

V. “Fields Whitening to Harvest.” 1924 – 1932. From the Reconstruction of the Church to the Approaching Revolution.

School work, orphanages, mission through literature and other branches of work continue. They have been treated above. In this chapter, after a description of the political situation, the spiritual activities such as church life, the situation of the Christians, worship services, etc. will be taken up, in other words the emerging “Church in Eastern Turkestan”. The MCCS in Eastern Turkestan will be presented for instance in the chapter about the missionaries. It has already been written about them above, e.g. about their shortcomings and weaknesses. Now some of their positive sides will be identified. The mission field also received many new missionaries during this period. Medical care, also being “part of MCCS history” and already described above, is radically renewed at the beginning of the 1930s through among other things the construction of a new hospital in Kashgar and the arrival of two fully qualified doctors. But what is most characteristic of these years is the total reversal within the purely religious part of the work. At last prospects were improving and the time of harvest seemed to be at hand after all the laborious and seemingly fruitless sowing of seeds. During the first years of the 1930s the Mission experienced a spiritual breakthrough and the 40th Anniversary of the Mission, held in 1932, could be celebrated in a spirit of great hope. But as a matter of fact, the Mission was standing on the threshold of Revolution. This is the great paradox: while the Mission finally was experiencing breakthrough, political factors were being mobilized, making continued mission work impossible.

1. The Approaching Storm

In order to understand the political development in Eastern Turkestan during the latter part of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, a short review of the situation in China proper is necessary. Here, after Yuan Shih-kai’s death in 1916, there was a period generally called the time of the Military Governors. A better name would maybe have been the time of the “plundering warlords”¹. These Governors had received their training by Yuan Shih-kai and remained loyal during his lifetime. After his death however they started competing for power, waging war upon each other with their private armies. This anarchy went on into the 1930s.

The death of Yuan Shih-kai opened the way back to China for Sun Yat-sen. He was then invited by the southern Chinese authorities to come to Kanton and establish an independent republic there. So from 1917 China was divided into two republics. Sun Yat-sen however had very little power as he had no army. But while the generals were ravaging the country in the north and Yuan Shih-kai’s republic was becoming more and more powerless, Sun Yat-sen carried out ideological work which established a foundation.² For a long time Sun Yat-sen hoped for help from the Western powers. To his great disappointment they sided with Japan in the Versailles treaty. Only the Soviet

¹ Henriksson-Hwang, 1967, p. 314 ff. Keim, 1967, p. 233 ff. Carrington et al., 1968, p. 251 ff.

² Henriksson-Hwang, 1967, p. 325. Mathews, 1932, p. 111.

Union acted in a friendly way. Lenin sent his secretary to China and he acknowledged Sun Yat-sen as leader of China's official government. In 1923, the Russian diplomat Borodin arrived in Kanton and became Sun Yat-sen's advisor. Kuomintang, Sun's people's party was now organized into a political organisation. At the party congress of 1924 a programme was adopted modelled to a great extent on the Soviet pattern. Sun became party chairman for life and had right of veto in all decision. The development had led up to totalitarian party dictatorship.³ Sun died already in March, 1925 however. "The greatest popular leader in the history of modern China" soon was to be idolized as a Chinese national saint.⁴

Sun Yat-sen's work was carried on by the General Chiang Kai-shek. He soon realized that the growing Communist influence was a great danger for the country. And in the spring of 1927, he ordered a massacre of communists in Shanghai.⁵ In December the same year, a communist army attacked Kanton where there were large riots with killing and looting. Chiang Kai-shek now understood that if China wanted to survive, the communist must be driven away. He declared the Communist party illegal and all the Russian advisors had to leave the country. Meanwhile, Chiang continued his efforts to unite the country. In 1928, Peking was conquered. Nanking was proclaimed capital city in what at least on the surface looked like a united state. Chiang made himself dictator and was elected President.⁶

So from 1928 Chiang Kai-shek was China's leader. His power in this enormous country was however next to non-existent. In the different provinces the General Governors ruled with their own armies. Chiang could not visit a provincial capital without a hostage as a guarantee.⁷ Also contributing to the division of China was the uniting of the forbidden communist party under Mao Tse-tung.⁸

China's total division was facilitated by the Japanese expansion. In 1931 the Japanese attacked Mukden and soon conquered the whole of Manchuria, where they set up a separate state, Manchukuo. A few years later they conquered the Jehol province and thereby the Japanese were now in China proper.⁹

³ Henriksson-Hwang, 1967, p. 324. Mathews, 1932, p. 113.

⁴ Henriksson-Hwang, 1967, p. 328. Some writers mean that Sun Yat-sen received a Christian upbringing in his home. Latourette however doubts the fact that his father was a Christian. (Latourette, 1945, p. 609.) Sun probably came into contact with Christianity only in Honolulu, and was later on baptized in Hongkong. (Mathews, 1932, p. 181. In compliance with Sun's wish, he was given a Christian burial in Peking, Union Medical College. (Mathews, 1932, p. 115.)

⁵ Lötveit, 1961/62, p. 6.

⁶ Henriksson-Hwang, 1967, p. 334 f. Carrington et al., 1968, p. 251 ff. Mathews, 1932, p. 116 f. A communist uprising in Kanton in 1927 was crushed and in connection with that the Soviet consulates all over Central China were closed. (Westman, 1929, p. 224.) The expelled Russians went back home to the Soviet Union via the western route. Some of them stayed on in western China, where they started conspiring in the 1930s. – The severe unrest in Central China in 1926/27 caused great damage to the MCCS Mission in Hupeh. Some 40 missionaries went home to Sweden. (Palmaer, 1940, p. 210 ff. Sigrid Larsson to her brother Efraim on Good Friday, 1927.) – Chiang Kai-shek became a Christian. In October 1930 he was baptized by a Chinese pastor and taken up in the Christian Church. (Mathews, 1932, p. 121.)

⁷ Carrington et al., 1968, p. 259.

⁸ Henriksson-Hwang, 1967, p. 336.

⁹ Ibid., p. 339 ff.

Torn to pieces by inner and outer forces and with a totally paralysed government Central China could not do anything about the development in Eastern Turkestan in the beginning of the 1930s.

In Urumchi, the Eastern Turkestan capital, power was held at that time by the General Governor Yang Tseng-hsin. Formally he acknowledged the Central Government of Peking, but for the rest he paid no attention whatsoever to Peking. This autocrat was also at an advantage due to the enormous distances separating his province from Central China.

John Törnquist describes Yang as a despot living only for two things: "Power, more power, gold, more gold!" The Chinese elements among his subjects hated him, says Törnquist, for he had trampled to death too many of their fathers and brothers. The Muslims grovelled before him, something which he often rewarded by favouring them. When inspectors from the Central Government came to examine his affairs, he met them at the border and presented them with two alternatives: either to go back home, after having received a generous bribe, or else go on to his capital, where they would soon be surrounded by his soldiers. The messengers often chose the first alternative, says Törnquist.¹⁰

Eleanor Lattimore communicates similar impressions of Governor Yang, "... and its (the country's) inaccessibility was further emphasized by the Governor's firmly implemented policy of isolation... Therefore he reigned with medieval majesty and barbarism over a country uncontaminated by modern culture."¹¹ His oriental cruelty manifested itself among other things, says Lattimore, in his inviting undesirable subjects to a party, only to behead them. A journalist at the Journal of The Royal Central Asia Society describes one of Yang's parties. This happened in 1916. Yang felt threatened by some conspirators and invited some of the leaders to a party. One after the other they were given so much to drink that they got totally drunk and then were executed. One can wonder, adds the journalist, to what an extent Yang's cold-blooded cruelty was the reason for his own execution, several years later.¹²

Yang's policy was thus to keep the province out of reach of the influence of the Central Government. He wanted relations with China to be purely formal ones. On the other hand, Yang was not interested in creating an independent republic. The neighbouring province Kansu was ruled by Feng, one of those self-willed generals mentioned above. Feng was called "the Christian general". His missionary zeal manifested itself among other things in his baptizing his whole army with a fire engine.¹³ It was Feng who suggested in 1925 that Kansu and Eastern Turkestan should form a Muslim republic under his own leadership and be attached to the rest of China. These plans came to nothing though as Yang showed no interest.¹⁴

As determinedly as he had tried to keep his province away from China's supremacy he also tried to stop Soviet's growing influence. Up to 1925, when the Soviet Union got a

¹⁰ The *Ansgarius*, 1926, p. 46. Before Yang became Governor he had been commander of a Muslim troop. (Nyman, 1977, p. 20.)

¹¹ Lattimore, 1935, p. 8, 114.

¹² RJCAS, Vol XVI (3), p. 407 1929. Davidson, 1957, p. 202.

¹³ Henriksson-Hwang, 1967, p. 326. Wennerholm, 1978, p. 202.

¹⁴ Nyman, 1977, p. 21, 46 f., 61 f.

General Consulate in Kashgar, the Russians had been working underground.¹⁵ Also after 1925, the Russian diplomacy was decidedly discreet. This did however not stop the Kashgar authorities from being irritated. In connection with a political scandal the Sino-Russian relations reached bottom level and the Russian Consul General was ordered to leave the country. After that, his successor, Consul General Posnikoff led a very cautious policy for a couple of years. The Chinese authorities in Kashgar were clearly anti-Russian. As an example of that a campaign was launched against persons having had anything to do with the Russian Consulate.¹⁶ In the meantime, however, the Russian influence grew stronger and Yang “did not realize that the Russians were getting mightier than himself.”¹⁷

Moreover, during the 1920s, the population in the main was widely opposed to the new regime in the Soviet Union. The White Russian Nazaroff who was on the run in Eastern Turkestan says that one could hear Muslims in Kashgar praying aloud, “Oh, Allah, restore the Tsar and all will be well again.”¹⁸ Following orders from Governor Yang, all pilgrims on their way to Mecca, travelling through the Soviet Union, had to pay an extra tax, intended for the building of a Mosque in Eastern Turkestan. A similar tax was paid by merchants going to the Soviet Union. Through these arrangements Yang tried to isolate the province.¹⁹

Yang was murdered in 1928. He ended his life hated but also respected.²⁰ Having had a premonition that his days were numbered he had placed enormous sums of money with British and American banks. He had sent his family to Manila. And outside his Residence there was an aircraft ready to take him out of the country.²¹

The murderer was one of Yang’s collaborators, Fan Yao-nan.²² Presumptions have been put forward that the Russian were behind the assassination.²³ Lars-Erik Nyman however points out that even though the Russians could hardly avoid knowing about the conspiracy, they were not directly involved in the murder.²⁴ Fan Yao-nan was arrested and executed with customary Chinese cruelty.²⁵ The person in charge of the execution was Yang’s assistant secretary, Chin Shu-jan, who was also to become Yang’s successor as Governor General.

Chin was described as a good-for-nothing. Sven Hedin was in contact both with Yang and Chin. He gave Yang very good marks for being both wise and energetic. His successor however was “completely incompetent”.²⁶ Hedin writes about him from Urumchi to the Swedish missionaries in Kashgar. The new Governor was giving him great trouble, he complains. “Speaking to the highest authority here is hopeless. After the

¹⁵ An agreement made in 1924 with the Chinese Governor General allowed the Soviet Union to open consulates in five cities: Altai, Chuguchak, Kuldja, Kashgar and Urumchi. (Jackson, 1962, p. 51. Hayit, 1972, p. 299.)

¹⁶ Nyman, 1977, p. 27 f., 66 ff.

¹⁷ Hayit, 1971, p. 299.

¹⁸ Nazaroff, 1935, p. 41.

¹⁹ Nyman, 1977, p. 68.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

²¹ Davidson, 1957, p. 106.

²² Ibid., p. 106 f. Cable, 1929, p. 183. Lattimore, 1950, p. 65.

²³ McLean, 1948, p. 131.

²⁴ Nyman, 1977, p. 73.

²⁵ Wennerholm, 1978, p. 217.

²⁶ Hedin, 1935, p. 11.

death of his predecessors everything is different compared to before.” Hedin continues to be a typical Swede deep down in Central Asia, dating his letter “November, 30th, 1928. The day of death of Carolus XII”.²⁷ Hedin had great plans for exploration at this time. Among other things the Tarim basin was to be explored. But he was constantly hindered in his work and his travels by Chin. Chin’s unfriendliness and arrogance also affected Nils Ambolt, a member of Hedin’s expedition, who also embarked on lengthy explorations on his own, though commissioned by Hedin.²⁸

Chin was an opponent of the Mission. When the Norwegian missionary Torvik visited Urumchi in 1932 in order to obtain permission to open mission work in the Ili area, he was not even given access to see him.²⁹

Chin continued his predecessor’s policy of isolation towards Central China. But his attitude to the Soviet Union was different. He was considered to be “a fierce Communist”.³⁰ He was open towards the Russians, willing to negotiate and make concessions. In the year 1931 e.g. he made an agreement with them whereby commercial relationships were regulated giving the Soviet Union extensive privileges. In exchange, Chin received significant loans.³¹ The Russians kept a low profile during the years after the re-establishment in 1925 of the general consulate. At the beginning of the 1930s they intensified their involvement.

On the domestic front, Chin’s years in power, 1928-1933, led to total impoverishment of the population. Among other things he imposed extortionate taxes. On top of that he took a clear stand against the Turkish part of the population. The Turks asked for better conditions, e.g. better schools, but the Chinese refused to accept any improvements.³² Around 1930, the currency lost value in a catastrophic way. Another great source of irritation among the Muslims was the growing influence of the Russian communists.³³ In the end Chin’s injustices and arbitrariness made the hatred of the Muslims overflow.

The Muslim uprising started in the spring of 1931, in the north eastern corner of the province in the Muslim town Hami. “The tribe” was made up of about 10,000 members who for long periods had been able to live without taxes and on the whole freer than any other part of the province. Chin stripped them of all their privileges. The soil they had cultivated was given to Chinese from Kansu. All these humiliations reached a climax in the spring of 1931 when a Chinese tax collector married a Muslim woman. The bridegroom and many other Chinese were killed and then the Muslims fled into the mountains away from Chin’s troops which had come to take revenge. In the mountains they managed to make the Kyrgyz side with them. And at the same time they turned to the Tungan General Ma Chung-yen in Kansu, asking him for help. The uprising was led by among others Chodja Nias Hadji, who had earlier met with prominent Muslims in Khotan where he had planned the revolt.³⁴

²⁷ Hedin to the missionaries in Kashgar, November 30th, 1928. The letter was published for the first time in the Christmas publication *Vinterny* of 1972.

²⁸ Ambolt, 1935, p. 74 ff.

²⁹ Torvik, 1946, p. 158 f.

³⁰ Wennerholm, 1978, p. 217.

³¹ Teichman, 1937, p. 189. Fleming, 1936, p. 470.

³² John Andersson in the *Svenska Morgonbladet*, December 3rd, 1934.

³³ Törnquist in an interview with Gholla Mähnet khodja, Jarkend, January, 1933.

³⁴ Torvik, 1945, p. 118 ff. Nyström, 1936, p. 2.

