

DOCUMENT #1

Author: Yang Zengxin, Governor of Xinjiang Province

Date: November 30, 1916

Title: “Text of a Memorial Explaining the Special Circumstances in Xinjiang and the Inclusion of a Request to Accommodate Special Methods of Provincial Governance”

Source: Yang Zengxin, *Buguozhai wendu* [Records from the Studio of Rectification], vol. 1 (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1965 [1921]), 186–90.

Xinjiang is situated far away on the distant frontier and cut off from the central plains. In previous dynasties throughout history, it did not appear on the maps of the Song or the Ming. During the Tang and the Yuan, frontier settlements were established, but the reality fell far short of their name. The land has always lacked colonists. When the Qing pacified the Jungars and returned to the northern marches, a semblance of infrastructure was set up. In the south, however, a policy of loose rein was implemented. This situation obtained right up until Xinjiang received provincial status [in 1884] and civil officials began to staff administrative offices. With the sole exception of these officials, however, who functioned in accordance with standard precedent, all other aspects of administration were carried out in the spirit of accommodation (*biantong*). This is quite different from the situation in the inner provinces. Furthermore, [even after 1884] the system of prefectures and counties was only set up for the southern oases. All along the margins of settlement, Mongols, Kazaks, and Kyrgyz continued in their ancient pastoral ways.

The province of Xinjiang contains more than 20,000 *li* [about 640,000 square miles], but its population amounts to little more than 2.1 million people. Of these, the Han comprise less than one percent. The majority of these Han are rootless transients, while those who have settled down are few. As for agricultural taxes, those who work the land pay in grain and straw. Merchants pay duty taxes. But those nomads who are stipulated as owners of certain tracts of pasture are often not present [on the land and thus do not pay taxes]. Education is limited to religious studies, which can lead one down a dangerous path. As for language, writing, food, and clothing, all are determined by local customs, and cannot be unified by force.

Over the past several decades, an effort has been made to compel the Turbans to enroll in [Chinese] schools. But most of them wanted only to serve as messengers and runners, positions which they then used to take refugee abroad and obtain foreign citizenship. We have even less need to speak of the Mongols and Kazaks in this regard. As for raising troops, there are few Han who have settled here, and the nomads are not interested in joining the ranks. Therefore, I have no choice but to enlist Turbans or Sino-Muslims, and then try to restrain them through military discipline. The Sino-Muslims can generally be integrated in this fashion. The Turbans, by contrast, do not possess knowledge or experience with regard to military service. Some of the Mongol peoples, such as the Sibo and Solon in Ili, can be enlisted into brigades. The Kazaks and Kyrgyz, however, are even less suitable for military service than are the Turbans.

These are the reasons why Xinjiang adheres to a special set of circumstances, and why it absolutely cannot be managed in a fashion similar to that of the inner provinces. During the Qing period, Taiwan was cut off from the mainland by the sea, and Xinjiang

was cut off from the mainland by the distant passes. That we were unable to defend Taiwan is a fact of history. In the past Xinjiang was threatened from one corner [i.e., the Russians taking over the Ili Valley in 1871], and no effort was spared in collecting the enormous sum of 2.8 million *taels* that were necessary to get it back. That once barren wasteland has now become an important bulwark. Thus I am compelled to stint no effort in defending it, so as to dispel our country's anxieties on the western frontier.

Since the establishment of the Republic of China, the disbursement of shared funds (*xiexiang*) from the inner provinces to Xinjiang has been cut off entirely. We have not been issued with a single penny with which to cover administrative and military costs. As a result, I have had little choice but to print unbacked paper currency simply to make ends meet. The dangers of such a practice are too great to speak of. We have been fortunate thus far. I have secured control over Ili [after rebels rose up there during the 1911 revolution], and military operations on the Mongol border [following an Russo-Mongol invasion at Khobdo] are now finished. As a result, however, I have been forced to reduce the number of troops under my command as well as the amount of their rations. I have also had to minimize or eliminate government expenditures in many other areas of administration. Because I do not have access to sufficient funds, Xinjiang's annual provincial revenue stands at 3.4 million *yuan*. To put this in perspective, during the Qing it was common to allocate up to four times that amount [for the governance of Xinjiang], and yet still it was exhausted by the end of the year.

