

April 21, 1962

**Cable from the Xinjiang Foreign Affairs Office,
'Report on the Flight of Border Residents from the
Yili and Tacheng Areas to the Soviet Union'**

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Summary:

The Xinjiang Foreign Affairs Office offers one of the first accounts of the cross-border flight of Uyghurs and Kazakhs.

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Chinese

Contents:

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[...]

Report on the Flight of Border Residents from the Yili and Tacheng Areas to the Soviet Union

[To the] Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

There have recently been successive incidents of border residents fleeing to the Soviet Union from counties and cooperatives in Tacheng [Qoqek] and Yili [Ili] on the Sino-Soviet border in our region [the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region]. According to incomplete statistics given during a telephone report, around 2,000 people fled to the Soviet Union from Tacheng County from 10 April through 20 April. These include urban residents from Tacheng (many of them were very rich residents); three brigades from the Tacheng Huojian [Rocket] Cooperative (this cooperative presently has two small brigades which are still fluctuating); all of the Kazakh cooperative members from the October Cooperative, Tie-lie-ke [sic] Brigade, as well as the Brigade Secretary, Brigade Captain, Production Team Leader, cadres from the supply and marketing cooperative and the bank, and public security envoys (who brought a pistol with them); and civilian police personnel from Tacheng County. Our cadres went to dissuade [individuals from fleeing], but they were attacked with knives and cudgels. Those fleeing said to the Secretary of the Tacheng County Party Committee: "do not try to persuade [us], say no more nonsense. If [you] are willing to help, then please give us horses." Those fleeing initially took their properties and left at night, [but] now they are leaving in broad daylight with horse carriages and livestock from cooperatives and livestock from local state-owned pastures. Based on [our] understanding [of the situation], the people from the four Ke-zi-bie-ti [sic] Brigades of the Tacheng October Cooperative, the Advanced Brigade of the High-Speed Cooperative, urban residents from Tacheng, and the Second and Third Brigades of the Cattle Farm are presently leaving or are preparing to leave. Civilian police personnel and labor camp teams in Tacheng are also fluctuating. The situation is expanding, and the second line has already burst; not only are cooperative members near the border fleeing, [but] even cooperatives in the interior are fluctuating quite a bit [and] some have even started to flee. Based on a report from Yili, seventy-eight people from Huocheng [Qorghas] County (including three Hans and two people who died in the Huoerguosi [Horgos] River) from 13 March through 20 April, and a few people from Suiding [Shuiding], Yining [Gulja], and Chabucha'er [Qapqal] have also fled to the Soviet Union. Ten people were recaptured as they were fleeing in Bu-lun-kou [sic] Cooperative in Kezileisu Prefecture [Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture] and Aketao [Akto] County. According to the initial trial confessions, there are seven cliques preparing or organizing to run away in Kashi [Kashgar] City.

Concerning the causes of these incidents, the Party Committee of the [Xinjiang Uyghur] Autonomous Region put forth [the following] in a report to the Central Committee: "that these people fled is not entirely because they [faced] difficulties in their livelihoods; political causes are even more important." Based on our understanding of the situation, the following issues can explain the problem.

Personnel from the Soviet Consulate in Yili went to Tacheng six times last winter and this spring and met with a total of 4,743 people. The Yili Vice-Consul went to Tacheng for seven days in January and met with 1,373 people. From 5 April through 9 April, the Vice-Consul went to Tacheng again for four days and met around 1,000 people. The Vice-Consul said to children of White [Russians] (non-Soviet nationals)[1] and ethnic Russian women [that] as long as the Chinese government agrees, [then] the doors to the Soviet Union are open for you. [He] also said [that] if the local [authorities] did not agree for you to return home, then you can write letters to Yili, Wulumuqi [Urumqi], and Beijing. Based on the letters from [these] people which have arrived recently: there was one signed collectively by 270 families, or 1,326 people, from Tacheng City and the Huojian, October, and High-Speed cooperatives, and written to Chairman Mao [Zedong], Chairman Liu [Shaoqi], and other leading cadres, in which they requested to go to the Soviet Union. One letter to the Premier [Zhou

Enlai] was signed by 106 families, or 562 people.