Ma Chung-yen had become a General already at the age of 17. He was now in command of a force of 10,000 men.³⁵ He was the “fifth Ma” of his family³⁶, and he used his career in order to take revenge of his father whom the Chinese had executed. In Kansu he was waging a war against “the Christian General” Feng. When the China Inland missionary, Mildred Cable, and company, arrived in Kansu and saw Ma’s doings, she writes that he had transformed Kansu into “hell on earth”.³⁷ K.B. Westman remarks that the Kansu troops were half savage, and that many of its soldiers had taken part in the Boxing uproar.³⁸

In the summer of 1931, Ma and his army marched into Eastern Turkestan. After fierce fighting he was however forced to withdraw across the border back to Kansu, where he immediately started to recruit a new army, and in the winter of 1932/33 he marched, once again, towards Urumchi.

2. “Distressed, maltreated, tormented”

The political development touched upon briefly above hardly affected the Mission up to 1932. The fighting between Tungans and Chinese in the Urumchi area were more or less seen as thunder clouds menacing at the horizon. In the southern part of the province the Mission could carry on its work in a fairly normal way.

At the beginning of 1924, the Christians of Kashgar were scattered and it was now a question of gathering them again. And they came back from prisons and hiding-places, one after the other. The missionaries now raised the standards for new membership. The missionary Moen who arrived in the field, the year after the reconstruction, tries to understand the strict measures. After many years of a seemingly hopeless struggle, the Mission had finally had some success at the beginning of the 1920s. Then came the persecution and the Christians were scattered for the wind. Many deserted openly. One has to understand the deep distress and boundless disappointment of the missionaries, says Moen. In their distress they had no other explanation than that everything was lost. The results of many years of hard work were crushed. And in words maybe it was never clearly stated, but in action it said, “Get out all of you! We will have to start all over again!” After a long experience in the mission field, Moen means that a softer attitude would have been beneficial for all. One should never have asked a person if he wanted to join the church again. Instead, one could have tried to find those who had withdrawn and ask them if they now wanted to leave the church.³⁹

Great trouble was also caused by the Chinese Mission. There the situation was always unstable, but it was especially troublesome during times of unrest. John Törnquist points out that the Chinese population was unstable and inconstant. There was a stream going to and fro between China proper and the provinces on the outskirts. Within Eastern Turkestan there was constant circulation,⁴⁰ and the small congregation in Hancheng was

³⁵ Nyström 1935, p. 4.

³⁶ Snow, 1977, p. 327. “Ma” is the Chinese character for “horse”, but it is also the Chinese name of the prophet Mohammed. (Hedin, 1935, p. 6.)

³⁷ Platt, 1966, p. 236 f.

³⁸ Westman, 1934, p. 649.

³⁹ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

⁴⁰ Nyrén, 1928, p. 450.

scattered all over the province, even under normal conditions. Sigrid Larsson, who worked most of her time in Eastern Turkestan at the Chinese station Hancheng writes in a letter from 1924 about how utterly scattered the congregation was. There were members e.g. in Kashgar, in Jengi-Hessar and in Hana, yes, even in Eastern China.⁴¹

Pastoral care and cure of souls were important and delicate tasks. Of course the equipment and natural talent of the missionaries for taking care of the congregation and its separate members differed from one person to another. Ahlbert for instance was reputed to be too patient and tolerant. He also helped the natives economically as long as his personal resources so allowed. Sometimes his helpfulness was unduly exploited.⁴² Nyström on the other hand was said to be severe, “But Nyström could be excessively strict. If a servant did something wrong, it quite often happened that he was given corporal punishment.” If necessary, Högberg too would resort to similar methods.⁴³ Even the women missionaries sometimes found themselves forced to take strong measures. Nils Ambolt visited the missionaries in Jarkend at the beginning of the 1930s. He speaks about a servant who had misbehaved. The missionaries then let him choose his punishment, either reduction of the salary or – a beating. The latter alternative sounds a bit harsh, says Ambolt, but as a matter of fact it was an excellent method, by far the best one. “I had never tried it myself before Jarkend. There I learnt it from one of the missionaries – a lady!”⁴⁴ A couple of days later, another servant had committed felony. Ambolt sent him away. “Soon afterwards a delightful young woman came to see me”, says Ambolt, describing the missionary. “How can you be so cruel to the poor wretch” she says. “Why could you not be satisfied with a good beating?” When Ambolt tried to argue with her by remarking, “I cannot beat up a grown man” her reply was, “You are so stupid – that is the only thing that these people respect. Have a try! You will see that it works.”

The missionaries often felt inadequate faced with the problems of the Christians. Moen says about his first years in the field, “When as a young and green missionary I came to the field I made many mistakes. I came with my Swedish moral principles to a people from Central Asia. Afterwards I realize I was stupid and merciless.” In many respects, these people had a totally different outlook on life, says Moen. To demand a complete confession from a Christian having sinned, following a Western pattern was too merciless. That meant taking away from him for ever all honour and respect. That could lead to irreparable damage. The natives had their own ways of confessing their wrongdoings. This could be done in the following way, “If I have done what I have been accused of, or not, which is most probable, then forgive me.” This implied a humble prayer for “keeping the face”, in spite of everything.⁴⁵

After many years spent among the population Palmberg was mild and indulgent towards the shortcomings of the Christians. “With some of our Christians there is hardly a sign of Christianity to be seen. Their position among the population is however so difficult that one must be rather mild in ones judgements of their low confession.”⁴⁶

⁴¹ Sigrid Larsson to her brother Efraim, November 7th, 1924.

⁴² The *Ansgarius*, 1943, p. 140.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1937, p. 147.

⁴⁴ Ambolt, 1935, p. 153.

⁴⁵ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

⁴⁶ MCCS Annual report, 1925, p. 153.

In many cases the Christians were stuck in their old attitudes and in all situations the missionaries tried to consider that. For instance the mere sight of pigs or pork meat was abominable even to old Christians. Consequently the missionaries refrained from all handling of such things. The use of church bells was another practical detail mentioned by Mrs Arell from which the Mission distanced itself in order not to make offence. At the Chinese station of Hancheng, a bell had been put up with the inscription "The Swedish Mission of Kashgar". But in consideration of the Muslims no such arrangements were made at the Turkish stations. The Christians would surely get into trouble among the rest of the population when the sound of the church bells mingled with the prayers said from the Minarets.⁴⁷

The missionaries treated the Christians and their ancestral customs and beliefs with sensitivity. Ellen Törnquist e.g. tells us of one of the Christian Chinese teachers at the Mission. He wished to make the long walk to Central China to visit his ancestors' graves. The missionaries then took care of his Muslim wife and let her live at the mission station while the husband was away.⁴⁸

The missionaries showed great understanding of the fact that the Christians had difficulties breaking with old customs like the prayers in the Mosque, the Islamic fast, etc. Arell reports in 1933 from the situation in Jarkend where the evangelist Josef Khan was then working. Since he arrived, "even the old Christians had given up reading *namaz* and fasting according to old Muslim customs", says Arell.⁴⁹ "Namaz" is the ritual service held five times daily. Evidently the old Christians were more stuck in the old religion than the younger ones. And this was tolerated by the missionaries. But now Arell could announce with satisfaction that "what was old" was losing its grips also on the old Christians.

Ahlbert points out that it may not have been too difficult for a Muslim to accept Christ. What was more difficult was letting go of Mohammed. "Maybe it was a good thing to be at the receiving end of the blessing of his interceding on the day of judgement."⁵⁰ The Christians wanted to live as Christians, to die as such, but they preferred to be buried among their fathers in the Muslim graveyard instead of in the Christian cemetery. Maybe it was correct what the Mullahs taught that only the followers of Mohammed could be sure to enter Paradise. And if one was buried among the Muslims, maybe one could just follow the crowd into Paradise. Ahlbert points out that this idea of going with the crowd is typical of the Muslims. This need followed them also when they became Christians. That is why they had such a great need for fellowship in the church. It was however hard for many of them to understand that the Christian faith gave them everything they needed for the salvation of their souls.

The Christian faith turned the converts into "spiritually unemployed" people.⁵¹ The old religion had shown them a laborious way of acts leading to salvation. To this way belonged a multitude of religious practices. But the Mission presented salvation as a gift of grace, given to the unworthy. This was sensed by the Muslims as a new and strange

⁴⁷ The *Barnavänner*, 1920, p. 218 f.

⁴⁸ *Hem Hem*, 1921, p. 25 f.

⁴⁹ Arell's report, July 12th, 1935. "Namaz" is often translated by "prayer".

⁵⁰ Nyrén, 1928, p. 343.

⁵¹ Palmaer, 1942, p. 142.

life, an unknown world. They could not understand why e.g. reading a number of chapters in the Bible or a night of prayer in the church were not merits in the eyes of God.⁵²

During their lives as Muslims the converts had lived in strong group solidarity. As Christians they lacked this fellowship. The missionaries understood their situation and tried to help them with their feelings of solitude. An exchange for Islam's many festivals were the feasts at the mission station. "We tried to make it as festive as possible for them" says Arell, "they felt so lonely".⁵³ A special problem was those Christians living outside the towns, far from the mission stations. They did not want to take part in all the Muslim festivities in which their neighbours took part, and they did not partake of any Christian fellowship as they lived so far away from the Christians in town.⁵⁴ The Eastern Turkestan Conference took up this question and discussed what could be done for these church members. It was decided to make them spend some time, if possible, at the mission stations for training and fellowship.⁵⁵ Ahlbert tells about one such group. They consisted of six-seven people living at one day's journey from Kashgar. They were subjected to persecution from their neighbours. The animosity was especially bitter when they came back to the village after some days in Kashgar.⁵⁶

The Christians were always in danger for their lives. To become a Christian was considered a crime that could be punished by death. In this respect the Muslims of Eastern Turkestan did not differ from Muslims elsewhere.⁵⁷

U. Han was a Christian teacher who had worked for many years at the mission station of Hancheng and he was also a member of the church. His wife was a Muslim with several unhappy marriages behind her. Her family harassed her constantly. When it was later become known that the woman had been baptized and been employed by the Mission that was the last straw! When her husband died after some time, the relatives came claiming her. They enticed her to come with them to a place outside town where they were to meet for the distribution of the estate. This was however only a pretext. In fact she was herself put in front of the alternative of marrying a Muslim man or being killed. The last thing the missionaries heard about her was that she had yielded to the pressure and had let the Muslim marry her. Thereby she was considered won back to Islam by the family.⁵⁸

One way of removing a Christian was by poisoning him.⁵⁹ The poison could for example be put in the tea. And poison was easy to get at. Strychnine, so called fox cakes could be bought in the bazaars.⁶⁰ Högberg tells about a man in Kashgar who came to the mission station quite often and who studied the New Testament for several years. He

⁵² The *Ansgarius*, 1927, p. 142.

⁵³ Interview with Arell, October 27th, 1973.

⁵⁴ Ibid. with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973.

⁵⁵ Eastern Turkestan Conference minutes, 1937, § 20.

⁵⁶ Nyrén, 1928, p. 342.

⁵⁷ Kraemer, 1940, p. 235. Elisabeth Bohlin, a missionary within Southern Baptist Mission society, relates similar things from the mission field in Yemen. Interview, October 16th, 1972. The same conditions are prevalent e.g. in Pakistan. Christians can be exposed to deathly assaults. (The *Svensk Veckotidning*, 1979, nr 1, p. 9.)

⁵⁸ *Hem Hem*, 1921, p. 25 f.

⁵⁹ Palmaer, 1942, p. 38. Ericsson, 1961, p. 194.

⁶⁰ Interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973.

feared his relatives would kill him. The missionaries did not want to believe him. They saw the man's worry more as some kind of nervous trouble. But then one day he was gone and when the missionaries made investigations it appeared that his relatives had given him poison one night. The following morning he was dead.⁶¹ The missionaries got to know several similar cases.⁶²

The difficulties a Christian might have to endure are told by a converted Muslim, "And then it happened, what I had long feared, I was evicted from my lodgings for the sake of my faith. Nobody wanted to receive me. Wherever I go in town, the superintendent of my block comes forward telling people not to accept the infidel. I do not know where to turn with my wife and our child."⁶³ Another Muslim who used to come to the Mission asked the question whether it was worth the price to become a Christian. It could entail death.⁶⁴

When the Mission Secretary Sjöholm inspected the Mission in 1913, he also got to know the situation of the native Christians. This is what he writes about them,

"They are rejected by their own, mocked in the market place, scoffed at in the streets and stripped even of their means of income. Through agents, the Mullahs spy on all those attending the services at the Mission. They try first with friendliness and then with threats to make them stop their seeing the missionaries. Our Christians in Sweden have little or no knowledge of what it generally costs a Muslim to become a Christian."⁶⁵

Some ten years later, Högberg describes the situation of the Christians. Most of them are stripped of all means of existence, he points out. They can neither sell nor buy, and they have nowhere to live.⁶⁶ Sigfrid Moen adds, "Not half of Sweden's Christians would have stood the test that the Christians of Eastern Turkestan had to go through. When they became Christians they were excluded from all family fellowship, they could not buy anything in the shops or get a job."⁶⁷ And Sigrd Larsson writes home in 1927 about the conditions of the Turkish Christians. They dare not go into town because special guards will catch them.⁶⁸ And yet 1927 was a relatively "normal" year.

The missionaries spent a lot of time wondering how to help their Christian Asian friends in a practical and material way. It has been said above that the Christians became "spiritually jobless", but they were also materially jobless. Högberg says in 1917 that one possibility would be to buy a big farm and establish a smithy and a carpentry shop there. Then the children from the children's home would be able to learn how to tend to horses, cows, sheep and fowl. After some years, when the children were older, they would be able to learn farming, black-smith work, carpentry, and so on. But Högberg's dream ends with a dejected sigh, "We have no money."⁶⁹

In 1918, Högberg's little publication *Jolbas* came out in its third edition. The purpose of this book was to inspire mission friends in Sweden to give money towards Högberg's

⁶¹ Högberg, 1915, p. 45 f.

⁶² Högberg-Ahlbert, 1925, p. 183.

⁶³ Missionsuppgifter, 1921, p. 183.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 179.

⁶⁵ Inspection minutes, 1913.

⁶⁶ Högberg, 1925, p. 45.

⁶⁷ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

⁶⁸ Sigrd Larsson to her brother Efraim, Good Friday, 1927.

⁶⁹ Högberg, 1917, p.54.