In addition, powerful neighbors surround us on all sides, and they gaze upon Xinjiang like a tiger hunting prey. During the reform period [i.e., the 1911 revolution], bandits roamed rampant throughout southern Xinjiang and assassinated officials at will. The foreign powers [i.e., Britain and Russia] immediately took advantage of this situation to send in their own troops and meddle in our affairs. Then, ignorant commoners forsook their citizenship and adopted foreign nationalities. In response, I have had to adjust my policies in innumerable ways. I punished the bandits severely, but then ordered my officials not to impose any new taxes on the people, so as to provide them with a measure of respite. Over the past two years the situation has finally calmed down somewhat, and the foreigners have not found any cracks to exploit. Should I encounter another crisis, I will again be forced to resort to any number of appropriate measures in order to save the situation. With no room to make a mistake, I would be reluctant to confine myself only to methods that are prescribed for China proper. In the event of a crisis, the walls of the capital are very far away, and Beijing, for all intents and purposes, will prove unable to lend a helping hand. If a portion of our territory should be lost as a result, who shall shoulder the blame?

At this time of promulgating our constitution, I am unable to keep silent in the face of all that I have seen. Can we look into the possibility of allowing Xinjiang, in light of its special circumstances, to be governed in the same way that Japan governs Hokkaido and Taiwan? Or perhaps in the accommodating manner that the Qing once stipulated for special administrations? This would facilitate a more natural arrangement, one more conducive to the development of industry and extraction of resources. It would also protect the people's livelihood, and win their hearts and minds. By such means will all the people unite as one solid mass, and act as a bulwark.

DOCUMENT #2

Author: Yang Zengxin, Governor of Xinjiang Province

Date: December 20, 1923

Title: “Text of a Reply to the Central Government Regarding the Problem of a Great Muslim Unity”

Source: Yang Zengxin, *Buguozhai wendu xubian* [Records from the Studio of Rectification: additional compilations], vol. 2 (Shanghuan, 1926), 52–54.

I have received a telegram from the State Council, which reads as follows: “Recently we have heard that Turkey has sent a number of people into Xinjiang for the purpose of instigating the Muslim masses into making preparations for a great alliance of Muslim countries. Furthermore, it is said that they have also smuggled weapons into Xinjiang in order to launch an attack. We await your reply as to whether or not these reports are true.”

I am aware that several Muslim countries throughout Eurasia have conspired to create a single great Muslim state as well as a grand Islamic alliance. Along the border with Xinjiang, we have already witnessed the appearance of two nations, West Turkestan and Bukhara, which have united and formed a single Muslim republic. They then sent a representative to Xinjiang with a letter announcing the establishment of a confederation of Muslim republics. I have already reported all of these developments previously.

In my view, the desire of various Muslim countries to create a great Islamic unity is driven by another motive altogether. They have not fixated their attention on Xinjiang, and their influence has not been felt here. Indeed, there has been no instance at all of weapons being smuggled into Xinjiang for the purpose of launching an attack. Instead, I believe this new political tide is purely a matter of racial and religious politics. In fact, if we dig deeper, we will find that it is actually no more than a simple struggle for power. Regardless of what shape the Muslim countries of Eurasia will assume in the future, as far as Xinjiang is concerned, all we need to do is make manifest our Republic, and racial distinctions and mutual enmity will dissipate into thin air as a matter of course. Of utmost importance, however, is that we improve our governance and not oppress the Muslims and Turbans. We must ensure that indirect rule by the Han is far superior to self-rule by the Muslims and Turbans. If we do this, then afflictions from foreign lands will not disturb us, and chaos from within will find no foothold from which to expand. This is how to achieve a government of long and lasting peace.

If Han officials speak only of a five-nationality republic in name but do nothing to realize it in practice, then it will become clear that they wield power only to contend with one another, and that this is a brand of politics entirely devoid of virtue or the Way. Consider the present autonomy of Tibet. We cannot simply blame the Tibetans for the error of their ways. It was the degeneracy of Han officials that first pushed Tibet toward autonomy. The British simply took advantage of our mistakes. Similarly, the autonomy of Outer Mongolia cannot be blamed entirely on the Outer Mongols. It was the degeneracy of Han officials that first pushed the Outer Mongols toward autonomy. The Russians simply took advantage of our mistakes.

