The Unknown Frontier of Manchuria

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THE UNKNOWN FRONTIER OF MANCHURIA

By Owen Lattimore

Perhaps the most obscure of all the questions raised by the Japanese policy of drastic intervention in Manchuria is the problem of Mongolia; or rather the problem of the several Mongolias. It is true that Manchuria is a great enough problem in itself, affecting the destinies of China, Russia and Japan; yet Manchuria is no more than the eastern abutment and ocean gateway of the far greater region of Mongolia. The struggle in Manchuria has been associated so exclusively with problems of ocean ports and railways that not nearly enough attention has been paid to the great continental background lying west of the immediate area of conflict. Yet no conflict in Manchuria can be anything but a prelude to struggle in Mongolia, nor can any settlement of the “Manchurian problem” be effective unless it is based on an understanding of the geographical facts of Mongolia and the political developments and racial movements going on in that dark hinterland. Manchuria is the vital flank; but Mongolia is the main line of the frontier between Continental Asia and Continental Russia, and the Mongols, long regarded as a helpless and decayed race, are likely to emerge once more as an active force in the history of the world.

There are, in effect, three Mongolias—Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia and Manchurian Mongolia. In the middle of the seventeenth century, when the Manchus were on the eve of the conquest of China, the Mongols occupied between one-fourth and one-third of the area of modern Manchuria; their occupation extended to within a hundred miles of Mukden, and played a decisive part (for which in ordinary historical accounts they have never been given proper credit) in the Manchu conquest of China. It is only within the last thirty years that a great part of this Mongol-inhabited Manchurian territory has been expropriated and settled by Chinese colonists.

While this displacement of Mongols by Chinese is complete and probably permanent, the very success of the Chinese has created a “Mongol question.” This question has been considered important enough in the recently established state of “Manchukuo” to justify the creation of a separate Mongol province, the Province
of Hsingan, under a Mongol governor (see map below). Based on the Hsingan mountains, which define part of the western frontier of Manchuria, it is divided into three sub-provinces. The southern is under a Mongol vice-governor; the northeastern (including a part of the Nonni valley, inhabited not only by Mongols but by other non-Chinese tribes, of which the most important are the Daghor) is under a Daghor; the northwestern (which has never been colonized by Chinese) is also under a Daghor. South of Hsingan province lies the province of Jehol, which under Chang Hsüeh-liang, the Chinese ruler at the time of the Japanese occupation, formed the fourth province of Manchuria. South of
Hsingan is the Silingol League of Inner Mongolia, the only part of Inner Mongolia proper that has not yet been encroached on by Chinese colonization. To the west lies Outer Mongolia, and on the north is Siberia.

Before discussing the political situation, we may pause to consider the relative areas of the various geographical divisions in question and the number of Mongols inhabiting them. There are no reliable figures either of area or population, but approximations will serve our present purposes. The area of Outer Mongolia is something like a million square miles. Manchuria contains about 360,000 square miles. The Mongol population of Outer Mongolia is perhaps a million and of Manchuria between a million and a million and a half. In addition, there are something under a million Mongols in Inner Mongolia, and about half a million in Jehol. This gives an approximate total of three and a half to four millions of Mongols — really a small number of persons in such a vast territory.

Inner Mongolia is recognized as one of the appanages of China, but actually it is administered by its own princes. They have been strong enough up to the present to avoid Chinese colonization, but they are not likely to try to break away from China unless rash efforts are made to increase Chinese control, or unless they are tempted by offers of an alliance with Manchukuo guaranteeing them some degree of genuine autonomy.

The Province of Jehol was made up out of the territory of the old Mongol “Leagues” of Chao-ude and Chosotu which together with the Cherim League (later absorbed into Fengt’ien province and now the southern division of Hsingan province) formed the eastern wing of Inner Mongolia. Chinese colonization of this region began early. The modern type of colonization, based on railways and backed by troops, either sweeps the Mongols before it or obliterates them under the weight of the new Chinese population. But the pre-railway conditions under which most of Jehol was colonized allowed the survival of many “islands” of Mongols. Some of these Mongols have lost their language, but the majority preserve it; none have forgotten their nationality. Though they are not nomadic, and live like Chinese, they cherish the memory of their Mongol race and rarely intermarry with Chinese.