“farm vision”. He turned especially to MCCS youth groups suggesting that every member of the Youth sections and of the Sunday Schools should give 10 öre each to the building of a children’s home and a school home in Eastern Turkestan. Part of the home would be made up of a farm and a garden.⁷⁰

The same year, the Mission was able to buy an estate outside Jarkend. Maybe it was not as big as Högberg had envisaged, but nonetheless a small colony could be established where the children from the children’s home - and also older Christians – could learn a variety of crafts.⁷¹

In the 1930s the missionaries Mr and Mrs Roberntz and Stina Mårtensson purchased a farm outside Kashgar. Here as well the purpose was to give vocational training and offer a livelihood to Christians. The farm worked well for some years and at the closing down of the Mission at the end of the 30s, it was transferred to the tenant farmer.⁷²

One way of helping the converts was thus that the Mission arranged jobs and a living for them. This would however lead to great financial problems for the Mission. Employing all converts, says Högberg, would be too big a burden for the Mission.⁷³ He wrote this in the 1920s when the prospects of the Mission were fairly good. He then reckoned that more and more people would become Christians and that with time, the Christian congregations would be so big that these practical measures would be impossible to maintain. The development did however take on a different form. At the 50th anniversary of the Mission, missionary Arell touched upon this question. He maintained that the best outcome both for the natives and the missionaries would be if the children and the youth that were under the influence of the Mission first learned a profession from which they could live, and not until after that considered the matter of becoming Christians, of “choosing sides”.⁷⁴

Polygamy which is very common in Muslim countries was not a major problem for the Mission. It was the rich who had the possibility of having many wives. Among the poor, where the Mission worked, polygamy was rare. It did happen though that a member of the Church had an extra wife, secretly. There the Mission could not compromise. As soon as such a relationship became known, the husband had to divorce the second wife.⁷⁵

So if polygamy was not a significant concern to the Mission other marital relationships often worried the missionaries greatly. For example the wife of a member of the church could run away from him because he had become a Christian. Was this man now to live alone, maybe with several young children? This was virtually unthinkable. And the missionaries who were well acquainted with the conditions in the country knew that the man could not live without a wife. But if he remarried he would have to choose between a divorced woman or a young girl of 11-12. None of these alternatives was seen as acceptable in the eyes of the Mission. Or if a member of the church sinned, left the church and cast off his Christian wife. Could this woman then remarry a non-Christian man?⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1918, p. 24.

⁷¹ Ibid., 1925, p. 44.

⁷² Interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973.

⁷³ Högberg-Ahlbert, 1925, p. 240.

⁷⁴ Nyrén, 1928, p. 377.

⁷⁵ Interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973. *The Ansgarius*, 1920, p. 131 f.

⁷⁶ Nyrén, 1928, p. 344.

3. To Preach the Gospel

In the bazaars, crowds would gather and listen, attracted by wandering musicians, storytellers and street-preachers, a fact exploited by the missionaries.⁷⁷

At times at least, it was fairly easy to gather people for worship services at the Mission stations. A strange thing was that in this typically Muslim country, men and women came together to church, even though they sat down separately once in church, men on one side and women on the other.⁷⁸ In the late 1920s Rachel Wingate writes that even though less than a hundred people were Christians, a couple of hundred gathered for the services every Sunday, both in Kashgar and Jarkend.⁷⁹ When Mr. Nazaroff, a Russian, stayed in Jarkend for a week in 1924, he found it very interesting to see Christians and Muslims celebrating services together and listening attentively to the native preacher.⁸⁰ Also during the first years of the 1930s, church attendance was good.⁸¹

At other times, church attendance was low. Of course general unrest influenced worship service life. At such times people did not want to, or did not dare, go to church. And then the Chinese mission in Hancheng was in special trouble. Sigrid Larsson often mentions in her diary that very few people were present at the services, noting that sometimes John Törnquist had only one single Chinese to preach to.⁸²

The format of a Christian service was something new and unusual to a Muslim as neither songs nor sermons were incorporated in their own style of religious services. There were, however, many positive things to be found in a Muslim church-goer. For example, it was easy to achieve stillness and a spirit of worship as Muslims were used to taking part in prayer in the mosques, and when the pastor lifted his hands to pray, everyone did the same.⁸³

Preaching to Muslims was a delicate matter. J.E. Lundahl, the Mission Secretary, makes a categorical statement in his book *World Missions* to the effect that preaching was not possible in Muslim countries.⁸⁴ This generalisation was strongly rejected by Rikard Nyström who writes from his own experience, "... We are now able to preach to great crowds of Muslims in this country, Sunday after Sunday, year in, year out, in churches and, when possible, in bazaars... without being hindered..."⁸⁵

The missionaries did not appear in public until they had a reasonable grasp of the language.

⁷⁷ Andersson, 1948, p. 99.

⁷⁸ Palmaer, 1946, p. 78. Högberg, 1910, p. 14 ff.

⁷⁹ Wingate, 1951, p. 12.

⁸⁰ Nazaroff, 1935, p. 130 ff.

⁸¹ Mission Covenant Church of Sweden (MCCS) Annual Report 1932, pp. 143 and 153. Such a large attendance was very unusual compared with mission work among Muslims in other areas. The MCCS Director Axel Andersson visited India at the end of the 1930s to familiarise himself with the other mission societies working among Muslims there. He wrote that mission work was allowed in India but the churches were empty. (Andersson, 1939, pp. 213 ff. 220, 225).

⁸² Sigrid Larsson's diary, October 10th, 1926.

⁸³ Palmaer, 1942, p. 138 ff.

⁸⁴ Lundahl, 1921, p. 136, 2nd edition, 1939, p. 281. Also published in *Folke* (a periodical), 1927, Vol. II, p. 29.

⁸⁵ Nyström to Lundahl and others, November 19th, 1921.

Preaching in the bazaars was avoided until one had achieved a certain level of fluency. This decision was made to prevent any embarrassment or defeat in debates. However, the morning service in the hospital provided good opportunities to practice the language and witness to Muslims.

What is it then in the Christian message that particularly upsets Muslims and arouses opposition? "One could put it this way", writes George Roberntz, "that it is everything of importance to their salvation."⁸⁶ Space does not allow us to examine Muslim beliefs, even in a superficial way, but suffice it to say that the Islamic view of the Trinity, incarnation and resurrection of Jesus was very different from the Mission's beliefs. Disagreement in those areas led to a rejection of the central message of the Gospel.⁸⁷

According to Raquette preaching to Muslims was an extremely delicate matter. It was necessary to find references in the Bible and in life which explained and led to Christ. The stories of the miracles in the Bible, for example, were very useful.⁸⁸ Raquette also praised one Swedish missionary who once started off his sermon by calling out the confession of Islam, "God is One, and apart from Him there is no God!" Another time Raquette mentioned the "stumbling blocks" a preacher should try to avoid.⁸⁹

The Mission's teaching about Jesus being the Son of God caused unrest and anger. The pupils at the Mission schools soon discovered how sensitive the Mullahs were on this point. The boys in the Islamic schools discovered this sensitivity, too, and Mrs. Moen says that when they wanted to tease their teachers, they would shout, "Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus the Son of God...!"⁹⁰

After the printing press came into use in 1912 the missionaries published some booklets which, in a simple and logical way, attempted to explain some of the misunderstandings and stumbling blocks of the Gospel. L.E. Högberg's booklet *The Way of Life* was printed in 1914, and a couple of years later G. Raquette had his work *Simplified Christian Doctrines for Muslims* published. Some people, however, thought that Christian apologetics were questionable when working with Muslims. There was a

⁸⁶ Palmaer, 1942, p. 34 ff.

⁸⁷ The Apostolic Declaration of Faith compared to Islamic Faith (Vicedom, 1959, p. 144. C-M Edsman in a book by Hemberg-Jeffner, 1966, p. 145 ff.). Muslim Resistance against Christianity (Smith 1961, note 235. Kraemer, 1940, p. 372). The Muslims Reject the Central Message of the Gospel (Sundkler, 1970, p. 158). The Muslims' Understanding of Jesus Christ (Zwemer, 1929, p. 183. Christensen, 1936. p. 10 and 1959, p. 150. Högberg-Ahlberg, 1925, p. 151. The Koran, sura 3,4 and 5. Zwemer, 1933, p. 22 ff., 80 ff. 41). The lack of clarity about the death of Jesus on the Cross in the Koran has led to a number of differing traditions. One of them says that Jesus was taken down from the Cross before he died and some time later was seen riding along the Silk Route on his way to India, where he eventually died and was buried. (Palmaer, 1942, p.34 ff.. The monthly magazine "Året Runt", 1973, No. 34. The "Expressen" (a newspaper), 4 June Hemberg-Jeffner, 1966, p. 159 ff.. The Muslim World, 1928, p. 409. Christenson, 1959, p. 8, 217. Sabri, 1948. *Ansgarius*, 1927. p. 40.137. Kraemer, 1940. p. 234. 237). Among the Muslims a "gospel" is circulating; the so-called Gospel of Barnabas. This was written in the 14th century by an Italian monk, a convert from Christianity to Islam. Many Muslims regard this gospel as the true, original one. In it, the teachings of Jesus have been adapted to the Islamic faith. The promise in the Gospel of John about the "Paracletos", "Helper", has been changed in the Gospel of Barnabas to "Periclytos" "the famous one, who is worthy of praise", and is said to foretell the coming of Muhammed. (Palmaer, 1942, p. 32 ff. This interpretation is based on *sura* 61 in the Koran).

⁸⁸ Raquette, 1935, p. 173.

⁸⁹ Lundahl, 1917, p. 307. Raquette, 1928, p. 4.

⁹⁰ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

fear that when Muslims realised how little evidence there was to support and explain Christian doctrine they would become even stronger in their own beliefs.⁹¹

The distribution of the booklets was an important supplement to the oral preaching of the Gospel. It is estimated that between 60,000 and 70,000 religious booklets of various kinds were sold or distributed free of charge during the mission era.⁹²

Most important was the distribution of Bible portions. Over a period of time a notable change occurred in people's attitude towards the Bible. One missionary writes, "Whereas people used to tear up the Gospels that were offered, or throw them into the fire, they now receive them gratefully, yes and are even happy to buy them. They are also showing them the same respect a Muslim usually shows to other holy writings."⁹³

Nyström speaks about a man, a teacher, who had visited the Mission station in Jarkend for medical help. While he was there he bought a Scripture portion, the Gospel of Matthew, which he took home with him. Later, he began to read it with some of the other Mullahs. The first few chapters were accepted, but when they read the last verse of the third chapter where it says, "This is my beloved Son", confusion started to reign among the Mullahs. Referring to Jesus as the Son of God is one of the most offensive things a Muslim can hear. When they read this they simply erased the word "Son" from the Bible portion. As they continued to read they were also shocked when they came across the word "Father" so "Father" was erased as well. When they reached the eleventh chapter where "Father" and "Son" appear several times they realised how dangerous the book really was. It was decided that the only thing to do was to burn it, but one of the Mullahs intervened, "We cannot do this! We ourselves confess that the Gospel has come from God."⁹⁴ They mocked the man, but he was able to hide the book, and after some time he went to the Mission station with his "revised" copy and received a new one in return.

Private conversations with individuals were also a complement to the preaching in the services. Time spent by a missionary or a national Christian with a Muslim who was interested in spiritual matters generally provided an opportunity to lead the seeker, step by step, to Christ.⁹⁵ Sometimes the Christians fell into doubt and needed advice and counsel. Again, the opportunity to speak and share on a one-to-one basis was very effective. For example, a national evangelist came one day and expressed his doubts about the Trinity. With insight and warmth one of the missionaries explained the doctrine of the Trinity to him.⁹⁶ Home visits were often a valuable means of follow-up of ideas raised in church or in the bazaars. Anyone who had been contacted in the bazaar and was thought to be even slightly interested, or who had visited the church, received a home visit. The women missionaries were a tremendous asset in home visits and made a special point of visiting the sick.

Gradually, as the work progressed and expanded, the nationals took over such responsibilities as conducting the services and preaching, both in the church and in the

⁹¹ Christensen, 1936, p. 11. In 1936 Christensen wrote the book "*A Stumbling Block - the Incarnation, the Trinity and Redemption*" as an attempt to explain Christian doctrines to Muslims. He was himself a missionary to Muslims.

⁹² Törnquist, 1928, p. 494.

⁹³ MCCS Annual Report, 1919, p. 17.

⁹⁴ Lundahl, 1917, p. 443 ff. (Original with Jacob Stephen, Sundbyberg).

⁹⁵ Mission Report, 1921, p. 170 ff.

⁹⁶ SMT, 1931, p. 101 ff.

bazaars. Sigrid Larsson mentions in her diary that the services in Hancheng were often conducted by Chinese who also preached at times. During times of unrest, however, it was unthinkable for the evangelists to preach in public places, such as the bazaars, as they would have been arrested.

4. Between Colleagues Only

In the course of a few years, nineteen new missionaries arrived on the mission field. In 1924 John Norstedt, Ellen Söderberg, Gunnar and Adelia Hermansson and Rachel Wingate, an English woman, arrived.⁹⁷ Those who arrived the following year were Ruth Ahlbert (born Österberg), Sigfrid Persson-Moen and Ester Aronsson, who were later married. In 1928 Maja Bergqvist and Naemi Ryden (who married Terning) arrived. A year later, Petrus and Ingrid Kängstrom, Ester Johansson., Lisa Gahns (who married Persson), Elin Jansson (who married Roberntz) and Dr. Kristian Hermanrud arrived on the field. In 1931 Mrs. Greta Hermanrud who was also a doctor, joined her husband. The same year, Ivar and Elisabeth Höök arrived on the field.

Many of these new missionaries remained in service until “the bitter end” in 1938. John Norstedt died of typhoid in 1932.⁹⁸ Another worker, Miss Ellen Söderberg, received her salary from the Teachers’ Mission Association.⁹⁹ The Hermanssons left already in 1930, and Rachel Wingate, who had been a voluntary worker with the Mission, left her duties in 1928. One couple in particular, Mr. and Mrs. Kängstrom, experienced many difficulties. On their journey out in 1929, Mrs. Kängstrom had an accident. She was not able to obtain adequate treatment in Kashgar for her serious injury, so after a short time, the couple was forced to return to Sweden for treatment. On their second journey to the field, Mr. Kängstrom became seriously ill in Aden and once again they were forced to return to Sweden. After his recovery he was assigned a pastoral post at home. In 1936 Lisa Gahns was married to Carl Persson. After only a couple of months she died. The Hermanruds returned home during the revolution in 1933.

At times, especially in the early years, there had been some friction between the missionaries in the field, but the disagreements seemed to be more or less over in the 1920s. Both Högberg and Raquette, who were Törnquist’s major antagonists, had returned to Sweden, but, unfortunately for Törnquist, both of them became advisors to the

⁹⁷ Rachel Wingate was the daughter of Colonel Wingate, the founder of the Central Asia Mission. Her brother, Brigadier General Orde Wingate, led the Burmese Chindits during World War II. The family became interested in the mission work in Eastern Turkestan and Rachel Wingate joined the field as a voluntary worker. In 1928 she returned to England where she became a secretary for the Royal Central Asia Society. During her youth she studied Arabic, Persian and History at Cambridge University where she obtained her degree in Arabic and History. Several years after she left Eastern Turkestan she assisted Sir Denison Ross in his research into the Eastern Turkish language. (Platt, 1966, p. 193. Jarring, 1974, p. 264).

