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TRANSPORTATION IN NORTHWEST CHINA  
AS REPORTED BY A FORMER COMMUNIST CADRE

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[Comment: This report presents information on transportation in Northwest China under Communist control. Biographical information on the author, contained in the same series of four articles, is appended.]

The transportation lines in the Northwest Administrative Area are controlled by the headquarters of the Northwest Eighth Quartermaster District and the Northwest People's Transportation Company, the latter a civilian organization. The communication network of this area which includes Kansu, Tsinghai, Ningsia and Sinkiang is under the jurisdiction of the two agencies.

As to military manpower in this area, there are, at present, 300,000 regulars in Sinkiang and 400,000 reserves in the K'un-lun Shan area, the latter reportedly to settle in Sinkiang but actually to prepare for an attack on India. There are more than 500,000 slave laborers in the different Sinkiang and Kansu mines to fulfill Soviet petroleum needs.

In preparing against any counterattack by KMT forces and for possible necessity to evacuate East China, South China, and the Northeast, the Chinese Communists are moving their industries westward. Kansu, Sinkiang, Ningsia, and Tsinghai are being developed. At the same time, a large number of military supply industries are being established in this area. Naturally, Lan-chou and Urumchi have become the centers of activity. To aid in moving supplies and transporting equipment to meet the present emergency, Communist troops in these areas have been increased ten-fold.

As to the railway lines, besides the T'ien-Pao line (T'ien-shui--Pao-chi) which is being expanded, there are the Pao-t'ou--Lan-chou and T'ien-shui--Ch'eng-tu lines both of which have been completed, and the Lan-Hsin line which is still under construction.

Regarding highways, Lan-chou is rapidly becoming the highway center with roads reaching to Yin-ch'uan, Ha-mi, and with several main routes to the west. In addition, there are highways extending from Urumchi to Kuldja.

At present, much of the Northwest is a desert area and the Communists must rely on draft animals and human strength for transportation.

The most important transportation equipment in the Northwest Eighth Quartermaster District is the motor vehicle. It is generally known that the Chinese Communists do not have sufficient supply of this type of equipment. In the early days, the majority of the cars were US products. At that time, to travel one way from Lan-chou to Urumchi took only 12 days. At the onset of the Korean conflict, the flow of American motor vehicles stopped. But in 1951, after the signing of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty, four hundred 2½-ton ZIS trucks were purchased with 40,000 ounces of gold taken from the Sinkiang provincial treasury. In the spring of 1952, 300,000 unemployed Chinese were sent into slavery in the Soviet Union in return for 30,000 motor vehicles.

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The number of motor vehicles increased but they were of poor quality. Soviet vehicles were built with small radiators for use in low-temperature regions. In China, these vehicles are in constant danger of overheating and exploding and it is necessary to add water every 8 kilometers.

Vehicles must travel at a very slow pace. Formerly, it required 12 days to travel from Urumchi to Lan-chou. This is now impossible, and it actually takes from one to two months to cover this distance by motor vehicle which requires only 48 days by foot.

In this area, the life expectancy of an automobile which needs constant repairs is very short. According to an eyewitness report, over 3,000 vehicles were wrecked while transferring 150,000 soldiers from the Kansu-Sinkiang-Ningsia area to the railhead at T'ien-shui for shipment to the Korean front in 1951. Based on a very conservative estimate, up to the spring of 1953, some 80,000 motor vehicles were wrecked, 500,000 wheels broken, and 150,000 tires destroyed. Although the Soviets agreed in 1951 to sell 100,000 motor vehicles and to deliver them to the Chinese Communists by the end of 1952, it became necessary to purchase an additional 60,000 automobiles in the spring of 1953 because of heavy losses through breakdowns.