Whenever I reflect upon the present state of affairs, be it regarding the Tibetans, the Mongols, or the Muslims, or whether in terms of race or of religion, I note that they

are all steadily proceeding from a state of division to a state of unity. On the contrary, the Han people, be they regarded in terms of northerners and southerners or as a collection of political factions, are steadily moving from a state of unity to a state of division. Han and Han are unable to unite with one another. So how much more difficult will it be to achieve peace in Mongolia or Tibet? As for the Muslims and Turbans in Xinjiang, I have nurtured and pacified them for many years now, and I will be able to maintain the current status quo of peace and tranquility. The reason why I am able to do this is because I have managed Xinjiang as a five-nationality republic and as a refuge from chaos. I have not turned Xinjiang into my own personal domain nor have I culled a fortune from its coffers. Over the past decade I have not once raised taxes, nor have I taken out a single foreign loan. The burden on the people is light. This makes it very difficult for foreign extremists to find a foothold here.

If I were to meet force with force, the Muslims and the Turbans, ignorant though they may be, would not simply stand by idly and wait for their deaths, nor would they suffer the rapacity of Han officials in silence. Now Xinjiang has already been a province for some several decades. But those Han officials who are talented and able to carry out their duties number less than one in ten. Those with virtue and an ability to cherish the people number less than one out of a hundred. They come from thousands of miles away to take up their posts and then use it to fatten themselves and their families. They spend precious little time concerning themselves with the fate of our land or the livelihood of the people. Hence, we have very few good officials but very many bad ones, and days of unrest outnumber days of peace. The inner provinces are already like this; how much more so our border regions?

If we do not fix our own internal affairs first and effect a fundamental resolution, then it will prove impossible to make the Muslims and Turbans forever endure the rule of Han officials, and the compact among our peoples will burst. The tide of calls for self-government rises day by day. It is not something that machine guns or artillery can stop. If good government and noble instruction cannot be upheld, if virtue and principles are not just, then all I can do is eradicate corrupt governance, punish greedy officials with extreme severity, strengthen the resolve of the people, and eliminate lurking threats. By such means can I relieve the government of its concerns on the western front. Though these are the oft-stated platitudes of an old scholar, there truly are no other ways to rescue us from the current situation.

DOCUMENT #3

Author: Yang Zengxin, Governor of Xinjiang Province

Date: September 1924

Title: “Text of a Response to Kashgar Circuit Intendant E Regarding Reports of Expatriate Chinese Turbans Assembling and Issuing Pronouncements in Russia”

Source: Yang Zengxin, *Buguozhai wendu sanbian* [Records from the Studio of Rectification: three compilations], vol. 2 (n.p., 1934), 14–15.

I have received your telegram regarding expatriate Chinese Turbans in Russia assembling in the Andijan region and announcing their intent to return to Kashgar and kill Commander Ma Fuxing. I have been aware of this for some time, and have received several reports to this effect. Now that Ma Fuxing and his son have been eliminated, the anger of the Muslims and Turbans has dissipated. There should be no more disturbances of any kind. Yet Chinese officials have long made it their habit to exploit the common people. Such practices go back several thousand years, and they are not something that can be changed in the course of a single day. The accumulation of grievances and sense of alienation between officials and commoners grows daily. Eventually, relations between the two will sever completely.

But there is more to this situation. The Kashgar region is referred to as East Turkestan, and the area encompassing Tashkent and Andijan is known as West Turkestan. They share the same religion and ethnic makeup. Therefore, if Chinese officials continue to pursue the same exploitative policies of old, then we will not be able to prevent the union of East and West Turkestan, and the doctrine of pan-Islamism will have its day. It is my policy and inclination to cherish all the people. I make no distinctions among any race of people. The Muslims and Turbans are of a naturally good disposition. I firmly believe that there is presently no cause for concern, and certainly no need to enlist a special army to suppress them. The Soviet government recognizes this as well. That is why they are permitting the Russian Muslims in Andijan and Tashkent to set up an autonomous Muslim state, and the Russian Kazaks in Semipalatinsk and Zaisan to set up an autonomous Kazakstan. It is not as though the Soviet government is unwilling to suppress the Russian Muslims and Kazaks. But there are certain things which their current position does not allow them to do.