⁹⁸ Signe Olsson, a good friend of John Norstedt, had wanted to become a missionary in Eastern Turkestan. Although Miss Olsson never fulfilled this ambition, she forgot neither Eastern Turkestan nor Mr. Norstedt. When Nyström travelled to the field in 1932, he brought with him a present from Miss Olsson to Norstedt. Sadly, Norstedt died before Nyström reached Kashgar. If Norstedt had lived longer, Miss Olsson would probably have joined him on the field and married him. (Nyström to Signe Olsson, confidential correspondence, no date, probably July 1932 and October 30th, 1932).

⁹⁹ Högberg, 1924, p. 51. In 1919 LMF (the Teachers’ Mission Association) had decided to support fully one female missionary in Eastern Turkestan. (Högberg to Raquette, October 11th, 1919).

Mission leaders at headquarters. Whenever any questions arose about the Eastern Turkestan field, Högberg and Raquette were consulted. Naturally, this irritated Törnquist and in 1924 he personally informed headquarters in his letter to Mission Director Nyrén, “We refuse to accept Högberg and Raquette as authorities...”¹⁰⁰ Raquette, who was a member of the Mission Board, 1924-1936, was the one who was most often consulted about decisions concerning Eastern_Turkestan. He advised in matters such as David Gustafsson’s request in 1928 to have his furlough extended so that he could attend the summer conference in which the MCCA would be celebrating its 50th anniversary. The Mission Secretary, Mr. Lundahl, was of the opinion that there were no major reasons for extending his furlough but wrote to Raquette asking him what he thought about it.¹⁰¹ On another occasion, the field consulted headquarters about one of the missionaries, Ivar Höök, who wanted to return home to have medical training. Raquette had to be asked before the decision could be made.¹⁰² On yet another occasion, George Roberntz wrote to headquarters asking permission for his fiancée to join him in the field. Again Lundahl wrote to Raquette, “Bengtsson and I thought it best to ask for your advice.”¹⁰³

On several occasions Törnquist expressed his disapproval of the fact that Raquette had been consulted by the Board with regard to decisions concerning Eastern Turkestan. Once Törnquist wrote home complaining that a colleague had not come to the field because Raquette had advised him to stay at home.¹⁰⁴ Another time Törnquist wrote to Mr. Lundahl, the Mission Secretary, expressing his concern that the Board in Stockholm was under the bad influence of Raquette. Lundahl in reply to Törnquist’s letter said that his criticism was “not quite proper... I have never been involved in any intrigues.”¹⁰⁵

Many of the missionaries, as evidenced above, were determined and strong-willed people. This also had its advantages. Many times these strong and powerful personalities showed great compassion and care for others. Törnquist, especially, would support those who were in trouble. One example of his fairness was in 1915 when Mia Mobeck had to leave the field and Törnquist wrote to Sjöholm, explaining her situation. Even though she had failed in certain ways, Törnquist was very understanding and openly confessed that he had been unfair towards her earlier.¹⁰⁶ On another occasion Törnquist wrote a letter to Oskar Andersson, who had been forced to return to Sweden, asking forgiveness for his harsh words and warmly assuring him that he was welcome back to the field.¹⁰⁷

Rikard Nyström was a missionary who seemed to have a special gift of encouragement and speaking well of his colleagues. When, after numerous conflicts Gunnar Hermansson was all the same accepted to return to the field, Nyström wrote to the couple, giving encouragement. It had been suggested that the Hermanssons should be given the responsibility for the boys’ orphanage. This suggestion pleased Nyström and he adds, “People speak well of you”.¹⁰⁸ Another worker, Frida Lundell had, according to some missionaries, also lost her right to return to the field. Nyström, however, defends

¹⁰⁰ Törnquist to Nyrén, April 22nd, 1924.

¹⁰¹ Lundahl to Raquette, January 18th, 1928.

¹⁰² Ibid., December 17th, 1929.

¹⁰³ Ibid., February 10th, 1930.

¹⁰⁴ Törnquist to Lundahl, August 7th, 1928.

¹⁰⁵ Lundahl to Törnquist, August 7th, 1928.

¹⁰⁶ Törnquist to Sjöholm, February 2nd, 1915.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., to Oskar Andersson, January 20th, 1919.

¹⁰⁸ Nyström to Gunnar Hermansson, May 1st, 1936.

her and when she died suddenly in 1934, he spoke in memory of her with sincerity and admiration.¹⁰⁹ He also wrote a letter of sympathy, full of appreciation and words of comfort, to her family in Dannemora.¹¹⁰

Raquette speaks about the strong fellowship between the workers; at its best it was a source of great strength. On one occasion Raquette was experiencing deep concern and despair because of his son's severe illness. One night as he sat beside his little son's bed, the situation appearing hopeless and his own faith in God seemingly failing, words of comfort came. One of the female missionaries quietly opened the door, walked to his side and gently laying her hand on his shoulder whispered words of comfort, saying that in spite of everything, Jesus was there, and then she disappeared as silently as she had come. Raquette calls her "a messenger from Heaven".¹¹¹

Each of the missionaries desired the well-being of the others. The testimony of one of the female missionaries shows this in a simple but powerful way. She was a single missionary who had an open and friendly relationship with the other missionaries. Then "the older workers started to fear a scandal". One other older female colleague, in particular, hurt her deeply. She described her reaction as "hurting like a thorn". And yet she continued, "... as soon as it began to hurt, I prayed for my older colleague and in the end the bitterness passed."¹¹²

Perseverance and faithfulness were other important features among the missionaries. Their firm determination and tenacious persistency gave them strength.

The missionaries also tried to encourage each other to be faithful and persevering. They always tried to remember birthdays and other special occasions – small, insignificant gestures under normal circumstances, but of great importance in their present situation. One person recalled comic strips being drawn and written by the missionaries themselves, then circulated around the group. It is touching to see how the missionaries tried to encourage their Norwegian colleague Otto Torvik. During his short visit to Eastern Turkestan, on his way north to explore the possibilities of developing work there, he had his birthday. Having found out about this, the missionaries planned a party and many gifts were prepared for him: shoes, ties of the finest Chinese silk, sweets and boxes of biscuits. Torvik mentioned that among the givers "a couple of single female missionaries were prominent".¹¹³ It appears from Sigrid Larsson's diary that the missionaries in Kashgar and Hancheng frequently came together for fellowship. In Jarkend, and more particularly in Jengi-Hessar, the problem of loneliness was greater, as in these places the work was less well developed and there were fewer missionaries.

The longest serving missionary in the field was John Törnquist. For long periods he was the only one in the field working specifically among the Chinese. As a matter of fact, the group of missionaries working among the Chinese was never big. Albert Andersson and his wife worked among the Chinese from 1903 to 1912, Carl Persson in the 1920s,

¹⁰⁹ Obituary about Frida Lundell. Nystrom, August, 24th, 1934.

¹¹⁰ Nyström to Lundell, Dannemora, August 25th, 1934.

¹¹¹ Memories and impressions from a lifetime, 1922, p. 240 ff.

¹¹² Interview with Ester Johansson, February 27th, 1973.

¹¹³ Torvik, 1946, p. 53.

Ellen Törnquist from 1905 to 1923, Sigrid Larsson during the late 1920s and John Törnquist from 1904 to 1937.¹¹⁴

In 1924 John Törnquist wrote the following to Mr. Nyrén, the Mission Director,

“Of the 35 missionaries that have been working here so far, only three men and one woman have been fluent in the Chinese language. Out of the 22 years that the Chinese Mission has been in existence, I have been the only missionary to the Chinese for ten years.”¹¹⁵

In spite of all the difficulties and disappointments, Törnquist was totally fascinated by his task. In 1919 he addressed a group of young people in Sweden, saying, “If I were to start my life all over again, I would have no greater ambition than to be a missionary.”¹¹⁶ In 1935, two years before his death, he writes in his diary on the way out to the field,

“If God the Father suddenly spoke to me in a human voice and said, ‘You have 30 years to live on earth, provided you stay in Europe. If, however, you prefer to go to Asia, you will only have ten years’, I would then gladly accept the ten years and continue on my journey to the field.”¹¹⁷

As late as in the early 1930s “storms” once again broke out among the missionaries, and in 1932 Palmaer, the Mission Secretary, requested Törnquist to return to Stockholm to help sort out the problems. Törnquist was then Field Leader and Nestor among the missionaries. Palmaer writes, “We have to clear up all the misunderstandings that have arisen among the missionaries recently. You have to come home and help us.”¹¹⁸

One of the “misunderstandings” that Palmaer was referring to was the unrest among the missionaries, for which Gunnar Hermansson was blamed. He arrived on the field in 1924, and within a short time had major disagreements with Törnquist. Törnquist, as Field Leader at that time, was responsible for ensuring that new missionaries received their language training. Friction between the two colleagues began when Hermansson informed Törnquist that he refused to study Turkish. Hermansson explained his position by stating that language studies had no importance whatsoever. Matters became more complicated when Hermansson interfered in another colleague’s language study. Whenever Norstedt tried to follow the rules and study the language, Hermansson caused problems for him. The situation was shared with headquarters in Stockholm and the Board dealt with the problem. Concerning the handling of the matter, Törnquist writes, “But when such a man comes before the Board it is all reduced to a question of ‘personality’.”¹¹⁹

In 1930 the Hermanssons returned home, leaving behind them many bad relationships with different missionaries. In 1932 after their furlough was over and the time had come to return to the field, the Mission Board decided to allow them to return, although Mission Secretary Lundahl had received a letter of warning from Törnquist which read,

¹¹⁴ Törnquist, 1928, p. 449 ff.

¹¹⁵ Törnquist to Nyrén, April, 22nd, 1924

¹¹⁶ *Ungdomsvännan* (=The Friend of the Youth), 1919, p. 269.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1935, p. 413.

¹¹⁸ Palmaer to Törnquist, May 19th, 1932.

¹¹⁹ Törnquist to Palmaer, January 16th, 1932.

“The group of missionaries here have asked me to write and request that headquarters not allow Mr. and Mrs. Hermansson and Miss Frida Lundell to return to the field for another term. The work in Jarkend has been badly damaged as a result of their presence there. Ten years will not suffice to repair the damage that has been done. While the family was staying as guests in Kashgar, waiting to return home, they were impossible to please. The last words I heard from him were the worst I have ever heard... Before he left Eastern Turkestan he is said to have sworn that if he was not allowed to return to the field he would cause the end of the whole Mission... He is also extremely cowardly. In Jarkend he slept with a gun under his pillow.”¹²⁰

In spite of this letter, the Board only gave a strict warning to Mr. and Mrs. Hermansson and they were then given permission to return to the field in 1932.¹²¹ However, the Hermanssons decided to stay at home for a little longer, at least “until Törnquist returned home.”¹²² As it turned out, the couple never returned to the field. It would seem, though, that they were not entirely to blame. Carl Persson defended Mr. Hermansson, claiming that Hermansson justly took up certain injustices in the field. This criticism was, however, very badly viewed by some missionaries. Discharging him would have been unfair, says Persson.¹²³ Nyström, as mentioned earlier, also sided with Mr. Hermansson on some issues.

5. Renewal of Health Care Work

Before presenting the actual health care work such as it was at the beginning of the 1930s a few facts will be stated about a special branch of this activity, namely dental care. The same thing was to be noted here as in ordinary medical care, i.e. that the missionaries had to work with a minimum of training. In several cases even others than those with medical training within the missionary body had to work with dental care. John Törnquist e.g. acquired a good reputation as a “dentist”. And Raquette was also known to be competent. Le Coq says that when he was in Jarkend he had an aching tooth filled by Raquette. “The filling was very good” he writes.¹²⁴ Carl Persson became a “dentist” by chance. In Sven Hedin’s expedition which found itself in Eastern Turkestan in the 1930s, there was also a dentist included. This dentist himself got problems with a tooth and needed immediate care. He then turned to Persson in Kashgar and asked him for help. Persson had not formerly offered such treatment and firmly refused to have anything to do with the matter. Hedin’s dentist however did not give up, but installed his equipment. And then Persson fixed the tooth with the patient as a guide. The equipment was left with Persson in thankfulness of the help given.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Törnquist to Lundahl, October 6th, 1930. Some years later Hermansson wrote to the mission board expressing how he felt persecuted both by the missionaries in Eastern Turkestan and by the mission leaders in Sweden. If they didn’t apologise, he threatened to expose publicly the difficulties within the Mission. In carrying through his threat, he created further problems for the mission leaders. (Hermansson to the MCCC Leadership, September 18th, 1939). In 1936 Nyström had advised Hermansson not to create any scandals. (Nyström to Hermansson, November 20th, 1936).

¹²¹ Palmaer to John Andersson, February 27th, 1932.

¹²² Palmaer to Gunnar Hermansson, April 13th, 1932.

¹²³ Interview with Carl Persson, September 23rd, 1972.

¹²⁴ Le Coq, 1926, p. 141.

¹²⁵ Linnéa Nyberg to John Steiner, August 11th, 1977.

The best of the dentists was maybe Rikard Nyström. Sir Clermont Skrine, British Consul General in Kashgar in the 1920s remarks that at that time Nyström was sought after in the whole of Kashgar and was by far the most competent dentist as far as Western dental care was concerned. Nyström was stationed in Jarkend, but now and then he came to Kashgar. When it became known that he was there, people flocked there from different parts of the neighbourhood in order to get help with their teeth. Among other things, he provided toothless mandarins with dentures. Skrine says that once when Nyström was in Kashgar he received a letter from a wealthy man calling Nyström “Your Excellency” and writing that all his teeth but one were gone. Now he had heard about the outstanding capacity of “His Excellency” and asked him if he could buy a set of false teeth. They could be sent to him by the post messenger. Nyström however had to guarantee that the teeth did not come from “the jaw of an infidel”. When Nyström answered the man that he could not possibly send him any teeth not having examined his mouth, he got the reply that he himself had exactly the same mouth as the servant he was sending in order to get the teeth. It would be easy to leave a spare room for the only remaining tooth so that it all fitted together. Nyström now suggested a meeting in Jengi-Hessar. When they later on met it turned out that the only remaining tooth was loose and rotten. He was however not allowed to extract it. It was Allah’s will that this tooth remained, and with that declaration the man left the missionary. Later on this tooth fell out all by itself, and then the man once again went to see Nyström and got his denture¹²⁶.

As has already been described above, over the years, several missionaries became very competent “doctors”, as was the case with Högberg and Raquette. These two were now absent from the mission field since many years. Rikard Nyström was still there however, stationed all the time in Jarkend. His competence is still alive among the Asians. In a letter from 1978 e.g. a woman from Jarkend writes to the missionaries in Sweden about “the great Nyström”.¹²⁷ Nyström also came to do important work during the revolution in the 1930s. Ivar Höök was similarly active as a missionary doctor from 1931 and onwards. During the revolution he was stationed in Kashgar where he could help ten of thousands of patients.