In spite of their strong Mongol feelings these Jehol tribes are not popular among nomad Mongols, who regard them as too
THE POSITION OF MANCHUKUO IN THE FAR EAST

Scale of miles

0 400 800 1200 1600 2000
Chinese. Out of touch with the main body of Mongols and out of sympathy with the Chinese, whom they admit to be higher in culture but whom they blame for the decline from the “good old Mongol days,” they are a pathetic and melancholy people. Without hope of being able to recover their Mongol independence, they yet cling stubbornly to everything possible of their Mongol identity, and can only be absorbed very slowly into the Chinese mass. A genuinely and obviously constructive Mongol policy on the part of Manchukuo could perhaps win over these Mongols; but not easily, because they are greatly outnumbered by Chinese and because they have so long resigned themselves to the fact of China’s superior power.

The mountainous province of Jehol is a key to the frontier of North China. It was only after they had allied themselves with the Mongols of this region that the Manchus, who had already raided North China, were able to plan for an invasion leading to permanent conquest, and to take full advantage of the free passage of the Great Wall at Shanhaikuan offered by the Chinese General Wu San-kuei when the Ming dynasty collapsed in rebellion. At the present time Jehol is an obvious base for Chinese guerilla warfare against Manchukuo. Thus if the new state of Manchukuo is to survive, a struggle between it and China for the mastery of Jehol province is inevitable. It is not clear whether the formation of Hsingan province was brought about by the demands of the Mongol element in Manchuria or whether it was inspired from without as a measure of Japanese high policy. But in any event the step is an important one. Ever since the fall of the Manchu dynasty, when Russia made good a claim to “special interests” in Outer Mongolia, the world has assumed that the Mongols were no longer a force in controlling their own destiny. It has been taken for granted that Russia on the north and China on the south would gradually devour Mongolia, while the majority of the Mongols would die out and the negligible remnant become absorbed among Russians and Chinese. No one has thought that the Russian device of setting up a Soviet Republic in Outer Mongolia, and the Chinese formula of calling the Mongols one of the “five constituent races”1 of the Chinese Republic, were anything but convenient temporary fictions.

1 Chinese, Manchu, Mongol, Moslem, Tibetan. The five-colored flag first adopted by the Chinese Republic symbolized this union. The substitution of the “blue sky, white sun” flag of the Nationalists coincides with the adoption of the Nationalist policy of urging the conversion of all minority groups into Chinese.
The attempt to create a new Manchurian state, the recognition of the Mongol element within it, and the setting apart of a large frontier province which is virtually a Mongol reserve, have totally changed the situation. The Japanese have long claimed a special interest in "Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia," but the geographical limit of this claim has never been properly defined. It must in fact be based on the three eastern "Leagues" of Inner Mongolia, Cherim, Chao-ude and Chosotu, which lie within the administration of modern Manchuria; but little attention has been given to defining "Eastern Inner Mongolia," because there was a great stretch of Chinese-colonized territory between the sphere of immediate Japanese activity and the nearest Mongol nomads; and Mongol affairs, considered as affairs of the Mongols themselves, were in any case held to form an academic question.

The recognition of a regional Mongol interest by the creation of Hsingan province is important because it means that instead of two nations, each treating its Mongol subjects as auxiliaries or victims as seemed expedient, three nations are now bidding for power. This in turn means that the Mongols can no longer be disposed of arbitrarily; they must be courted, and thus they have once more become to a certain extent agents of their own destiny. Until a year ago they had only the choice of extinction under Chinese rule or drastic social revolution under Outer Mongolia, affiliated as it is with Soviet Russia. Now they have at least a margin of bargaining power, for any concerted action, or even the action of a determined minority, can profoundly affect the policies and strategic positions of Russia, China and Japan.