Today Xinjiang’s financial and military power falls far short of that of the Soviets. If we are intent on suppressing the Muslims and Turbans with military force, then I am afraid that the level of resistance will simply increase. Our only solution is to thoroughly reform our administration and earnestly cherish the common people. There is simply no other way. In Xinjiang, the Han comprise less than one percent of the people. If we do not court the hearts and minds of the ninety-nine percent of the people who are Mongols, Kazaks, Muslims, and Turbans, but instead turn the one percent of the people who are Han toward the suppression of the other ninety-nine percent, we will fail.

Soviet ideology is a lurking menace to the entire world. How can we expect Xinjiang, which everywhere shares a border [with the Soviet Union], to be able to resist the gradual infiltration of extremism? When our domestic policies are not up to par, the minds of the people are not at ease. This is the same throughout the entire country. Such thoughts make me anxious to no end. I will look to you to be on guard and remain calm.

DOCUMENT #4

Author: Sadiq, Head of the Mongol Association for Ethnocultural Advancement

Date: January 31, 1935

Title: “A Petition by the Mongol Association for Ethnocultural Advancement to the Provincial Government regarding a Request to Transform the Shangdi Temple into Lama Holy Site”

Source: Xinjiang Wei-wu-er zizhiqu dang'an ju, Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan bianjiang shidi yanjiu zhongxin, and “Xinjiang tongshi” bianzhuang weiyuanhui, eds., *Jindai Xinjiang menggu lishi dang'an* [Historical documents on the Mongols in modern Xinjiang] (Wulumuqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 2007), 146.

This is a petition requesting the transfer of the Shangdi Temple to our Association for the purpose of turning it into a Lama holy site and engaging in outreach activities. During the first meeting of our Association's Standing Committee, we discussed the proposal of Chairman Saliq, who observed that the Mongol people are simple-minded adherents of the Lamaist faith, and are steeped in superstitions. The issue under deliberation was how to improve this situation. After much discussion, we concluded that this sort of belief system, while no doubt superstitious, has long been an object of worship by the Mongol people. Therefore, in the interests of adhering to the government's proclamation of ethnic equality and religious freedom for all, we decided that it would not be prudent at this time to carry out a policy of repression, lest we lose the confidence of the Mongol masses.

Instead, it would seem best to establish a Lama holy site in Dihua [i.e., Urumchi], which would then give Mongol youth a reason to come to the capital. Once here, they can worship freely as they please, while simultaneously being compelled to enroll in a course of study that will introduce them to the new education. In the future, once their knowledge increases, their superstitious beliefs will naturally dissipate. After a decade or so, the number of Lamaist disciples will gradually decrease, and the frequent travel back and forth to the capital by the Mongols will make them fully cognizant of the government's policies. Then, when they return to their pastures, they will constitute a voluntary and willing source of propaganda, helping to break down barriers, instigate feelings of goodwill, and disseminate a sense of firm support for the government.

All of our members voted for this resolution, and a record is on file. The problem is that once the Lama holy site is opened, there will be a great number of Mongols arriving in the capital, yet we do not have a place large enough to receive them. The Shangdi Temple at Old East Gate is a spacious site, and it seems most suitable to serve as a Lama holy site. The chairman of our Association has already made this request in person to the *duban* [i.e., Sheng Shicai], and has received his verbal approval. We request a special despatch ordering county authorities to issue a permit that will allow us to proceed.

DOCUMENT #5

Author: Osman Batur, Kazak Chieftain of the Kerey Tribe

Date: September 1943

Title: “A Call to Arms”

Source: Zhang Dajun, *Xinjiang fengbao qishi nian*, vol. 9, 5193–95. This translation is based on a Chinese translation of the Kazak original.