John Andersson was another medical missionary who was highly appreciated at this time. He too gave valuable help during the war to those suffering and dying. Gunnar Jarring who could follow Palmberg’s work on the spot in 1929 considered him unusually competent.¹²⁸

Among the medical missionaries at this time Gottfrid Palmberg should also be mentioned. He started his “medical career” from scratch. His son, Karl-Erik Palmberg says that his father was “completely inexperienced in medical care. Before leaving for the mission field he was a carpenter and built barns for the farmers in his home region.”¹²⁹ This professional skill came very handy when together with Arell he built up the mission station of Jengi-Hessar, and when later on he built a church in Kashgar. But that kind of work was of no interest for the medical missionary.

¹²⁶ Skrine, 1926, p. 126 ff. Ambolt in *Äventyr jorden runt* (=Adventures Around the World), 1962, p. 42 ff. Also in Radio Sweden, Channel One, March 19th, 1959. *Svenska Journalen*, 1977, no 20.

¹²⁷ N.N. to Naemi Terning, February 18th, 1978.

¹²⁸ Interview with Jarring, June 21st, 1976.

¹²⁹ Interview with Karl-Erik Palmberg, November 25th, 1978.

When Högberg went home in 1916 the medical care work of Jengi-Hessar was left in the hands of Palmberg. For some time he had then accompanied Högberg in his work, but for the rest he was totally inexperienced. Sick people continued to come as in the days of Högberg. E.g. blind people came wanting to have an operation for their cataract. In his helplessness, Palmberg went to one of the butchers in town and bought a couple of sheep heads that he then dissected. After some time he could no longer resist the pleas of the sick. He took the chance and operated on a cataract-blind patient – and succeeded.¹³⁰ Another example shows how the misery came near the missionaries. One day a couple of men arrived at the mission station carrying a man having committed *hara-kiri*. The man was still alive, but the whole mesentery was hanging outside. Palmberg washed it and put it back and thereafter he stitched together the abdomen. Some time later the man came walking to the mission station, bent but in good health again.¹³¹

Already in 1915 Palmberg had drawn the attention of the Board in Stockholm to his difficult situation, “I have been given not the slightest training, and then I am left all alone with the medical work.”¹³² The Board rejected his demand of getting medical training. Renewed demands were treated in the same way.¹³³ During his furlough in 1921 he however followed a short course under the guidance of Professor Åkerman at the Serafimer Hospital.¹³⁴ After that Palmberg was for many years head of the Kashgar hospital. Among other things he operated on 136 cataract patients. Another common disease was stones in the bladder. The stones taken out could be as big as a duck’s egg.

During Palmberg’s years in Kashgar, the town was governed by a madman and tyrant. He was the Chinese commander in chief and a Tungan. He even struck terror into the provincial governor and the local mandarins. His reign of terror was not directed towards the Mission but the mission hospital often had to take care of his many crippled and tortured victims. People caught stealing had one hand cut off in accordance with Koran commandments. Others had their feet cut off.¹³⁵

Apparently the medical missionaries were criticized for their risky interventions. In his memoirs Palmberg repels the criticism. The missionaries did not act without a sense of responsibility and with rashness. They simply could not send away the suffering.¹³⁶

All the time the missionaries came back to the need of getting a qualified doctor to the field. Törnquist writes in 1928,

“In spite of twenty years of repeated appeals, no qualified doctor has put himself at the disposal of the Mission. This is all the more remarkable as Eastern Turkestan would in all respects be the most gratifying sphere of work for a doctor. It might be that the absence of a doctor is due to the fact that we absolutely demand a person uniting in himself the doctor and the missionary... If medically trained people were at our disposal we could open new stations in densely populated towns and districts at a comparatively low cost.”¹³⁷

¹³⁰ Palmberg in the *Vetlandsposten*, February 29th, 1960.

¹³¹ Interview with Karl-Erik Palmberg.

¹³² Palmberg to the Board,,March 29th, 1915.

¹³³ Törnquist to Norberg, December 12th, 1917.

¹³⁴ Palmberg in the *Vetlandaposten*, February 29th, 1960.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, February 2nd, 1961.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, February 29th, 1960.

¹³⁷ Törnquist, 1928, p. 468 f.

The M CCS leadership in Sweden struggled with the issue. At the beginning of the 1920s things seemed to brighten up. There was then the hope that Simon Ståhl, the son-in-law of Sven Bengtsson, M CCS Chairman, would be willing to go to Eastern Turkestan after having obtained his medical degree. Another possible solution was that Rickard Larsson, son of the missionary E. John Larsson, went there as a mission doctor. A “friend of the Mission” had already even guaranteed to pay for the rest of his studies on the condition that he worked for the M CCS after having obtained his degree.¹³⁸ These bits of information reached the missionaries during the spring of 1918. Later the same year Lundahl came back to the issue. He could now give more detailed information, ”Ståhl has promised to go to Eastern Turkestan...Rickard Larsson seems to be willing too....”¹³⁹ So things were quite hopeful and when it became known that Ståhl planned to go to Eastern Turkestan one mission leader exclaimed, “Now the Eastern Turkestan Mission is saved!”¹⁴⁰ But all this came to nothing. Neither Ståhl nor Larsson came to Eastern Turkestan. Ståhl went to China, where he worked for a short time. Larsson did not become a missionary doctor at all.

Apart from some years at the beginning of the Mission, when the Persian doctor Mässrur was employed by the Mission, it was not until 1929 that a Swedish doctor came to the field.

His name was Kristian Hermanrud and he started to work in Kashgar. Some years later his wife, Greta Hermanrud, also a qualified doctor, arrived. In the year report of 1929, the Mission Board writes about the delight in the fact that the Mission now had got its first doctor. His arrival in the field had been greeted by the missionaries and the nationals with great joy and was seen as an answer to many prayers.¹⁴¹ The inspiration engendered among the assembly of thousand people gathered in The Immanuel Church a couple of years later for Mrs Hermanrud’s commissioning as a missionary is indescribable. At last the Mission had got doctors sent out to the field, and not only one but two. That was a granting of their prayers beyond measure. The period in the field for the two mission doctors was however not a long one. When the revolution broke out in 1933 they returned home. When best needed they left the work.¹⁴²

The mission doctors were encountered by the missionaries with great expectations. In certain cases these expectations were not at all met. A great disappointment to all was the fact that the time spent in the field became so short for the doctors. Kristian Hermanrud undeniably arrived in the field in 1929, but his service up to 1933 was split up by a journey home to Sweden. He dared not let his wife do this trip without his company, and therefore he went home to fetch her. He left his important practice in Kashgar for several months although his wife travelled together with experienced missionaries. Once in the

¹³⁸ Lundahl to Törnquist, March 20th, 1918.

¹³⁹ Ibid. April 27th, 1918.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973.

¹⁴¹ M CCS Annual Report of 1929, p. 13. At the sending service in Immanuel Church, Stockholm, on September 3rd, 1929, the M CCS President Nyrén expressed the hopes of the M CCS linked to the departure of Doctor Hermanrud for Eastern Turkestan. Surely medical work was already carried out on quite a large scale, but this was something totally different, when it was put under the leadership of a professional. (*The Svenska Morgonbladet*, September 4th, 1929.)

¹⁴² Palmaer, 1938, p. 176. Gunanr Jarring regrets the departure of the two mission doctors. (Interview, June 21st, 1976.)

field, their possibilities were restricted just because they were a couple. When the Mission now was lucky enough to have two doctors, it was important their work was spread out over the field. The Hermanruds however did not want to live separated. So the Mission found itself with two doctors in Kashgar and none at the other stations.¹⁴³

In a letter to the Mission Secretary Palmaer in January 1932, Törnquist expresses his feelings of disappointment. It was not only Doctor Hermanrud's trip home that irritated him. While back home in Sweden Hermanrud was supposed to consult experts concerning the building of the hospital of Kashgar. Törnquist writes,

“And the medical expertise consulted can be more than usually green when transferred from Stockholm to Kashgar. The conclusion to draw from this decision cannot be but one: Exams and degrees in one pan of the balance make it very heavy, whereas many years of observation and knowledge about the country, the population and conditions acquired on the spot weigh next to nothing in the other pan. How else could this ‘stain’ be explained.”¹⁴⁴

And later on Törnquist points out that Hermanrud returned back “empty-handed”, and that his negotiations in Stockholm had only delayed the construction of the hospital.

Kristian Hermanrud was excessively careful where infectious diseases were concerned. According to the missionaries he went too far.¹⁴⁵ He never really settled down in the mission field. Another handicap for him was the fact that he never learned the language, but was always obliged to have a missionary by his side as interpreter.¹⁴⁶ Mrs Hermanrud on the other hand found it easier to adjust.¹⁴⁷ The missionaries in the field however did not judge them. They realized how difficult it was for them to settle down in this new situation. Mrs Hermanrud's miscarriage added a hard personal blow to their difficulties in general. This happened in January 1932 causing a considerable upset to the couple. Sigrid Larsson writes in her diary, one year later, “Greta looks alarmingly ‘down’. Poor thing!”¹⁴⁸ When they started their trip home in the spring of 1933, they were both totally broken. Both of them were however to make valuable and important contributions when back home in Sweden.

During the following years the missionaries kept coming back to the need for doctors. The fact that they even suggested that the Mission Board could persuade the Hermanruds to return to the field shows that they were still positive to this pair of doctors. If this proved impossible, maybe the Board could find some other doctor who was willing to come, urged the missionaries. There was no other doctor recruited however.¹⁴⁹

In the year 1932 the new hospital of Kashgar was built. It was the third hospital since the beginning of the Mission. This hospital was directed by doctor Hermanrud, its architect was Carl Persson and Georg Roberntz was its builder. This new hospital had great facilities compared to the old one. There was plenty of space for both clinical and polyclinic activities. The polyclinic had wards both for men and women with treatment rooms, waiting rooms, pharmacy, laboratory, etc. A light and practical surgical

¹⁴³ Interview with Ester Johansson, February 2nd, 1973.

¹⁴⁴ Törnquist to Palmaer, January 16th, 1932.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., with Arell, October 27th, 1973.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Roberntz April 16th, 1973. Sigrid Larsson's diary, January 29th, 1933.

¹⁴⁹ Eastern Turkestan Conference Minutes of 1934, § 18 and of 1935 § 13.

department was in close connexion with a series of large hospital wards united by the means of a veranda to a two-storey building with sixteen smaller wards. A special boarding-house was planned near the hospital with a school of nursing for the women of the country. Premises were already available in the old hospital for this new school.

When the hospital was being planned there was a lively and at times bitter correspondence between the missionaries in the field and the MCCS leadership in Sweden. Missionaries on furlough had met in Uppsala in 1931 and decided to put forward a request to the Eastern Turkestan Conference concerning the place of the new hospital. They were of the opinion that the building site intended for the hospital was inappropriate among other things for the reason that it was leased for only 20 years. Moreover this site was situated at the canal passing by the mission station, just above it. It was thus inappropriate from a health point of view. This letter was taken up at the Conference but no action was taken in the matter. According to the Conference there was no health problem. "No hospital must be run in such a way that it poisons a public water supply." And as to the short time of renting the site the Conference pointed out that the site proposed by the Uppsala meeting was acquired on still flimsier grounds.¹⁵⁰ The decision taken by the Conference was forwarded to the Mission Committee of the Board in Stockholm. The Committee then delegated the issue to Doctor Hermanrud as the person to decide about the site of the hospital. At the same time the Committee wrote to the missionaries in Eastern Turkestan stating that they found their opinion on the building of the hospital "somewhat offhand". In reply to this Törnquist wrote a long letter. There was no carelessness whatsoever, he pointed out. It was possible that there was some indignation at the fact that a decision already taken would have to be cancelled. Törnquist has a feeling that there is a certain missionary who has misled the Mission Committee. He refers to Palmaer who had taken an active part in the Uppsala meeting. He had put his own authority and expert knowledge high above those of all the others, says Törnquist. "Still there are missionaries in the Eastern Turkestan Conference who think that they know the country and the conditions of this field just as well as he does."¹⁵¹ Some weeks later Palmaer announced in a letter to Törnquist that the hospital would be built on the site proposed by the Eastern Turkestan Conference from the beginning.¹⁵²

As has been mentioned above, the Eastern Turkestan medical mission was criticized by the MCCS in Sweden. It took too much energy and interest from the rest of the Mission was the opinion. This criticism continued into the 1920s. A similar reaction was to be noticed among other mission societies. "Institutionalized mission work" which meant schools, hospitals, children's homes, etc., threatened to become too dominant at the cost of evangelical work. The "ice-breaker", a name given to institutional Mission work by the Danish Muslim missionary Christensen, threatened to become an end in itself.¹⁵³

Of course the missionaries defended the situation. Raquette writes in 1928, that it was clearly evident that the Mission was on the right way. It had shown that "together with the pills, drops and ointments handed out to the sick, a drop here and a drop there of another ointment had followed suit, an ointment that was not produced by an earthly

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 1931, § 22.

¹⁵¹ Törnquist to the Mission Committee in January, 1932.

¹⁵² Palmaer to Törnquist, February 15th, 1932.

¹⁵³ Lindeberg, 1936, p. 137. See also Christensen, 1959, p. 206 f., p. 203.

pharmacy – a Gilead ointment with the wonderful effect of softening hard human hearts.”¹⁵⁴

Mission Secretary Palmaer defends the medical mission in 1923 in his publication “*I kärlekens tjänst*” (= In the Service of Love). Medical care, he writes, has from the outset been a kind of “obligation of Love”. It has always been a necessary part of mission work. There are people, he says, who see a clear opposition between Philanthropy and Mission. “Where the boundary goes... is hard to tell. Mission means that Christ is being proclaimed. All philanthropy is not Mission, but if the philanthropy points to Christ, it becomes Mission.”¹⁵⁵ In 1929, Palmaer once again takes up the issue about “The Spiritual Values of our Mission Methods”. When speaking about the medical mission he points out that some people tolerate it in as far as it is a means for the Gospel. But, he continues, “we must, for Love urges us, we must place ourselves in front of human misery willing to give unconditional and unlimited love”. And Palmaer goes on to say,

“As far as our medical work, our children’s work and all other similar work is inspired by the love of Christ and is an urge to glorify God, it has a spiritual value in itself, which the Mission cannot discharge without great risks... When we are alongside the sick, our work acquires spiritual value, whatever happens afterwards... Every mission method which driven by love and the urge to glorify God among the nations wants to give richer life, bodily or spiritually, has its own spiritual value, without which the Mission would see itself incapable of fulfilling its noble and wonderful task.”¹⁵⁶

6. On the Brighter Side

During the 1920s different missions working with Muslims in various parts of the world were, in general, encouraged by the Muslims’ changing attitude towards Christianity. Respect towards Christ and appreciation for Christian practices were on the increase. Samuel Zwemer went so far as to mention the “falling asunder of Islam” and foresaw “a new day” for the evangelisation of Muslims.¹⁵⁷ The same thoughts were expressed by one of the missionaries in Eastern Turkestan in 1930. He described the new era as being a step towards individualism “and when the Muslim begins to think as an individual he becomes easier to win for Christ.”¹⁵⁸

The church in Eastern Turkestan started to grow in the 1920s and in 1921 Törnquist could write the following in a newspaper article,

“Several years ago each station received a set of cups for the Lord’s Supper. This could easily have been seen as an ironic reminder of how things ought to be as opposed to how things really were. At

¹⁵⁴ *Folke*, 1928, III-IV, p. 74 f.

