

Latterly, however, the conviction seems to have gained ground that Tchang's appointment as Governor-General of the province of Sinkiang is merely a matter of time and many mandarins are doing their best to transfer their allegiance from the Futai to Tchang. Aqsu is generally mentioned as the future residence of the former.

Tchang arrived early in the year with a «tchinping» (bodyguard) of about 40 and a couple of hundred civil and military officials of different grades. On the way from Peiping he is said to have been empowered to inspect the local administration in various places, including Lanchow (?). The journey proceeded incredibly slowly. On arrival at Urumchi he shut himself up in his yamen in the NE or Manchurian part of the fortress. Officially it is given out that he is visiting the town en route for his residence at Ili, but his activities during his stay, which has already lasted eight months, are a puzzle, at all events to outsiders. Having now spent a year in Chinese Turkestan I have learnt how much faith may be placed in the rumours passing from mouth to mouth.

There is no doubt that a great many reforms have been decided on in principle and that they aim at connecting the province more closely with the rest of China, by means of instituting better communications and strengthening the Chinese element, and at completely reorganising the defence of the province. It remains to be seen how this crowd of officials with their internal dissensions, intrigues, corruption and lack of education will succeed in fulfilling the task. The extremely limited resources of the province already seem to present serious difficulties to the realisation of even the most minor reforms. The provincial administration has already had to be granted an annual subsidy of 2,400,000 lan and the Dzian Dziun is alleged to have complained that these funds come in very irregularly. A proposal for levying a tax on house property in towns, factories and workshops and for introducing a personal tax is said to have been rejected in Peiping, at any rate for the present. In view of the restricted resources of the population, which lives from hand to mouth, it seems unlikely that the provincial revenue could be increased to any extent worth mentioning by means of taxation. The suggested energetic exploitation of the mineral wealth of the Tian Shan mountains, said to be enormous, would be rational, but the lack of technical training and capital in addition to bad, not to say impossible communications, and objection to foreign enterprise, considerably reduce the prospects of speedy success in this sphere. Nevertheless, the leading men seem to be considering the idea and negotiations have been proceeding with Bauer for the purchase of various machinery for mining, pumping oil etc. Bauer, however, seemed to think that in the present state of communications it would be impossible to transport up-to-date machinery. Some coal deposits in the neighbourhood of Turfan are said to have been investigated and gold washing on behalf of the Government in the river Dshirgalan near Shikho is spoken of. A grant of 20,000 lan is supposed to have been made for this purpose, but this figure appears to be as unreliable as the statement that 200,000 had been granted for mining operations.

In connection with the economic reforms, the establishment of two new central departments should be referred to; one of them is to control the trade of the province, and grant patents, and the other to carry on mining for the Government, industrial activity, handicrafts etc.