To those relations of mine with whom I have grown up as well as anyone nearby, young or old:

I write this letter because my fellow nomads have given me the title of *batur*. Over the past four or five years, I have toiled without cease and have not slept at night. I have endured the cold of winter and the heat of summer. When I sleep, it is on a bed of horse droppings, with a hard rock for my pillow. All day long, I spur my steed across riverbeds and do battle with the enemy. The purpose of my struggle is not to pursue personal profit nor does it stem from fear that the government will capture me. Rather, I fight for the benefit of the nomadic masses.

Over the past eleven years, the *duban* has ruled all of Xinjiang, and he has pursued his Six Great Policies. He said that the Kazaks would be treated equally along with all other ethnic groups, and he said that he would organize good local government, complete with good officials. He promised to organize militias to protect our religion and private assets, and he promised to raise our levels of education, decrease taxes, and improve our pastures. For ten full years the Kazaks never once raised arms against the government.

But take a good look around you now. What the government has done, and what it said it would do, are not in accord. Bad people have been put in charge of local government, and good chiefs have been detained. Not only has the government not organized a Kazak militia, but it has confiscated Kazak firearms. Not only has our religion not been protected, but, on the contrary, our mosques have been destroyed, our akhunds and mullahs have been imprisoned, and our taxes have been increased. Not only have they not improved our pastures, but they even go so far as to requisition our livestock at will. Merchants no longer visit the steppe, and all private wealth has been confiscated.

We are not animals. We are the same as any other people. And when we see that the *duban*'s actions do not match his words, how can we not rise up and fight for the interests of the Kazaks? To those nomads and troops under my command, I make the following proposals:

- 1) Fight for your freedom, and rescue the Kazaks from our present crisis.
- 2) Place Kazaks in charge of the counties in east Altay district, and set up our own government there.
- 3) Organize a Kazak army in the district of Altay.
- 4) Release all prisoners.
- 5) Prohibit the government from requisitioning the livestock of nomads at will.
- 6) Eliminate crippling taxes and other miscellaneous exactions.

- 7) Prohibit Han from settling in Altay, and do not allow Han soldiers to be stationed there.
- 8) Neighboring countries that have been friendly to us may still exchange local products for our cloth and other goods. They can come as soon as possible, and merchants are permitted to deal with them.

These are our proposals. Whether or not we can see them through depends on you. If, among you, there are any heroes who wish to fight for the future of our people, then come with me. Grab your guns and mount your horses. Otherwise, you may as well turn your back on the customs and traditions handed down to us from our ancestors.

I swear to the Almighty: you are my wings and you are my tail. You are the nomads that I have grown up with. And your mission is as follows: 1) join my army in all loyalty and in all sincerity; 2) resist the Han people with all your might: do not give them horses or camels, do not carry out any orders given to you by a Han, and make sure you report to me the movements of Han troops at all times.

I, Osman Batur, your military commander, wrote this letter.

DOCUMENT #6

Author: Wu Zhongxin, Nationalist Governor of Xinjiang Province

Date: November 24, 1945

Title: “Excerpts from the Governor’s Diary”

Source: Zhongguo di er lishi dang’an guan, ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dang’an ziliao huibian—di wu ji, di san bian: zhengzhi (wu)* [Collection of archival materials concerning the history of the Republic of China—vol. 5, no. 3: politics, pt. 5] (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1999), 364–65.

Ever since the fall of Tacheng, our armies have retreated at every turn. Though the minds of the people in Dihua are still at ease, there are a small number of unsettled Uighur youth, who are supported and instigated in part by the Soviet consulate. There is also a man by the name of Sudan, a Uighur graduate of the [Nationalist] central military academy, who, ever since his arrival in Xinjiang, has wantonly propagated the idea of Xinjiang as East Turkestan territory and asserted the absurd fallacy that adherents of Islam have suffered oppression by the Han. He draws Party members into his circle, forms unauthorized organizations, and engages in reactionary activities. Once the representatives from Ili arrived in the provincial capital, the prospect of peace apparently caused him to tone down his actions. But now that Masud, Isa, and Emin have returned to Xinjiang, he has once again taken to inflammatory activities, racing hither and thither, exhorting the youth of various ethnic groups to demand high-level autonomy.