¹⁵⁵ Palmaer, 1923, p. 42 f., 49 f.

¹⁵⁶ SMT, 1919, p.105 ff.

¹⁵⁷ Lindeberg, 1920, p 44 ff. and 1927, p 122 ff. Zwemer 1925, p 25 ff., 34, 84, 1925 in “Working together”, p 140 ff. and 1939, p 140 ff. In 1914 Zwemer wrote about reformed Islam which seemed to be becoming more sympathetic towards Christianity. (International Review of Missions, Vol. 3, 1914, p 696 ff.). The Evangelical Mission Work (DEM), 1939 p. 88.

¹⁵⁸ DEM, 1930, p. 153, Believed to be Raquette’s position.

that time there were no churches here. Now the sets of cups are regularly used for their original purpose. We thank God for this with all our hearts.”¹⁵⁹

In the same article he described the annual missionary conference being held in Jarkend at the time. On two consecutive Sundays he had participated in the services held for Muslims. On both occasions, the roomy new church was full of Muslims who seemed both interested and attentive. Törnquist noticed that it was not only the poor who were present, but there also seemed to be well-to-do middle class people there.

In a report from 1925 Raquette says that the harvest time in Eastern Turkestan seemed to have finally come. It was believed that the Muslim world everywhere was open to receive the Gospel.¹⁶⁰ The following year Palmberg expressed the same opinion when the new church in Kashgar opened. Throughout the duration of the building project there had been no disturbances, which in itself was very unusual, considering what had happened earlier when the Mission was expanding. At that time the disturbances had been so hostile and threatening that the missionaries had feared for their lives.¹⁶¹

Törnquist sent the following greetings to the MCCS 50th anniversary celebrations in Stockholm in 1928, “...the general situation in Eastern Turkestan for our Mission has never been better than it is now”.¹⁶² The Mission had been quite successful; more so than what was dreamed of just a decade ago, he adds. The Mission had, by God’s grace, become one of the most important missions in the world. The whole missionary world acknowledged the importance of “our lonely outpost in the struggle for the coming of the Kingdom of God”. After having given much praise and thanksgiving to God for the church buildings, the school work and the full hospitals at the Mission stations, Törnquist concludes, “There is a feeling of optimism and hopefulness among the MCCS missionaries in Eastern Turkestan.”

Even though the atmosphere of the 50th anniversary celebrations enticed Törnquist into expressing himself far too subjectively, nobody, however, could deny what was actually happening with the Mission in Eastern Turkestan. Between the years 1928 and 1932, 86 people had been baptised. At the beginning of 1932, church registers showed that there were 56 members in the Kashgar church, 29 in Hancheng, 65 in Jarkend and 13 in Jengi-Hessar. Altogether there were 163 members.¹⁶³ It is also recorded that in 1932 there were 22 missionaries in the field and approximately 30 national workers including both Turks and Chinese. Sunday school statistics show that 170 children were being taught the Scriptures, and in the thirteen “day schools” the attendance records show almost 300 pupils. The hospital and outpatient work was very encouraging too, providing a natural contact with people from all walks of life. During the same year (1932), 13,228 patients were treated and about 50 major operations performed. A new hospital was built in Kashgar by Dr. Hermanrud and at Jengi-Hessar a new church with a seating capacity of 200 was inaugurated.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ The *Missionsförbundet*, June 30th, 1921.

¹⁶⁰ *International Review of Missions*, Vol. 14, 1925, pp. 252-259. Raquette, 1928, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ The *Missionsförbundet*, December 9th, 1926.

¹⁶² Nyren, 1928, p. 339 ff.

¹⁶³ MCCS Annual Report, 1930,1931,1932.

¹⁶⁴ Palmaer, 1942, p. 222 ff.

Otto Torvik, the Norwegian missionary visiting the mission field at that time, confirmed that the churches were full of people wanting to hear the Word of God.¹⁶⁵ The China Inland missionaries, George Hunter and Mildred Cable, also referred positively to the valuable work done by the Swedish Mission.¹⁶⁶ In Stockholm, Lindeberg, a university lecturer, described the work in the field as “one of the very few ‘missionary enterprises’ achieving real success.”¹⁶⁷

The revival had come to the mission field. Vendla Gustafsson relates how Christians in Kashgar had, for a long time, been praying for a spiritual revival. And now it was here. It started among the church members. When the Spirit began to work, some of the Christians confessed that they had secretly visited the mosques. During services people were openly testifying and confessing sin.¹⁶⁸ Torvik writes concerning his servant “... he was touched by the Spirit and has completely changed.”¹⁶⁹

At that time, one of the national evangelists, Josef Khan (who later called himself Josef Ryehan) was working in Jarkend. The revival broke out there too and some young people became Christians.¹⁷⁰ When the revival broke out there were, however, some people in the church who were totally opposed to it. They felt it was not yet time for a spiritual harvest in Eastern Turkestan. Some even went as far as advising their friends not to become Christians, remarks Arell. Those who opposed the revival felt that it was no longer an honour to be a Christian. The Christians had become so numerous that the individual “disappeared” in the crowd. But during a series of revival meetings this opposition completely disappeared and more and more Christians were drawn into the revival. One after another came and confessed their sins. At the end of every meeting there were people asking for help in prayer and intercession. They confessed that they had been reading the Muslim prayers, had been keeping certain Islamic customs or been dishonest. One night a young woman confessed that she had regretted her Christian baptism. A young man confessed that he had stolen money and goods from Sven Hedin’s office when he had been working there some years earlier.¹⁷¹

Josef Khan says the following about the spiritual process in Eastern Turkestan,

“Many who say they want to become Christians, or who are nominal Christians, do not leave their old way of life; they still visit the graves of Muslim saints or sit at the feet of the Sufi leaders... Now a new period is coming, especially among the young men who have been brought up by the Mission. Many of them have now been filled by the power Christ and they have been able to cast off the oppression of old Muslim prejudices. They burn with the desire to preach the Word to their Muslim brothers and sisters...”¹⁷²

The time had come for the Mission to think of expansion. Many places not yet reached by the Mission sent urgent invitations and requests for missionaries. Miss Lovisa Engvall,

¹⁶⁵ Torvik, 1967, p. 17.

¹⁶⁶ The Muslim World, 1930, p. 23. International Review of Missions, Vol. 18, 1929, p. 184.

¹⁶⁷ DEM, 1930, p. 155.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Vendla Gustafsson, September 11th, 1972.

¹⁶⁹ Torvik, 1946, p. 29 ff.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Ester Johansson, February 27th, 1973.

¹⁷¹ Arell, 1935, p. 8 ff.

¹⁷² Ansgarius, 1932, p. 83 ff.

who was at that time working as a nurse in Kutja, about 700 kilometres northeast of Kashgar, wrote in January 1932,

“Today a Mullah came to us. He sat for a long time looking at a wall chart from the Bible and reading the first three chapters of Luke. He asked why we were not coming to build a hospital and a school... Write and ask them to come... I have already done that, I said to him, but there is nobody available... Write again and again until their heads ache and they will just have to send someone... Tell them this is a big city and that we are waiting for a hospital and a school here too.”¹⁷³

The plans of the Mission concerning expansion did not, however, include Kutja but rather Khotan, south of the already established mission field. These plans were old. As early as 1897 the idea of establishing a Mission station in Khotan had been discussed.¹⁷⁴ Missionaries had visited the area now and then. However the establishment of a work was thwarted by the outbreak of the First World War and the economic problems following the war. Although it did not seem possible then for work to be established in Khotan, the missionaries kept praying that somehow the door to Khotan would be opened. Amazingly enough, in 1920, Nyström, then stationed in Jarkend, was asked by the Governor of Khotan to come for a visit.

The Governor wanted a doctor to save the life of two of his soldiers who were severely ill. Nyström used this opportunity to mention his desire to see a Mission station established in Khotan. The Governor expressed his approval of these plans and promised to help the missionaries in every way possible. Shortly after that Hanna Andersson was asked to go and establish an immunisation programme since all the children in the town needed to be vaccinated. The Governor provided some troops to escort her to Khotan and she was his guest during the project.¹⁷⁵ In 1926 Nyström was again asked to go to Khotan to help in an emergency. This time many people suggested he should stay or else send for one of his colleagues to come and start mission work there.¹⁷⁶

No immediate action was taken but the issue was re-opened at the Eastern Turkestan Conference in 1932. At the conference there were two proposals: firstly, that the Mission should establish a clinic in Khotan with nurses and midwives, and secondly, that a course in evangelism for nationals should be offered. The course would be held in Jengi-Hessar during the spring of 1933. Maybe then national workers would be prepared to be sent to the new area.¹⁷⁷

Carl Persson met with similar openness and friendliness while travelling in the northern part of the country in the summer of 1932. He was acting as guide and translator for Otto Torvik, the Norwegian missionary, who continued to explore the possibilities of future work for Norwegian missionaries. Everywhere they went they met friendly people who listened readily as they witnessed about Jesus Christ, and who willingly bought Scripture portions and tracts.¹⁷⁸ Nyström had similarly been impressed by the openness of

¹⁷³ The *Missionsförbundet*, 1932, No. 8, p. 119.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1897, p 227.

¹⁷⁵ The *Vinterny*, 1920, p 13.

¹⁷⁶ Nyström, 1928, p. 144.

¹⁷⁷ The minutes of the Eastern Turkestan Conference, 1932, § 28.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Carl Persson, September 23rd, 1972. Torvik, 1946, p. 54, 59. On their journey northwards, the missionaries came to the town of Kutja, where they met Lovisa Engvall. From there they continued on to Kulджа (or Ili), at that time the biggest city in Eastern Turkestan. Here, because of the presence of a large

the people while on a trip in the same area already in the 1920s. Some evangelists from Jarkend had made a 25 day long mission journey into the mountains. Everywhere in the villages they were heartily welcomed and during their trip they sold 45 Scripture portions and nearly 100 tracts.¹⁷⁹

In Sweden, people were rejoicing. Gösta Raquette, who had returned to Sweden in the early 1920s, was especially encouraged by the openness, and in 1932 he wrote,

“Eastern Turkestan has been such a hard field, but it is no longer so. We have become used to describing it as a ‘hard field’ but this is not an accurate description any more, and we ought to stop using it. Where else in the world has the Christian missionary working among Muslims seen such results after only 40 years? We are thanking God for such advancements.”¹⁸⁰

Such was the situation in November 1932 when the Mission celebrated its 40th anniversary. It was a simple celebration held in Kashgar. It was estimated that approximately 80 people, most of whom were national Christians, were present at the Communion service. Nyström, unable to leave the work in Jarkend to go to the celebration, set aside time to commemorate it there. Old and young Christians told about times gone by. One man testified how he had led a double life for many years. He had remained a Muslim in his heart until he met Josef Khan who had helped him to be liberated from his old life.¹⁸¹

7. A Spiritual Breakthrough - Some Underlying Causes

As has been described above, the Mission experienced a total breakthrough and there were many reasons for this breakthrough.

number of Russian and German refugees living in the city, they found signs of Western cultural influence. Some of these refugees were Christians. Although most of the Russians were Orthodox, there were also about a hundred Baptists among them. The Germans were Lutherans. (Torvik, 1946, p. 118 ff.). During the 1930s there were several Orthodox congregations in the northern part of the province. An attempt was made from Beijing to coordinate them under one Bishop, but this was unsuccessful. (Latourette, 1945, p. 356). Since they did not speak any Turkish, the Christian refugees did not evangelise the Muslims. A few Turks knew Russian, however, and sometimes came to the meetings. The missionaries took part in some of these church services which were organised by the Baptists. In one service, the evangelist from the group in Kashgar was invited to speak. Some of the Turks present became angry at what was said. The situation became so serious that they even threatened to kill the evangelist. (Interview with Carl Persson, September 23rd, 1972). Torvik intended to open a mission station in Kuldja, so when Persson returned to Kashgar, Torvik stayed behind. Within a short time he was able to start a school for Muslim children. However, when he spoke with missionaries from the China Inland Mission during a visit to Urumchi, they made it clear to him that he was an intruder into their area. (Torvik, 1946, p. 158). The Urumchi missionary, Percy Mather, later printed a song book for the Baptists in Kuldja. (Cable, 1948, p. 100). Torvik returned to Kuldja and at the beginning of 1933, the Norwegian Lutheran Mission to China was established there. Kuldja is approximately 1,000 kilometres from Kashgar. Although the work began well (Torvik, 1967, p. 7), it had to stop in 1935 when Torvik was expelled from the country. A short time before his departure he baptised a young Turk, the son of a merchant. (Torvik, 1946, p. 171).

¹⁷⁹ Nyström to the *Missionsförbundet*, December 12th, 1923.

¹⁸⁰ Palmaer, 1942, p. 220 ff.

¹⁸¹ Nyström to “brother Sandberg”, November 7th, 1932.

In the first place, the Mission methods were effective. Social welfare was a way for the Mission to try to assist people who needed help. The work of the Mission in this area also inspired the authorities to establish social institutions and aid programmes.¹⁸² Most important, however, was the social work among the children and women. On one occasion a Muslim, reading about the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, exclaimed that that was the most wonderful thing he had ever heard of. "Imagine Jesus talking to a woman!"¹⁸³ The efforts of the Mission were quite modest. Through the orphanages, however, many girls were helped. Home visits were also important, when women who never met anyone except their close relatives, had contact with the outside world. The missionary women usually brightened up the day for these women. "Harem wives" were sometimes interested in the Mission and were happy to see the women missionaries in their homes. Often when these women were invited to a service they were not, however, allowed to attend.¹⁸⁴ The mission work never had time to contribute to a change of the social structures of society. There were, however, some small signs in the change of attitude towards women that could be observed. Consequently, Christian women were not veiled as a rule. They could wear a thin scarf, but were never entirely covered.¹⁸⁵ The Mission did manage to lead some women into a freer and happier world. One 20 year old Kashgar woman, for example, freed herself from her family's old conceptions and started to study. As a result of her decision her family considered her insane. When confronted by her family about her future, she replied, "Look at the Swedes, they remain single their whole lives if they want to."¹⁸⁶ In the 1930s, Nyström managed to obtain a prohibition against child marriages from the Governor of Urumchi. No girl under 15 years of age could be married.¹⁸⁷ Unfortunately this prohibition was not strictly observed, but it did at least show that the authorities had begun to listen to the Mission.