□□

□□The Soviet side has strengthened work related to the Soviet Nationals Association [in Xinjiang].[2] For example, [they] allowed the former Governor of the Boertala [Bortala] Autonomous Prefecture, Ai-er-de [sic], to be the Chairman of the prefectural Soviet Nationals Association and the former Cultural and Educational Director, Su-li-tang [sic], of the Yili Autonomous Prefecture to be the Chairman of the Yining Municipal Soviet Nationals Association.

□□

□□They] have carried out propaganda to lure border residents. Since this year, the Soviet side has not only established Kazakh-language broadcasts in the border region, but they have also increased Uyghur-language broadcasts from the Alma-Ata [Almaty] Station. According to reports from our nationalities cadres,[3] they once heard on the radio [that] the Soviet Union has a lot of privately owned livestock and life is good [in the Soviet Union] and that those returning home from Tacheng would have very satisfying work arranged for them. The Soviet side, by way of family relations, has not only sent many invitations to our border residents, but has also sent much food, cloth, and clothing to show that life in the Soviet Union is good. For example, in 1961, the Soviet Union sent 1,777 packages to residents of Tacheng. In the first quarter of 1962, 562 packages weighing four tons were sent to Tacheng [and] 2,519 packages weighing around 20 tons were sent to Yili.

□□

□□The Soviet side has placed returnees in the Soviet Union, who have extensive contact with our side's masses, and some local nationalists along the border to disrupt our side's work.

□□

□□After incidents of large numbers of border residents fleeing to the Soviet Union began, the Soviet side cut down some of the heavily guarded iron fences. [They] set up tents on the border with cars (in Huocheng) to welcome our runaways. The Tacheng masses have reported [that] on 20 April, ten people on horses from the Soviet Union arrived with guns and went into our territory for activities (the details of this [event] are unknown).

□□

These incidents of flight among border residents have already had a major influence upon Tacheng; if the situation develops again in Yili, then it may produce even more severe consequences than in Tacheng, followed by the possibility where these types of incidents will occur in Aletai [Altay], Boertala, and Kashi [Kashgar]. As a result, class contradictions will sharpen, [and] landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements, rightists, and, especially, reactionary local nationalists will take the opportunity to join up with the revisionists and make trouble, even engaging in riots. Accordingly, the [Xinjiang Uyghur] Autonomous Region Party Committee has already given a second report to the Central Committee, instructed all localities to heighten vigilance, adopted effective measures to stop these incidents from growing larger, and sent out work teams to strengthen work. Additionally, we have:

□□Met with Soviet border defense stations through [our] border defense stations [and] demanded that the Soviet side return those personnel who fled. We believe this will allow [us] to seize the initiative in the border defense negotiations and will calm the mood of the masses.

□□

□□Investigated the detailed situation of the activities in Tacheng undertaken by staff of the Soviet Consulate in Yining and have obtained evidence; have taken photos of the situations where the Soviet side cut wire fences and used automobiles to greet the runaways; have tried to catch personnel dispatched from the Soviet side to cross the border [and], besides taking photographs, have used border defense stations to deliver them to the Soviet side; and have been careful to obtain evidence of certified Soviet nationals inciting and organizing cooperative members to flee. [All of this has

been done] in order to prepare for a diplomatic struggle.

□□

□□ When dissuading border residents, [we] do not want to create tension in the border region or forcibly block [anyone from crossing the border], so as to avoid conflict; chasing is not even necessary ([we] have already rectified the Huocheng County chase situation).

□□

□□ Please give instructions as soon as possible if we are required to do any work for negotiations with the Soviets.

□□

If any of the above views are not proper, please give instructions.

Xinjiang Foreign Affairs Office
21 April 1962

[...]

[1] The meaning of the original text, which reads "gai lingshi dui chi bai tiaozhi de ren," is vague.

[2] In Chinese, the "Suqiao xiehui."

[3] In Chinese, "minzu ganbu."