The Siberian frontier of Manchuria is well established. Its frontier toward North China must follow one of several obvious alternatives, based on the mountain ranges of Jehol province. Its frontier toward Mongolia alone is uncertain. Tribal boundaries exist, but are they to be recognized as national boundaries? Where can the physical frontier be defined? When it is defined, what will be the feeling and relationship between the Mongols included in Manchuria, those remaining under Chinese overlordship in Inner Mongolia, and the independent or quasi-independent Mongols of Outer Mongolia? The region itself is almost never visited by foreign travellers. Practically nothing is known (except to a few people in China, Japan and Russia) of the tribal groupings, historical associations, and racial and nationalistic feelings
of the people involved. Yet the frontier to be defined, and the tribal and political grouping that will result from it, will have a direct bearing on national history and international relations in continental Asia.

II

Let us turn now to Outer Mongolia. The position here is obscure—more obscure than it need be, because international recognition of the actual state of affairs would require acknowledgment of a prodigious improvement in the standing of Soviet Russia, which the nations most affected would only admit under pressure and with distaste. The historical claim of the Mongols themselves, for which a strong case could be stated, is that they do not "belong" to China and never did. The Chinese came under Manchu rule by conquest, but the Mongols came under the Manchu Emperors chiefly by alliance, or as the result of tribal wars among themselves leading to Manchu intervention. They owed allegiance directly to the Manchu Emperors, not to the nation of China, by which they have never been conquered.

When the Manchu Empire fell the Mongols attempted to assert their right to autonomy. In Outer Mongolia, with Russian support, they succeeded to a certain degree, but Inner Mongolia was too near to China and too far from an independent supply of arms. After there had been a good deal of fighting it remained under Chinese rule; but the administration of regions not colonized by Chinese was left in the hands of the tribal princes.

In 1919, when it appeared that the power of Russia was broken forever, the Chinese made an attempt to conquer Outer Mongolia. The expedition, at first successful, treated the Mongols with such brutality that any voluntary union between Outer Mongolia and the Chinese Republic is now most unlikely. The Chinese invaders were finally slaughtered and scattered by a very small force of Mongols and Tibetans, led by anti-Bolshevik Russians.

A government of Outer Mongolia was then established under the highest ecclesiastical authority in the nation—the Living Buddha of Urga. But real power was in the hands of the Russian soldier-refugees under the sadistic Baron Ungern-Sternberg, who even exceeded the Chinese in extortion and massacre. When the "Mad Baron" was at last defeated and killed by Red Russians the Bolshevik intervention came as a deliverance. Soviet Russia
did not need to conquer Outer Mongolia: it had only to organize a people which was already well disposed in its favor. And when the Living Buddha died in 1924, it was only necessary to confirm the reorganization of the country on Soviet lines begun in 1921. Although as much killing, or almost as much, was done in the course of the secondary revolution as in the preceding years of rebellion and war, that revolution did not appear to the Mongols as a Russian conquest. A genuine pro-Russian, pro-Soviet party had by then been built up, and though Russians were concerned in the political reorganization, most of the executive work was in Mongol hands, and has remained there.

The few people who know anything of Outer Mongolia tend to be so violently prejudiced either for or against Soviet Russia that an objective statement of present conditions is most difficult to obtain. Such knowledge as I myself have been able to gather comes chiefly from Mongol refugees. As these people have fled from Outer Mongolia at the risk of being killed by the border patrols, it might be expected that any bias in their accounts would be anti-Russian. It is the more surprising to find that they are not, on the whole, anti-Russian. The almost invariable testimony is that Russian control by force does not exist. There are no Russian troops in the country, and even the Russian officers there are instructors, not commanders. Russian civil officials, apart from technical experts, doctors, veterinaries and so forth, are also very few, and on the whole are popular. In other words, the government of Outer Mongolia may be under the influence and inspiration of Russia, but it cannot fairly be called a disguised Russian government. It is based on the genuine conversion to Russian ideas of an important minority among the Mongols.