Schools, medical care and literature work also produced good results. After visiting the field in 1929/1930, Gunnar Jarring had many positive things to say about the mission work. He gave prominence to the literature work and the possibilities offered by the printing office. Within the area of schools, the Mission had acted as an innovator and in describing the medical work in Kashgar, he adds, "The Swedish hospital has become a real model hospital..."¹⁸⁸ The medical work made the Mission known and respected throughout the country. In a lecture given in 1935, Sven Hedin describes the health care work carried out by the Mission in Kashgar where Turks, Mongols, Kirghiz and Chinese were treated. Hedin goes on to say, "The missionaries carried out works of charity among the natives which made their name so honoured and respected that I heard Turks praise the Swedish missionaries last year thousands of kilometres from there..."¹⁸⁹ When Peter Fleming, a reporter for *The Times*, visited Eastern Turkestan in the 1930s he made the

¹⁸² Inspection Report, 1913.

¹⁸³ *The Ansgarius*, 1927, p. 39 ff.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Vendla Gustafsson, September 11th, 1972.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973.

¹⁸⁶ Lundahl-Walder, 1938, p. 100, 126 ff. Högberg, 1918, p. 8, 15.

¹⁸⁷ Nyström to Palmaer, June 2nd, 1936.

¹⁸⁸ DEM, 1936, p. 26 ff.

¹⁸⁹ *The Missionsförbundet*, June 14th, 1935. Hedin wrote that General Ma Ho-san travelled all the way from Turfan to Kashgar (about 1,000 kilometres) in order to receive treatment from one of the missionary doctors. (Hedin, 1935, p. 330).

same observation. He recalled meeting patients who were willing to travel for more than three weeks in order to be treated at the Mission hospital.¹⁹⁰ The medical work was allowed to operate until the “bitter end” in 1938. It is estimated that during the entire mission era approximately 400,000 patients received treatment through this ministry. One must not forget that 3 or 4 people usually accompanied each patient and so came into contact with the Mission. The numbers of people who came into contact with Christians through the medical work can thus be counted in the millions.¹⁹¹ These people usually returned to their villages to tell others about the Mission. The literature work was appreciated by many as well. When the Mission first came to the country, there was scarcely any literature available there, apart from a few hand-written translations.¹⁹²

The Mission methods bore fruit. “Institutional mission work” paved the way for the Gospel. Surely these methods were one of the roads leading to spiritual breakthrough. A long and painful road. Another factor was the missionaries themselves. Here the truth that the “influence of a patient Christian” leads up to the goal came true. The missionaries lived among the people and their lives were under constant observation from those among whom they were living and working. They taught the people many practical skills which improved their standard of living. As an example, when the missionaries were building their own houses the local builders and construction workers observed what they did, and then modelled their own houses after it. Carpenters, bricklayers, stove-builders, painters, tin-smiths, smiths and others soon learned to work like the missionaries. In areas where the Mission did not reach, the poor people lived on in traditions and customs from the days of their ancestors. This was also valid for agriculture.¹⁹³

The missionaries’ way of life and behaviour also left their marks. So many years of patient loving kindness could not pass without result. Strangers visiting the Mission stations complimented the work of the missionaries. Hedin writes,

“... with admiration and emotion one reads between the lines about the courage, patience and faithfulness of the Swedish apostles in the most difficult conditions and one is proud to know that our people are represented in the heart of the largest continent of the world by such men and women.”¹⁹⁴

Hedin also showed his appreciation of the missionaries’ work directly to them during his long stays in Eastern Turkestan. This can be clearly seen in a newly found, unpublished letter. The letter was sent from Urumchi where Hedin was stationed during the winter of 1928, intended for the missionaries in Kashgar. It started with “Dear fellow countrymen” and ended with “your sincere, close friend Sven Hedin”. The four page letter gave a very

¹⁹⁰ Fleming, 1936, p. 490 ff.

¹⁹¹ Högberg, 1925, p. 47. Hanna Raquette wrote, “The leaders of villages far away from the mission station came to us for help, often together with many of the people from their village.” (The *Svensk Veckotidning*, November 7th, 1975.).

¹⁹² Oskar Hermansson to Palmaer, April 6th, 1936. One of the few hand-written books that existed in Eastern Turkestan when the missionaries arrived was “The History of the Prophets”. Originally written in Arabic, it had been translated into Persian at the beginning of the 11th century. It was then eventually translated into Eastern Turkish. (Högberg-Ahlbert, 1925, p. 69). Owen Lattimore points out that the few books which had been written in Uighur (Eastern Turkish) dated back before the Mongol reign in the 13th century. This literature was influenced by either Arab, Persian or Indian culture. (Lattimore, 1950, p. 240, 245).

¹⁹³ Högberg, 1918, p. 3 and 1925, p.47; Högberg-Ahlbert, 1915, p. 225.

¹⁹⁴ Hedin, 1935, footnote, p. 329.

warm-hearted Christmas greeting. "It would have been nice meeting you, but I do not know if I will get as far as Kashgar. Therefore I just send my warmest greetings to the Swedish missionaries and wish you the blessing of God in your beautiful work. Peace, happiness and success, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."¹⁹⁵

Nils Ambolt, also part of the Sven Hedin expedition in the early 1930s, got to know the Mission of Jarkend, where he also spent some time, especially well. He, too, was deeply moved by the missionaries' self-sacrificing work. Before the expedition he had disapproved of the missionaries' work, but when he saw the way they worked, he was softened and influenced by their example of love and dedication.¹⁹⁶ Ambolt in the end came to appreciate their stand and felt it was a joy to see people who believed so strongly and showed such convincing love. He writes in a letter,

"It was a great joy to see these people working for their high ideals. They cherished ...one principle that could best be expressed by one single, but very significant word, love... Such a struggle is worthy of the highest appreciation no matter if it is successful or not..."¹⁹⁷

Rachel Wingate was similarly impressed by the Swedish missionaries' work and way of life. The Swedes stayed Swedish, she remarks. They did not try to imitate the Turks or the Chinese. They lived among the people as Swedes, to the extent that one could find a flagpole flying the blue and yellow Swedish flag in their gardens. They felt that the people should have the opportunity to get to know European Christians, and they did not keep people at a distance. Neighbours visited them freely. And Gunnar Jarring writes, "I met the sincere, tolerant and generous kind of faith that I believe is characteristic of the MCCS."¹⁹⁸

The long and patient work of the Mission led to a phase where people's attitudes towards the Mission were just about to undergo a radical change. At the end of 1931 Roberntz writes,

"Preaching, schoolwork, orphanage work and all other Mission activities can be carried out without restrictions.... It is also encouraging to observe that the Christians here are no longer without legal rights but enjoy the same legal protection as the Chinese and Muslims..."¹⁹⁹

The same year Oskar Hermansson discusses the new Mission situation. The most important stronghold for the Christian faith in the country was no longer the small group of baptised Christians, but rather the respect gained by the Mission among ordinary people. During the last years, Muslims from very influential circles had stood up in defence of the Mission. During the unrest in 1923 Oskar Hermansson was nearly arrested and taken away. To prevent the missionary from being harmed the Kashgar people formed a protective circle around him and so he was not hit by one single blow.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Hedin to missionaries, November 30th, 1928. *Vinterny*, 1972. The letter was found by Ragnar Widman, an

archivist, in the MCCS archives in Stockholm.

¹⁹⁶ DEM, 1936, p. 26 ff.

¹⁹⁷ Ambolt, 1935, p. 134 ff.

¹⁹⁸ Wingate, 195, p 14; Jarring, 1979, p 110.

¹⁹⁹ Palmaer, 1942, p. 220.

²⁰⁰ SMT, 1931, p.110 ff., 116 ff.

Another factor contributing to the breakthrough was the worship service format. Music and singing in the services had a positive influence on the people. In 1925 the Mission published a new songbook containing 193 songs.²⁰¹ Roberntz contributed with 29 songs and Högberg with 20. Oskar Hermansson contributed with the major part, 61 songs, in translation or original compositions. Later 63 more songs by Hermansson, either specially composed or translated, were made into a supplement.²⁰² Before, all the music had been taken from several different hymnals. The music, almost without exception, consisted of Western tunes. The missionaries felt it best not to set religious lyrics to Asian folk tunes, since in many cases these original folk songs had original lyrics which were “indecent”.²⁰³

At the end of the 1920s a choir was started in Kashgar. The soprano and contralto parts, which would normally be sung by women, were sung by children as it was unacceptable for women to perform or sing in public.²⁰⁴ The people greatly enjoyed music, and this is especially true of the Turks. The importance of the songbook for the churches and especially for the young Christians cannot be overemphasised, writes Roberntz, and he continues, "The Gospel was literally sung into their souls and caused many hearts to surrender, resulting in new birth or revival."²⁰⁵ Palmberg also emphasises the great power the songs and music had at the end of the 1920s.

The Asian Christians had a key position in the breakthrough. Rachel Wingate writes that the Mission could now rejoice in seeing the fruit of “second generation Christians”. They were brought up within the church and had a strong moral influence on other Muslims.²⁰⁶ Palmberg writes, “a new era has begun”. Young people brought up within the Mission were becoming Christians. Concerning the orphanage work, Roberntz says, “It has now started to give us young men and women who were brought up in the Christian way, and, unlike the earlier Christians, they did not question the meaning of new birth and the Christian life. Now the fire of new birth and revival was lit and spreading. It was so strong that even some of the old Christians were caught up in the movement.”²⁰⁷ Helena Nyström writes that some of the young people in the Mission married each other. The boys and girls had both the Christian faith in common and the general education that the missionaries had given them.²⁰⁸ John Andersson adds concerning the schoolgirls, “These were the first girls in the country to receive Western education.”²⁰⁹

The church was becoming really independent, something which had been the goal of the missionaries for many years. During the Mission Conference in 1921, the following was said,

²⁰¹ Nyren, 1928, p. 381.

²⁰² Roberntz to Hultvall, March 2nd, 1978.

²⁰³ Nyren, 1928, p. 382.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 382 ff.

²⁰⁵ Roberntz to Hultvall, March 2nd, 1978. Palmberg in the *Vetlanda-Posten*, February 14th, 1961.

²⁰⁶ Wingate, 1951, p. 17.

²⁰⁷ Roberntz to Hultvall, March 2nd, 1978. Palmberg in the *Vetlanda-Posten*. January 17th, 1961.

²⁰⁸ Palmaer, 1942, p. 173.

²⁰⁹ Andersson, 1948, p. 107.

“As much autonomy as possible should be given to the church. Self-responsibility is of the greatest importance. This will ensure that the church will develop according to its Eastern character.”²¹⁰

In 1927 Ahlbert gives an accurate description of the development and the goal of the Mission. He points out the danger of the missionary forcing his own understanding of the Gospel on the native. And what else could he do? He has no other experience of the Gospel than his own. He continues,

“The result is that in many cases the first converts become, more or less, bad replicas of the missionaries. They are rootless and do not feel at home anywhere. But as the church grows... it becomes rooted in its own soil... and slowly the Christian in Eastern Turkestan starts to see with his own eyes... and discovers new aspects of the glory of Christ in the Gospel.”²¹¹

At the same time, the Mission Conference decided that the church should be represented by the nationals themselves before the authorities.²¹²

The church was also on its way to becoming economically independent. The income from the medical work has been mentioned already, and a further source of revenue came from the printing press through orders carried out. This money was used by the Mission in various building and development projects.

The third part of the “Three-Self Principle”, self-propagation, was also becoming a reality. The Asian Christians were realising their responsibility to proclaim the Gospel. They preached in the bazaars and travelled throughout the country, holding meetings and selling Bible portions. When missionaries wanted to travel outside the towns they had to get permission from the authorities and sometimes the Mullahs would hinder them. The nationals, however, could travel wherever they wished.²¹³

The number of national Christian co-workers increased during the years of the breakthrough. Roberntz speaks about Josef Ryehan, who was possibly the most successful national, saying that “He was the first to succeed in making Christianity real to Muslims. He made Christianity Eastern. Earlier, Christianity had been more or less considered a religion of Westerners”²¹⁴ Roberntz also described Ryehan as being fanatically against Islam. During his period of work, independent local churches began to form as nationals gathered for prayer and Bible study without any missionary supervision.

Jacob Stephen has also been mentioned above. Ahlbert speaks well of his solid character. Jacob was a teacher at the girls’ school. Although he met many “unveiled beauties” there, he remained strong and uninfluenced by them.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ The minutes of the Eastern Turkestan Conference, 1921, §6.

²¹¹ The *Ansgarius*, 192, p. 44.

²¹² The minutes of the Eastern Turkestan Conference, 1926, §19.

²¹³ Wingate, 1951, p. 12 ff.

²¹⁴ Interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973.

²¹⁵ Ahlbert to Raquette, June 24th, 1940. The literature at the MCCS 50th anniversary in 1928 mentioned a number of the Asian leaders. Nyrén, 1928, p. 391. Nyreé. B, 1928, p. 275 ff. Also in Palmaer, 1942, p. 143. the *Svensk Veckotidning*, June 5th, 1942. Lundahl, 1945, p. 245 ff. Report from an exploratory journey in 1946/47. *Ansgarius*, 1947, p. 107.

At the end of the 1920s, Palmberg made a list of the national Christian workers at the Mission. He noted that nearly all the posts were held by Asian Christians who were not only employed in practical jobs, but who were also very much involved in the “spiritual work”. Palmberg also praised the Christians’ solidarity with the missionaries. The nationals, however, had many advantages over the missionaries, including a natural gift for preaching and witnessing.²¹⁶

During the first years of the 1930s when the Mission found itself in front of a major spiritual breakthrough, potentially destructive political events were beginning to happen. Apparently the missionaries in Kashgar were not aware of the serious political developments and changes in Urumchi nor of the serious turn things had taken there. Unreliable and unbelievable stories were spreading, and it was difficult for the missionaries in Kashgar to know what to think. Even if they could have foreseen the terrible things that would happen to the Mission, what else could they have done but “wait and see”?

²¹⁶ Nyren, 1928, p. 349 ff.

VI. Phasing out. (1933 – 1938).

From Ma Chung-yen to Sheng Shih-tsai.

The general political situation of Eastern Turkestan during the 1930s came to be decisive for the Mission. Not only the general title of this chapter but also several intermediate titles indicate this fact. But even if the political development was of the greatest importance it cannot be analysed here more than in its outlines, the purpose of this book being an attempt at describing the Mission during these fateful years.¹

The preceding chapter mentioned the remarkable turn for the better, experienced by the Mission during the last years of the 1920s, culminating during the first years of the 1930s up to the 40th anniversary of the Mission at the end of 1932. The congregations were larger than ever, many people awaiting teaching and baptism. A letter written by Nyström to the *Missionsförbundet* in February 1933 where he speaks about “revival in Jarkend” is typical of the situation.² However in a few weeks’ time everything had changed and Hermansson could write to the same newspaper about “times of terror in Jarkend”.³ At that time the Muslim revolt had reached the mission field. The Muslim uprising was knocked down after about six months, and the Mission had another three years of relative calm. The revolt was however something of a “beginning of the end”. And when the Chinese “restored order” with the help of the Soviet Russians in 1938, this meant the end of the Mission.

