional Chinese way, to divide the Moslems and bring them under control. Instead of creating a Moslem regional state, P'eng Teh-huai proclaimed the establishment of a regional government which was a coalition of nationalities and united-front groups.⁵⁴

A second feature of the new regional government, which affects its Moslem constituents, is its size. Proportional representation means that the Moslems will never be able to gain control of the new regional congress and government, for the Chinese outnumber all the minority groups combined. This perpetuation of minority status in political administrative units is also reminiscent of the tactics of China's national government to fasten its controls on China's minority border groups.⁵⁵ This policy permits the immediate development of popular government throughout Northwest China without endangering China's territorial claims.

The Soviet Union repudiated its support of Pan-Islamism in 1927

51 *Ta Kung Pao*, quoted in the *China Weekly Review*, Oct. 8, 1949, p. 83.

52 *Common Program of the Political Consultative Conference*, article 51.

53 This is the policy developed by Chang Chih-chung who has now been made vice-chairman of the Northwest Regional Government. For his former views see "Dilemma in Sinkiang," *Pacific Affairs*, Dec. 1947, pp. 422-429.

54 *New York Times*, Jan. 23, 1950.

55 See Sir Charles Bell, "China and Tibet," *Royal Central Asian Journal*, Jan. 1949, pp. 54-57.

when it decided to organize the collective state in Russia rather than scatter its strength in promoting the world revolution.⁵⁶ China's Communists, like Lenin and Stalin, tried to win the Moslems over to the revolutionary cause by emphasizing their common interest in liberation from feudalism and Chinese and foreign imperialism. But by 1935 Russia's actions, the inherent conflict between communist materialism and class authoritarianism and conservative Islamic traditions, the improved status of China's Moslems, and the emergence of independent and nationalistic Moslem States made such an appeal seem out of date. At present the policy of the Chinese Communists to build a transitional socialist state and their appropriation of Chinese nationalism seem to have led to the repudiation of their Pan-Islamic promises and their support of Moslem nationalism. The next step is the incorporation of China's Moslems into the Chinese "democratic" revolution which will necessitate the destruction of the Islamic community.

This Communist reassertion of China's national claims has not meant that the principle of "national" self-determination has been formally rejected by Communists in Russia and China. Pan-Islam, castigated as "greater nationalism or chauvinism," is now opposed because its usefulness in mobilizing power for the Russian or Chinese revolutionary cause is gone; henceforth it can be used against the New Democracies perhaps more effectively than by them. The concept of "national autonomy" still remains. If the Moslem racial groups now divided by the Sino-Russian boundary should seek unity, China's Communists will have to reconcile this aspiration with the national territorial claims of China which they have promised to defend.⁵⁷ Chinese nationalists may find it difficult to accept any territorial loss, especially if Moslem unity is sponsored by Russia or Russian Moslems, for by virtue of geography and the superiority of Russian economic and political inducements and power any such Central Asian Moslem state would be a Russian rather than a Chinese satellite.

⁵⁶ See Emmanuel Sarkisyanz, "Communism and the Asiatic Mind," *The Yale Review*, Spring, 1950, pp. 506-507.

⁵⁷ The right of secession is not granted minority groups in the new constitution of the Chinese People's Republic, nor may autonomous areas or regions have their own armed forces under the new unified military system. Instead, all nationalities have the obligation to defend China as their "fatherland." (*Common Program*, Article 8, 9.) The New China News Agency, the official organ of the new Chinese Government, has announced that "The Chinese Liberation Army must liberate all Chinese territory including Tibet, Sinkiang, Hainan Island and Taiwan and will not permit a single inch of territory to remain outside the rule of the Chinese People's Republic."—Quoted in *China Digest*, Sept. 21, 1949, p. 4.