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A CRITICAL SURVEY OF CHINESE POLICY IN INNER MONGOLIA

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IN THE March and May issues of a monthly published in Canton, *Three Principles of the People*, the last edited by the late Hu Han-min, there appears a long article on "The Basis and Solution of the Inner Mongolian problem." In view of the publicity that has been given to Japanese support of an alleged nationalism among the Mongols of Inner Mongolia, and the recent military campaigns in eastern Suiyüan, and in view of the repeated negotiations that have taken place recently between the Inner Mongolian princes and the Nanking Government to establish some sort of autonomy, this article is of timely interest as well as of historical importance. It is important because sound theoretical approaches to the problem of Mongolia have been relatively rare in China since the late Sun Yat-sen enunciated as one of his Three Principles the idea of doing away with nationalistic oppression or exploitation of racial minorities in the Chinese Republic. Official Nanking discussions of both the rights and obligations of national minorities have tended to be high-sounding but shallow. 557

The article in the Cantonese magazine, written by Mr. Ch'ien Shih-fu, narrates in detail the policy of the Ch'ing or Manchu dynasty in Mongolia as a whole. The gist is as follows: In the course of about 270 years, the Ch'ing policy was a blend of persuasion and threat. With the aim of demoralizing the primitive robustness of the Mongolians, religious influences were utilized to create a life of inactivity. Many small nominal political units, the "banners," were set up on the principle of *divide et impera*, while actual power was vested in the officials appointed by the Peking Government. Nothing was ever done to improve the livelihood of the Mongol toilers. Local and national defensive measures were reduced to feebleness and ineffectiveness, while Chinese troops permanently stationed in the border regions served the purpose of intimidation. Mongolia was then regarded as nothing more nor less than a protectorate. Instead of positively developing productivity, opening up natural resources and increasing the ability to produce, and of assisting the people to elevate their standard of living, the Ch'ing (557)

dynasty policy in Inner Mongolia was to demand obedience, and obedience only, to the Imperial Court in Peking, from the Mongol princes and the Mongol people. 558

Mr. Ch'ien Shih-fu asks why China cannot adopt this same policy today. Fundamentally, the Chinese Republic ought to regard the Mongols as equals of the Chinese, should treat them on the basis of equality, and furthermore should assume the responsibility of improving their livelihood. Mr. Ch'ien suggests concretely that the right attitude toward Mongolia for China to take is as follows: Firstly, in the matter of religion, it should be understood that the Mongol lamas are not permitted to marry; consequently this limits the Mongol population and prevents its natural growth. Many are made lamas in childhood, without being given any choice, thus becoming involuntary victims of their religion. This religion is full of superstitious beliefs and anti-social practices, and allows no freedom of thinking. It stops the Mongols from lifting themselves to a higher level of civilization. Then too the parasitic existence of such great numbers of lamas acts as a deadly weight in the scales against Mongol economic development. China should, therefore, first of all free the people from their religious bondage. 558

Regarding the problem of administration, Mr. Ch'ien says that during the Ch'ing dynasty there was an almost complete control of the Mongol princes from Peking. By way of punishment, even their hereditary titles and privileges were often taken away from them. The people could easily appeal to the Chinese high officials stationed in Mongolia to redress the wrongs done by princes. They occasionally impeached those high officials in the Li Fan Yuan, the chief administrative bureau for the territories and dependencies, in Peking. In addition, inspectors were sent out to Mongolia rather frequently by the Royal Court. But the system which was established after the beginning of the Chinese Republic offers little protection to the Mongol people, and only subjects them to the oppression and cruelty of their princes, whose official conduct is not checked effectively by the Central Government. Under the rule of the princes, Mongol society is divided into two very distinct groups, the extremely hardworking toilers and the extremely irresponsible and luxurious princes, to whom every day of the year is just a holiday. The burden of feeding the parasitic princes and lamas, and sometimes in addition supplying Central Government inspectors with all sorts of comforts, is rapidly increasing on the shoulders of the Mongol herdsmen. Conscripted labor, compulsory military serv-

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ice and hosts of requisitions are making their lives more and more miserable. The present feudalistic rule by the princes should be immediately and completely abolished, for the sake of the people in Inner Mongolia. 559

Issues concerning the chief economic questions must be also considered. The level of consumption and manufacture of the Mongols is still very low. The huge agricultural and mineral resources of Inner Mongolia are as yet untapped. In the meantime superstition holds the people back from raising their productivity. Needless to say, Inner Mongolia's contact with the outside world should be amply improved, and railways and motor roads should be constructed to accelerate the whole economic development. Inner Mongolia must establish a national industry of its own to utilize fully the local resources of raw materials, thus avoiding as far as possible the imminent domination of foreign imperialism. Still more fundamental, and certainly of more immediate concern, is the system of land reclamation. 559

