

## XIX. COURSE OF THE CIVIL WAR IN SINKIANG

**I**t now becomes necessary to make a recapitulation of certain events in the province of Sinkiang in order to provide a background for subsequent developments and our own adventures to come.

After the murder of Governor-General YANG in Urumchi on July 7th 1928 the reins of power were taken over by CHIN SHU-JEN, a Kansu man of humble origin. From the very outset he showed himself to be completely unfitted for the responsible post of ruler of the vast province. His misgovernment, greed and oppression provoked revolt and civil war that was destined to lay waste and paralyse the country, and destroy all the frail ties existing between Sinkiang and China proper. He appointed his two sons to the highest military posts and his body-servant as colonel of a regiment. His newly enrolled troops were a pack of undisciplined rowdies. Taxes were raised and the liberties of tradesmen and artisans curtailed. Customs duties were made heavier, revenue collectors stole without conscience, trade with China was cut off, and the internal trade of the province was completely controlled by Soviet Russia. The financial resources were destroyed, while gold and silver flowed into CHIN's private treasury. Only CHIN himself could send gold dust out of the province. Bills without covering were used in payment, and the currency rapidly depreciated. The chief sources of income, the trade with furs and wool, were monopolized. All complaints were met with silence. Spies were planted everywhere. A thoughtless word was punished with imprisonment. Letters, newspapers and telegrams were subjected to a stricter control than ever before. Not even within the province could one travel without a pass bearing CHIN's private seal. To leave the province was a matter of the greatest difficulty both for Chinese and foreigners. He tried to close Sinkiang hermetically, to prevent all complaints and information regarding the real state of affairs from leaking out.

All over the province the mood was one of depression and nervousity. Combustible material accumulated, and only a spark was needed to kindle a conflagration.

Hami became the seat of the revolt. For centuries it had been ruled by an increasingly impotent Turki vassal-king. When the last of these, SHAH MAQSUD,