Gasoline, alcohol, and charcoal are used as fuel to operate motor vehicles in the Northwest. Alcohol and gasoline-driven vehicles are operated by the Eighth Quartermaster District while vehicles using charcoal as fuel are operated by the civilian transportation company. Since the supply of gasoline is not sufficient to meet the demands, it is necessary to use the two types of fuel.

In the spring of 1953, of the total of 24,000 automobiles in the Northwest, approximately 8,000 were operating on the Hsi-Hua (probably An-hsi-Urumchi) highway daily. According to the established standard, a vehicle should be able to travel 10 kilometers on a gallon of gasoline and every vehicle should be able to cover 150 kilometers per day, a goal which has not been attained. On this basis, some 120,000 gallons of gasoline would be consumed daily on this line alone.

As for the supply of gasoline, the Chinese Communists must rely on the Wu-su and the Yu-men oil fields. The Yu-men oil field has increased its manpower from 3,000 workers to the present force of 7,000. It has increased the daily output of gasoline from 10,000 gallons to 20,000 gallons, and fuel oil from 9,000 gallons to 16,000 gallons. A vehicle with one gallon of Yu-men gasoline, which is inferior to the US product, can travel only 8 kilometers. With the same amount of US gasoline, the same vehicle can cover a distance of 10 kilometers. The Wu-su oil field has increased its manpower from 1,000 workers to the present 5,000, and output of gasoline to 5,000 gallons per day.

Since the outputs of the two oil fields are limited and the demand great, the Chinese Communists have limited the use of their products to the entire Northwest Military District, half to the Southwest Military District and half to the Sikang-Tibet border area.

Almost all of the vehicles in the Northeast, East China, North China, Central-South China military districts have been converted to use charcoal or alcohol as fuel. Coastal provinces and border areas are attempting to obtain their supply of gasoline from neighboring nations.

The blockade of the China coast has created hardships for the Chinese Communists. They have created, therefore, openings where needed material can flow into the mainland and where opium grown in southern Sinkiang can flow out in payment for goods received. The India-Tibet and China-Burma borders are the main gateways for such illegal trade.

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The inadequate supply of rubber tires is also causing serious problems for the Chinese Communists. There are large-scale tire-manufacturing plants in Harbin, Lan-chou, and Urumchi. German technicians captured by the Soviets are directing the operations in these plants. However, the supply of raw material is inadequate. Reprocessed rubber and raw rubber from new rubber plantations in Hainan are not sufficient. Recently, 50,000 tons were purchased from the South Sea areas to meet the needs temporarily.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

According to her own statements, Ch'in Chung-Ch'eng was a Chinese Communist cadre for 20 years and for the 2 1/2 years before her recent escape from China she had been working in the Northwest Military District. She made the following statements regarding her experiences:

Of the 600,000 who started out with her on the famous Long March, only 80,000 reached the destination, Yen-an, and that those who did not arrive were not killed by the KMT or did not die of hardships but were actually murdered by their fellow Communists. In one instance, some 1,100 persons were herded into a valley, approximately 50 li from Chia-men-l'uan and 100 li from Ming-shan Hsien, and killed with grenades by Communist leaders who wished to cause fear and distrust among members.

While serving under the command of Liu Ho-ch'eng and Teng Hsiao-p'ing, the author was, at one time, in charge of PLA military supplies for a Sui-yuan detachment which was about the size of an infantry division. Some 1,200 of the men were Koreans. As early as September 1949, Teng Hsiao-p'ing stated in a speech, "South Koreans have instigated an aggressive war on North Koreans..." Approximately one year after this statement the author realized that Mao and Chu had planned the Korean War.

In October 1950, the author's husband, Li Hsia-ch'ing, also a Communist of long standing, was executed for rebelling against the Communist regime. It was then that she had decided that she no longer wished to live under Communist domination. In March 1951, with the aid of influential friends, she was transferred to Lan-chou and was placed in charge of bookkeeping for a transportation firm. In the winter of 1952, she was able to transfer to Wuhan and from there she obtained passage to Macao in March 1953.

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