There exists a large element in Outer Mongolia which is bitterly hostile to the present government. Several thousand Mongols within the last year have found it so intolerable that they have abandoned all their possessions and fled, at the risk of being shot at sight. Nevertheless the government they have found insupportable is a Mongol government, and the patrols which try to shoot them when they cross the border are Mongols, who do not need prompting or orders from Russian officers.

The truth appears to be that the strength of the Outer Mongolian government is founded neither on Russian terrorism nor on any special diabolical Russian ingenuity in misleading a semi-barbaric people. The younger and more energetic men among the
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Mongols themselves are in control, and they have found no help or sympathy except in Russia and no model for modernization except the Russian. When first the Manchu and then the Russian Empire fell, and Outer Mongolia wished to stand alone, the native hereditary princes failed to provide capable leaders. When China tried to conquer Mongolia in 1919, the invading army did nothing to mitigate the traditional hostility between Mongols and Chinese, and everything to make new memories of hate. When the anti-Bolshevik Russians, welcomed at first as deliverers, were given a chance to found a new government under "civilized" guidance, they robbed and murdered more senselessly than the Chinese.

When, on the other hand, the Red Russians were strong enough to take a part in Mongol affairs, they were not yet strong enough to overrun the country. They were glad to use Mongols who had been disappointed by their own leaders, and by the anti-Bolsheviks, and build them into a pro-Soviet but at the same time nationalistic party. It should be remembered that, to these young Mongols, the old Mongol order meant failure and decay, while Chinese rule meant oppression and destruction. Bolshevik Russia alone meant modernism, progress and civilization.

The younger Mongols have modelled themselves on the Soviets as naturally as Chinese republicanism has modelled itself on America and Europe; but basically the new Mongolia is no more communistic in feeling and instinct than China is republican. Basically it is nationalistic, with a tincture of crude democracy, and the success of the new government would have been impossible without the rank failure of the old order to rise to the national emergency, and to adapt itself to the new conditions of power in the modern world.

Opposition to the present government of Outer Mongolia is found chiefly in the older generation and among the hereditary nobility and the lama hierarchy. The "progressives" of many Eastern nations which have come in contact with Western civilization tend to turn against the established religion. In Mongolia this tendency is especially pronounced, because communism makes all established religion an object of attack. In many ways this is a pity. The Mongol temperament is profoundly religious, and there are elements of beauty in lamaistic Buddhism which, if preserved, would accord well with the national character. A wise nationalism could reform and preserve the national religion; but
when the intellectuals of any people have decided to tear down their own traditional religion in order to reach what they have convinced themselves is a higher ideology, they cannot be stopped by simple counsels of wisdom.

Nor is this all. The Mongols depend a great deal on Chinese materials for the study of their own history, especially for the period of the Manchu dynasty. Throughout these writings they find it stated that the Manchu Emperors deliberately encouraged the “superstitions” of lamaism in order to undermine the warlike tradition of the Mongols. It is true that at the beginning of the Manchu Empire the Manchus were afraid that the Mongols might develop a military power challenging their own, although many of the Mongols were their allies. Yet I think it is probable that the Manchu and Chinese authors of the period overemphasized the effects of official policy in destroying the military power of the Mongols by encouraging religion, and that the decay of the Mongols was largely due to other causes. The facts of history, however, are often of less influence than the current interpretation of facts as they might have been. Progressive Mongols are convinced that all religion, most of all their own, is a curse, and therefore “progress,” “modernization” and the whole movement toward the material development which we ourselves call “civilization” are inextricably associated with the attack on the established religion, the social and political position of its high dignitaries and the vested interests of its great monasteries.