Now there are many who think that land reclamation, or internal colonization, inevitably takes away the livelihood of the Mongols, and that it will inevitably arouse their bitter resentment and hatred. Such an inference, however, is based solely upon the sad experiences of Mongolian colonization since 1912. For only during the six or seven years before the Chinese Republic, when the virgin soil in the province of Suiyüan was just beginning to be plowed, were the Mongols actually benefited by the sudden increase of agricultural and pastoral produce. In recent years, shrewd lamas, greedy princes and corrupt officials have all become powerful instruments in the rapid process of land concentration. Community pastures have been unlawfully taken away from the innocent herdsmen; and in the recent years of famine, conditions have been even more favorable for the grabbing of still more land by land usurpers. No wonder, then, that the Mongol people in Inner Mongolia are constantly under acute apprehension when any new colonization project is announced, or indeed any change of administration that may have anything to do with the land problem. Land reclamation *per se* is not undesirable, but its abuse can be very harmful. What China should do is to establish a land system which will give no chance of exploitation by officials, but will give all the advantages of land utilization to the Mongol toilers. 559

Ever since 1912, while Japanese intrigues and designs of conquest have been furthered year by year in Inner Mongolia, autonomous movements have taken place one after the other, some of them insti-

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gated by the princes and some by the common people. Those led by the princes were not aimed at a genuine autonomy. Behind them there were always intrigues linked with outside interests or the ambitions of the princes themselves. The princes never liked the republican doctrines; they exerted all their energy to restore their feudalistic rule, and therefore, using either the Ch'ing Monarch or the Living Buddha (the author refers presumably to the Panch'an Lama of Tibet) as political instruments, they shout for, ostensibly, Mongol independence. Entirely different were the autonomous movements originating among the common people. The kernel of the problem in these movements has always been the overthrow of the oppressive princes, indeed the abolishing of the system of rule by princes. They have not aimed at Mongol independence, but have sprung from a general conviction that the Central Government can be of little or no help to the Mongol people, making it necessary for the Mongols themselves to demand autonomy. Unfortunately the Republican Government in Peking (prior to 1928) continued to maintain an attitude of dynastic rule, demanding obedience from the princes, whose interests and privileges it tried to defend. 560

According to Mr. Ch'ien Shih-fu, what has happened in Inner Mongolia since the Mukden incident in 1931 reveals the regrettable fact that the Nanking Government also lacks a policy sound enough to effect a real solution of the Mongol problem. It seems that the sum total of Nanking's present policy is an effort to keep its Mongol territory under the name of the Republic of China. Clearly this aim cannot be realized unless the three questions, religious, political and economic, pertaining to the very livelihood of the Mongol people, are correctly and moreover adequately dealt with. The maintenance of territorial integrity is not peculiarly a Mongol problem; it is a problem for the entire Republic. On the other hand, if the essence of the Mongol problem is not fully recognized and respected, it would be almost useless for Nanking even if it succeeded in maintaining any sort of territorial integrity in Mongolia. It may be further pointed out that Nanking has failed to understand the intimate relationship between nationalism and the principle of the people's livelihood. Mongol nationalism should not be a monopoly of the Mongol princes, but the common aspiration of the entire people. But so far Nanking has dealt with the princes alone, leaving the Mongol herdsmen in complete oblivion. 560

Unsound as it is, Nanking's Mongol policy is not even consistent in (560) itself. From the winter of 1932 to the early summer of 1934, in the short span of one year and a half, persistent demands for Inner Mongolian autonomy came up. There were many signs of vacillation and contradiction shown by Nanking. In the very beginning, it refused to consider such an autonomy at all. Then it was permitted, but on the basis of many regional divisions. Finally, however, a political council for the whole of Inner Mongolia was appointed. Because it relied on the general ignorance and the usually inadequate information of the appointees, Nanking has been forced to revoke in the evening what it decreed in the morning. The central political council set up for Inner Mongolia vaguely included in its administration even the distant banner lands of Ch'inghai, in the Kokonor region of Tibet. Thus political efficiency was actually nil. Only when Japanese aggression in Chahar became very obvious did Nanking appoint a separate single political council in Suiyüan. Not enough pains have been taken by Nanking to examine the actual conditions now existing in Inner Mongolia; in this case no matter how many councils or varieties of them are to be set up, there is not the slightest possibility of reaching the heart of the Mongolian problem. And the heart of that problem is the real liberation of the Mongolian people. 561

The views thus formulated by a political writer in Canton may be open to dispute in matters of detail,* but they mark an important renewal of serious research on the problems underlying political questions in Mongolia—problems which have been disastrously neglected since the great creative period in which Chinese nationalism was led by Sun Yat-sen. 561

* Mr. Ch'ien Shih-fu's analysis of problems of Inner Mongolia will be commented on by Owen Lattimore in the March number of PACIFIC AFFAIRS. (561)