Masud and the others have already held three meetings in the dormitories of the military academy (the first on the 18th of this month, with a low turnout; the second on the 19th, which drew more than fifty attendees; and the third on the 22nd, with over 150 participants). Then again, in various mosques near the southern gate, they have made inflammatory overtures to the people, such as proclaiming their hope that everyone will submit their opinions regarding the resolution of Xinjiang autonomy, demanding that the central government eradicate the suffering of the Turkic peoples, and asserting that even a proposal that gives eighty percent of Xinjiang to the Turkic race and twenty percent to the central government is inadequate, and that they should fight to attain all one hundred percent of Xinjiang. They instruct the akhunds and imams to explain their position to the people during prayer sessions, and say that no one should be afraid to speak up like before [during the Sheng Shicai era]. Most agitators openly insult the government, proclaim that the Han have lost all their power, and demand the swift transfer of power. Otherwise, they say, they will take up knives, axes, clubs, and stones, and exterminate [the Han].

As a result of all this, some of those Uighur youth with unsettled minds and undeveloped thoughts have been deeply influenced. They get in touch with the Soviet consulate in Dihua, where they receive spiritual and material support and plot to overthrow the government. Their goal is to establish an East Turkestan Republic. Yet it is said that among the young people in Ili, only ten percent demand autonomy, whereas in Dihua, following the arrival of Masud and the others, about ninety percent of the youth here now demand autonomy. With such an imbalance in the numbers, it is clear to see just how great an influence Masud and the others have had in Dihua. Since the rhetoric of Masud et al. is exactly the same as that of the Soviets and the Ili bandits, [their common

efforts] will be sufficient to divide Xinjiang from the central government, the government from the people, and ultimately to drive a wedge among the people themselves. (Not only will this result in the eradication of any ethnic group that does not believe in Islam as well as the Tungan Hui [i.e., Sino-Muslims], but it will also mean intense persecution toward any Muslims who actually do favor the government).

For many years now, Masud et al. have been treated with a substantial amount of favor from the central government. On the current occasion of their return to Xinjiang, I, too, have exerted all my efforts to uphold my responsibility as a gracious host. As a result, they have become bold as bandits and stirred up a lot of trouble. Truly, this is painful to behold. [... Wu proceeds to outline in detail evidence of three conspiratorial organizations recently uncovered in Dihua ...]

I have often said that the solution to Xinjiang's ills lies not in Xinjiang, but rather in relations between the Soviet Union and the central government. What I mean by this is that Xinjiang's problems are not internal problems, or so-called "ethnic problems," but instead are created by Soviet instigation and those Xinjiang personages who receive shelter in the central government yet are not cognizant of the larger picture. As evidence of this, I need only point to the year-long bandit chaos in Xinjiang and the recent discovery of three separate conspiracy organizations in Dihua to prove I am not exaggerating. As far as the erudition, talent, and reputation of Masud, Emin, and Isa is concerned, they were originally not even worth mentioning. On the contrary, their narrow ethnic consciousness is very much ingrained. A small number of people in the central government do not understand this, and [... textual lacunae ...] this emboldens their arrogance and irresponsible behavior.

As it stands now, they were invited to Xinjiang by Minister Zhang [Zhizhong], who originally hoped to rely on them for assistance in resolving the Ili affair. Who would have thought that after their arrival in Xinjiang they would begin to agitate among the masses and organize meetings, all the while leveraging their reputation to carry out a reactionary tide? Someone told me that [Masud et al.] once used Xinjiang as a negotiating card to deceive the central government, but now they are using the central government as a negotiating card to deceive [the people of] Xinjiang. These are certainly not empty words. We might say that they are taking advantage of the situation by fanning the flames and beating the drums [of war]. Not only are they fishing both for praise and for a reputation, while turning a profit on the side, but they have also had secret dealings with the Soviet consulate. Their plot is so transparent that I hardly need say anything. I have talked to Minister Zhang [Zhizhong] about all this, and asked him to please send Masud and the others away as soon as possible.