III

Uncolonized Inner Mongolia is the stronghold of all that has been destroyed in Outer Mongolia: the old tradition, the power of the princes, the sanctity of religion. Chinese colonization has forced this conservative Mongolia back into a desperate last stand. Until recent years there was really more land than the Mongols needed—except perhaps in bad years—but this margin has now been devoured. The land was taken over by negotiation through the princes and great religious foundations, who, not being strong enough to resist, made the best of a bad business by taking cash compensation or annual subsidies. As this method avoided most of the difficulties of the forcible seizure of land, the officials interested in colonization supported the authority of princes and high lamas in what remained of the tribal territory. This process has now been pushed to the limit. There is no more
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spare land. The Mongols must either resist or resign themselves to abandoning the old Mongol way of life, turn to living like the Chinese, and eventually be lost among the Chinese. Any prince who consents to further grants of land for colonization is therefore obviously a defeatist who thinks it better to surrender to the Chinese than to risk, by resistance, what remains to him of his hereditary power and revenues.

It was therefore inevitable that a Young Mongol party should appear and grow rapidly in influence. The Young Mongols are devoted to the ideal of saving the remnant of the Mongols as a nation, or at least as a territorial, linguistic and racial group. They stand for education, "modernization," "progress," and adaptation to the standards of the outside world. In order to succeed, they are willing to make drastic changes. They are, of necessity, anti-aristocratic, anti-Chinese and anti-religious—at least to the extent of wishing to dislodge the lamas from their positions of privilege. One element of this party has tried to compromise with the Chinese, but found it hopeless. The Chinese, naturally, will not support any movement of education or reform which is not based on teaching the Mongols Chinese, and turning them into Chinese.

Speaking of colonization, the Chinese use catchwords about "civilizing" the Mongols, improving the land and defending and expanding the frontiers. But the impact of colonization is not directed by well-thought-out political, social and economic ideas. Actually, colonization results only from an ambition to make money on the part of the interested provincial authorities, land-commissioners and entrepreneurs who take a profit on every land-transaction. For this reason a great deal of land is taken from the Mongols that ought never to be colonized, because it is not suited for farming at all, or only suitable for farmers with advanced technical knowledge and equipment—a class that is simply not available. Thus the areas of colonization suffer a multitude of plagues; harvests are lost through cold or drought; "thin" land is rapidly exhausted and ruined by the emergence, through ploughing, of the underlying sand. As a result, the waves of colonization alternate with ebb-tides of colonists who have failed. Much of the land that has been ruined cannot recover even as pasture. This unsteadiness in colonization accounts for a great deal of the banditry which is the endemic scourge of the frontier. Nor is any compromise in the way of settling colonists as pastoral herdsmen
possible, because that life is incompatible with Chinese tastes, traditions and experience.

Because it has proved impossible either to halt Chinese colonization or compromise with it, the Young Mongols waver between ideas of union with Outer Mongolia and ideas of treating with Manchukuo and Japan for support in a movement toward autonomy. In the circumstances, unless the princes and the high religious dignitaries with whom they are associated as the natural leaders of the old order are prepared to take positive action to prove that they intend to keep the leadership, and to keep the Mongols free, rebellion can easily break out.

The establishment of a quasi-independent Manchukuo, with the last of the Manchu Emperors as Chief Executive, offers a rallying point for the princes. The difficulty among the princes of Inner Mongolia is to find one who can be accepted there as ruler by all the others. They are all so nearly equal in status and lineage that there is no obvious leader by right of birth. Allegiance to, or alliance under, a Manchu Emperor would solve the problem. Under the Manchu Empire the Mongols never regarded themselves as a conquered, subject people, but as loyal allies. It is true that the Manchus made impossible the rise of an independent Mongol power. Yet they granted to the Mongols privileges, honors and a degree of tribal autonomy which made them in their own estimation peers of the Manchus and superiors of the Chinese. There is no doubt that princes and church would rally to a Manchu Emperor if they were convinced he had come to stay and could give them real support. If other affairs of state and international policy had not caused P'u Yi to be declared Chief Executive instead of Emperor, a virtually spontaneous movement for the independence of Inner Mongolia, led by the princes, might already have been precipitated.

IV

The problems of the Mongols in Manchuria are much the same as those in Inner Mongolia, except that the Manchurian Mongols are even more perplexed. A Japanese policy in Manchukuo that guaranteed the integrity of Mongol lands and supported the claim to autonomy, as far as reasonably possible, would go far to win Mongol support. The Mongol regions of Manchuria are the outer frontier of the new state. If the Mongols are disaffected, they can easily assist Chinese guerilla warfare against the Japa-
nese, and the danger of their alliance with Outer Mongolia could offer a perpetual threat to the security of Manchukuo and Japan. Well-disposed Mongols, on the other hand, would greatly strengthen the frontiers of the new state, make them virtually unassailable by a flanking movement from China, and to a great extent immobilize the military forces of Outer Mongolia in the event of war with Russia.

But Japan is under enormous difficulties in following any straightforward policy in Manchukuo, especially one which will make convinced partners out of the Mongols. Manchukuo can only be controlled by a policy of playing factions off against each other. By far the most important element there, numerically and economically, is the Chinese. Unless they can be won over by justice and good government and by allowing them a proper scope for trade, permanent peace is almost impossible. The Mongols are afraid that the government in making concessions to Chinese, Japanese and Koreans, will permit Mongol interests to suffer.

The railways are the Mongols' greatest fear. All the new railways built to exploit the western part of Manchuria were originally designed to develop land taken from them. Several of these railways owe money to the Japanese. The Mongols are afraid that the Japanese, for the sake of interest on capital invested, and for the sake of new profitable investment, will continue the policy of railway exploitation, taking land from them and settling Chinese or Koreans on it. It is true that for much of western Manchuria it would be sounder economically to develop the trade in pastoral products and timber, rather than in agricultural products. There are interests in Japan which would like to see this kind of development, which would supply Japan with raw products for her manufactures and with food for home consumption and reëxport. Such interests might well favor the guarantee of Mongol lands, and assist in introducing better stock and providing the medical and veterinary services which the Mongols urgently need. Unfortunately the Mongols know little of such forms of development; to them railways mean Chinese colonization and the loss of their land, and nothing else.

It is also hard to see how the Japanese can support a Mongol policy in Manchukuo that is anything but reactionary. The appeal of Manchukuo is an appeal direct to the Mongol princes, in the name of the "good old days." It is therefore discounted in advance by many of the Young Mongols, who are ex hypothesi
sympathetic to some degree with Outer Mongolia, even though very few of them are theoretical Bolsheviks.

Finally, there is the very great effect of the Chinese propaganda, which is far more convincing than the Japanese. Mongols generally fear the Chinese; but for years they have been told that a Japanese Manchuria would be "another Korea." They know nothing precise about Korea, but the story they have been told is one of inhuman oppression, and as in past years many Koreans have immigrated into Manchuria to escape Japanese rule they assume that Japanese rule must be worse even than the colonization and extinction which they themselves fear from the Chinese. Japan, in her present position, can only win confidence by constructive measures, which will take a long time.

Some of the Mongol leaders hope that out of the antagonism between China, Japan and Russia they may succeed in salvaging a Mongol state. They realize that at present, without an independent supply of arms, they cannot stand alone. The ambition of these patriots, apparently, is a semi-independent state, allied with Manchukuo and combining the present Chinese Inner Mongolia with Manchurian Mongolia, but not directly subject to Manchukuo. Some of the more ambitious even believe it to be possible to win over Outer Mongolia. They say that if they could secure enough rifles to arm the discontented conservatives in Outer Mongolia, they could detach it from the Soviet federation. The ruling faction in Outer Mongolia is a minority, although it is powerful, numerous and supported by a loyal army. If Outer Mongolia is to be won at all, it must be won now, when the call to arms can be reinforced by the appeal of a restored dynasty (for these Mongols hope that the Chief Executive of Manchukuo will soon be declared Emperor) and a return to the "good old days." This is not only because Russia is at present anxious not to fight, but because in Outer Mongolia itself the old tradition grows weaker as the older generation dies out. A new generation is growing up, to which the present conditions are normal; it looks to its own abilities for promotions and careers, and would not like to see hereditary ranks and lama privileges restored.

Manchukuo, after all, is only an experimental buffer between Russia and Japan. The Mongols do not really believe that there can be settled conditions until there has been a test of strength between these two nations; but they are beginning to believe that they themselves at last may have a say in the matter.
There is, I think, almost no possibility of a strong Mongol reaction in favor of China. Even refugees from Outer Mongolia who hope for Inner Mongolian support in a war of liberation do not count on submission to China again. They believe that if the Mongols are strong enough to break away from Russia they need not fear China. As for the Mongols of Manchuria, they are afraid of being sacrificed to one or another of the interests of Japanese high policy; but the majority of their leaders, at least, are resigned to almost any amount of Japanese control if only they are guaranteed against Chinese colonization. The time when the Chinese could have built up confidence and loyalty among the Mongols of Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, to counteract the influence of Russia and Japan, has gone by. They are not likely to have another chance; and if they had, there is no important faction in China which believes in a generous Mongol policy and almost no one who even understands or sympathizes with the Mongols. For this reason, China has made the most urgent appeals to the Mongols to stand fast against Japan, but has given them no arms and hesitates even to support the Inner Mongolian princes in a manner that would promote Mongol unity.

The most real cleavage among the Mongols themselves is between Outer Mongolia and Inner Mongolia — between the young men, the modernizers, the believers in “progress” and “civilization,” on one side, and the monarchists, the princes, the church, the conservatives, those who distrust change and new ways, on the other. Politics and religion apart, there is among all Mongols a feeling of blood-brotherhood that is very strong. Race and language are almost sacred to them. Under all differences of allegiance there is a powerful feeling that all Mongolia ought to be united. It is only over the method of achieving unity that they quarrel. In this appeal for unity Outer Mongolia, with its tradition of being the ancient home of the Mongol race and Mongol glory, dominates Inner Mongolia and Manchurian Mongolia.

The Soviet influence in Outer Mongolia is playing for time, as it is in Russia itself. Already there is a powerful minority which feels that the Russian teaching is its own faith. If the monarchists, nobility and high clergy of Inner Mongolia prove themselves to be unintelligent conservatives, capable of “learning nothing and forgetting nothing,” then the already powerful, but largely subterranean Young Mongol movement will find itself forced to turn toward the Soviet influence of Outer Mongolia. If the Japanese
influence in Manchukuo gives even the impression of making dupes of the Mongols who tentatively support it, and if no concessions are made in the way of local self-government, guaranteed frontiers for a recognized Mongol territory within Manchukuo, and Mongol troops under Mongol command, then this will mean further damage to the cause of conservatism and increased prestige for Outer Mongolia.

The importance of the challenge of Manchukuo is that it offers a possibility for Mongol survival combined with the survival of the old tradition. The hope of a renewed Mongol unity, once abandoned, is now stirring again. The Mongols themselves look for a final decision by war; a war that will mark the end of one world and the beginning of another; for to the Mongol mind, with its tradition of world-sweeping campaigns, there can be no such thing as a great historical decision not ratified by trial at arms. They look for a final struggle between revolution and reaction, and they believe that in this struggle their own destiny will be made plain.

The issue is there, whether it is to be determined by open war or by the chess-moves of treaty and negotiation. The field on which it must be settled is the almost unknown territory where Outer Mongolia, Manchurian Mongolia and Chinese Inner Mongolia adjoin. Not only is the territory itself little known. The problems and hopes, the ancient pride, the barbaric courage and callous barbarity, the courtly traditions and spontaneous poetry, the frank instincts of loyalty and faith of its Mongol tribesmen are mysteries too, unguessed at by the outer nations which wait to deliver judgment. There are many people in all nations, the undistinguished apprehensive citizens as well as those active in the affairs of government, who believe that in Manchukuo there may break out a war which will affect the course of civilization. There are few who know that it may mean the emergence once more into history of the Mongols as a living force — a race whom the world at large believes to be moribund, and incapable of the deeds of action which made it famous under Jenghiz Khan, his great marshals and his heirs.