1. The Muslim Revolt Reaches the Mission Field (1933 – 1934)

As has already been mentioned Ma Chung-yen came back to Kansu in autumn 1931 with the remnants of his beaten Tungan army. They had not been able to crush the Chinese. After having recruited a new army he marched anew towards Urumchi in the winter of 1932-1933. Sven Hedin who was in the country at that time writes about the campaign of “The Big Horse” (Sven Hedin’s name for Ma). Like beasts the troops charged on towards Urumchi “slaughtering on their way all the Chinese they met”. Chinese troops were sent out to stop the Tungan army, says Hedin. On the Chinese New Year’s Eve, the Chinese celebrated heavily and became drunk. In this condition they were surprised by Ma and completely defeated.⁴ After his victory Ma returned home to Kansu.

In Urumchi the Turks rebelled in January 1933. Governor Chin then mobilized several regiments of “White Russians” (Russians having fled the Russian Revolution) in order to help the Chinese. The Russians were presented with an ultimatum saying, “Either you fight or you we send you back home.”⁵ For some time they managed to withstand the Turkish armies, but in April, the White Russians raised a mutiny and turned on their former allies.⁶ Chin was then

¹ L.E. Nyman gives a political analysis in *Great Britain and China, Russian and Japanese Interest in Sinkiang* 1918 – 1934. Malmö, 1977.

² The *Missionsförbundet* 1935, nr 15, p. 228.

³ *Ibid.*, 1933, nr 34, p. 533.

⁴ Hedin, 1935, p. 9 ff.

⁵ John Andersson in the *Svenska Morgonbladet*, December 3rd, 1934. Nyström, 1936, p. 6 f. Out of the several hundred thousand Russian refugees, civilians and soldiers, who fled to Eastern Turkestan before and during the Russian Revolution, many went back. A comparatively small number chose to stay on in Eastern Turkestan. (Yang, 1961, p. 316.)

⁶ Nyström, 1936, p. 7. Lattimore, 1950, p. 69 f.

panic struck and fled to the Soviet Union. From there he fled to Nanking where he was sentenced to four years in prison for his lousy administration.⁷

In Urumchi there was a couple of weeks' calm after Chin's running away. But when the Turks did not get the important posts they had wished for in the new Government, they started once again to prepare for war. In May they sent a new demand for help to Ma. When Ma's troops arrived they were met by the Chinese who were now – under the leadership of their new commander, Governor General Sheng Shih-tsai – reinforced by 7,000 Chinese soldiers who had previously fought against the Japanese in Manchuria.⁸ After having fled the Japanese soldiers into Russian territory they had been interned there. Now they had been set free by the Soviet authorities and sent to Urumchi to fight the rebels. They also managed to stop Ma's advance. Urumchi was liberated, but in the rest of the country the revolt kept spreading during the spring. In May it reached Kashgar.

In the Urumchi area, the three Muslim fractions, the Turks, the Kyrgyz and the Tungans formed a united front against the Chinese. This was not always the case during the course of the revolt in the rest of the country. At times they fought each other. Temporary alliances were formed and dissolved by turns.⁹

During the periods of time when one or the other of the Muslim fractions was in power, the Chinese, "those common idolaters", usually did not have the choice but to convert to Islam, if they wanted to survive. Sometimes they were not considered worthy of becoming Muslims but were summarily executed. Especially the Tungans were ruthless. They came marching, says Elisabeth Höök, big knives in their hands. Nils Ambolt witnessed their rampaging. In Kerija, a town south of Jarkend, "all infidels were made Muslims and were then told they would be living in peace", he says. And from another place in the same area," A lot of Chinese were converted into Muslims. The Mayor was baptized Jakub Bedöwlet, the Happy...".¹⁰ Ambolt says that the cruelties of the Tungans reminded him of medieval methods. Ears were cut off, the tongue ripped off, eyes poked out, hand and foot joints crushed. When after all, the tortured person died, the corpse was thrown to the dogs. The Chinese women who were spared were taken up as wives of the Muslims. Little girls of 10 were given to men over 40. This is "the new Islam" says Ambolt.

The goal of the Muslim fight was to liberate them from Chinese sovereignty and to establish a free Muslim state. This was an old dream. Ever since 1878 when Eastern Turkestan was forced in under Chinese sovereignty the Muslim population had nourished this hope. The goal was a theocracy where ever larger areas would be put under the will of Allah. Georg Roberntz underlines the religious side of the revolt. The motto was, "Islam has risen!"¹¹ So the revolt had a double purpose, one was to cut off the ties with China and another one was to introduce a Muslim society.

In the autumn of 1933 the dream of a free state appeared to become a reality. In September the Kashgar region broke away from the Provincial government of Urumchi, proclaiming "The Free Muslim Republic of Eastern Turkestan".¹² Nominally the proclamation took place

⁷ Nyström, 1936, p. 7. Lattimore, 1950, p. 70.

⁸ Nyström, 1936, p. 9. Nyman, 1977, p. 128.

⁹ Törnquist to Palmaer, February 11th, 1933.

¹⁰ Ambolt, 1935, p. 180. Interview with Elisabeth Höök, August 20th, 1979.

¹¹ Maillart, 1940, p. 5. "The Holy War" was proclaimed on several occasions during the Mission era in Eastern Turkestan. For instance during the First World War when the Eastern Turkestan population believed that the Sultanate in Turkey would quickly master the world, spreading the teachings of Allah to all peoples. Sobering down arrived in the 1930s when both the Sultanate and the Caliphate were abolished, the former in 1922 and the latter in 1924. *Ansgarius*, 1936, p. 115.

¹² Wu, 1940, p.247. Hayit, 1971, p. 303 f. Jakub Beg had the same intentions in 1877, but he too without success. (Wingate, 1951, p. 11.)

in November.¹³ Prime Minister was Emir Sabit Mullah, one of the religious leaders from Khotan and President the earlier mentioned Khoja Niaz.¹⁴ The policy of this republic was anti-Chinese and anti-Russian.¹⁵ The flag was a crescent with a star on a white background and with text from the Koran.¹⁶ The Koran became the foundation for both civil and religious legislation, and the implementation was literal and fanatical. Thieves were hung from trees,¹⁷ and women showing themselves unveiled in the streets or at the shrines of the saints were driven home and punished with a leather whip. “If they cannot hear with their ears, they will have to feel it in their skin.”¹⁸ Some were even executed.¹⁹

The Chinese were to be driven away. By the way, the new regime tried to establish diplomatic relations with the outer world. Thus delegates were sent across the mountains to Afghanistan, the Soviet Union and India. By the way it was through the Soviet Union that the rest of the world got to know about what had happened in Eastern Turkestan in the autumn of 1933. In the Soviet propaganda, England and Japan were accused of being behind the newly formed state. England vehemently repudiated these accusations. It was pointed out that the friendship between England and China was solidly established and any kind of help to the rebels was totally excluded.²⁰ This clear standpoint was a deception for the rebels who had hoped to turn the southern part of the province into a sphere with strong British influence via India.²¹

On the domestic level the new republic started out well. Promises like “We take no taxes or customs from our subjects. People have suffered so much under the reign of the Chinese and been bent down by their yoke and thus we wish to have a time of rest and peace.”²² Such things were just what people expected to hear, what they had been dreaming of. There was to be no oppression and the soil would yield harvests many times over.²³ It would however not be long before other announcements appeared with quite a different message. One tax after the other came “creeping” upon the people. Taxes and other duties from the authorities now became worse than ever during the Chinese era. Some people went so far as to sell their farms and other belongings to be able to flee abroad. More and more people started to regret the whole revolt against the Chinese and the misery they had brought upon themselves thereby.²⁴ And after a couple of months the story of the Republic was over. The reasons for its rapid fall were many. Apart from the failures mentioned above concerning the foreign politics and the quickly rising disappointment within the population, the incapacity of its leaders stood out more and more clearly. They were mediocrities or irresponsible adventurers, says Peter Fleming.²⁵ And they had difficulties to cooperate. The immediate reason for the fall of the Republic was connected with the change of regime in Kashgar. The Republic was a creation primarily by the Tungans, but in February 1934, Kashgar was invaded by the armies of the Turkish Muslims, which, for the time being, were strangely enough in alliance with their archenemy, the Chinese.²⁶

¹³ Lattimore, 1950, p.67. Hayit, 1972, p. 304.

¹⁴ Whiting, 1958, p. 45, note.

¹⁵ Fleming, 1936, p. 474. (Common edition, 1948, p. 252.)

¹⁶ Wu, 1940, p. 247.

¹⁷ The *Ansgarius*, 1967, p. 75.

¹⁸ Torvik, 1945, p. 122.

¹⁹ Wu, 1940, p. 248.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

²¹ Sheng in Whiting, 1958, p. 157.

²² Trovik, 1945, p. 122.

²³ Ellen Söderberg in the *Sunne Tidningen*, January 18th, 1934.

²⁴ A Swedish missionary in Torvik, 1945, p. 122 f.

²⁵ Fleming, 1936, p. 424. (Common edition 1948, p. 252.)

²⁶ Maillart, 1940, p. 250. In exchange of a promise of becoming Governor of the Kashgar district, Ghodja Niaz sold out his alliance with the Tungans. (John Andersson in the *Svenska Morgonbladet*, December 3rd, 1934.)

During the coming spring, the Tungans regained power in Kashgar. At the beginning of April, their main force arrived commanded by General Ma himself. The army was as a matter of fact on the run from the east. During the month of March, they had camped in Korla, at 750 kilometres from Kashgar. There the Sven Hedin expedition was taken prisoners and barely escaped alive. Ma had however confiscated the vehicles of the expedition.²⁷ Kashgar was now conquered from the Turkish Muslims. No pardon was given. Mrs Thomson Glover, wife of the Consul, who became an eye witness of the ravages of the Tungans, says that after the Turkish Muslim leaders had been executed, an order was given about “general slaughter”. Between 2,000 and 3,000 persons were killed, among them many unarmed old men, women and children.²⁸ When some Turks took refuge at the British Consulate, the Tungans followed them. At the ensuing shootings, Mrs Thomson had a bullet shot through her lung. Finally the soldiers went amok and destroyed everything on their way.²⁹ Their ravages of the Consulate were maybe also some kind of revenge for the English coldness towards the Muslim Republic.³⁰

Ma Chung-yen had great plans. His dream was to establish a Muslim empire. From Eastern Turkestan his reign would stretch over Iran and the Soviet Union to Europe. He wanted to become the Sultan of the new world empire.³¹ A.C. Wu says that he had a long talk with the general before he marched towards Kashgar. Wu was at this time employed by the Chinese administration and could follow the development in the Kashgar area, as he describes it himself, “not only as an eye witness, but as an actor in the revolt...”³² Wu says that Ma had no idea about conditions in Kashgar and what was awaiting him there.

There was no empire however. Instead the Tungans were driven away, during the summer, from the whole of the north part of the province and were forced to settle down south of the Jarkend River around the city of Khotan. Ma himself fled, escorted by 75 men, to the Soviet Union where he was disarmed. In Osh, not far from the Chinese border, the Swedish missionaries saw him when they were on their way home to Sweden in 1936.³³

The Chinese had now regained power everywhere apart from the Khotan area where the Tungans had retired. The victory was not won solely with troops of their own though. As has already been pointed out, Sheng commanded White Russians troops as well and also Manchurian ones. But his military resources were still not sufficient. That was why he had turned to the Soviet Union asking for help. The Russians had been positive about Sheng. Chiang Kai-shek writes that the White Russian coup, bringing Sheng to power, was inspired by the Russians.³⁴ They now gave him the help he needed. In January, 1934, both troops and military air force arrived.³⁵ According to Jan Myrdal, six whole regiments arrived.³⁶ And then the strange thing happened that White Russians and Communists were fighting on the same side.

²⁷ Wennerholm, 1978, p. 231.

²⁸ Davidson, 1951, p. 111 f.

²⁹ Wu, 1940, p. 250. Teichman, 1937, p. 21. Davidson, 1957, p. 112. Thomson Glover, 1937, p. 444.

³⁰ Wu, 1940, p. 250. The Russians however accused England of encouraging the forming of the Republic. This was sharply repudiated by English diplomats. (Teichman, 1937, p. 191 f., 152. JRCAS Vol XXIV, 1937, p. 453.) Very friendly relations were however entertained by the Tungans in Khotan, the “Tunganists”, and the British Consulate of Kashgar, says Peter Fleming after a visit to the country in 1935 (Lattimore, 1950, p. 213.)

³¹ Wennerholm, 1978, p. 231. Other rebel leaders had similar dreams. John Andersson says about Emir Abdulla. “The Khotan King”, who led the ravages of the rebels in Jarkend, that he had plans of establishing a new world empire, greater than both those of Great Moguls and of Djingis Khan. Even Europe would be part of this empire. (John Andersson in the *Svenska Morgonbladet*, December 3rd, 1934.)

³² Wu, 1950, p. 255, 1940, p. 239 ff., 1939, p. 675.

³³ Nyström, 1936, p. 20.

³⁴ Chiang Kai-shek, 1957, p. 99.

³⁵ Whiting, 1958, p. 26.

³⁶ Myrdal, 1977, p. 288.

Peace was now restored. But the price was high. The country had been turned into a desert.³⁷ Furthermore it is estimated that during the fighting of 1933/34 more than 200,000 Muslims had been killed, particularly by weapons coming from the Soviet Union.³⁸ Thereto must be added masses of Chinese.

The government of the Muslim Republic was dispersed. Some ministers had managed to escape; others had been arrested and executed.³⁹

2. The Mission in the Storm

For the Mission, the year 1932 ended in thankfulness and belief in the future. It seems as if the New Year started without the missionaries really understanding what was going on politically. Of course they heard rumours about riots and fighting, but “we had not bothered so much about that unrest”, says Ellen Söderberg. We were separated from the trouble spot by 40-50 days’ journey. And she goes on to say that in a country with no newspapers, there were lots of rumours afloat among the people who were not especially eager to tell the truth, but who rather had a very vivid imagination.⁴⁰

However, some years into the New Year, the situation seemed to become clearer. Sigrid Larsson in Hancheng writes in her diary on the 3rd of February that Roberntz had been there saying that Tungans from Kansu were on their way towards Aksu, a town situated some 400 kilometres from Kashgar. The missionaries ought to be ready to leave on very short notice. It would be wise to have the horses ready. The missionaries had also paid a visit to the British Consul General, Fitzmaurice to consult with him. Some days later, she writes, that the Chinese Consul in Hancheng had taken poison. In the town there was total panic.⁴¹ At the same time Törnquist writes to Jarkend about this new situation. He advises his colleagues to come to Kashgar immediately and from there go home to Sweden.⁴² This letter frightened the missionaries and therefore Roberntz decided to send them a few reassuring lines, “Törnquist really stroke you with terror, didn’t he? ... There is no imminent danger.”⁴³ And John Andersson writes more or less the same thing.

Mid-February the decision was taken about the departure of the missionaries. One week after the decision was taken, the missionaries left Kashgar. The group was made up of John Törnquist, Gerda Andersson, Judit Andersson with two small children, Elisabeth Höök, Sigrid Larsson and Mr and Mrs Hermanrud, the two doctors. Mrs Höök was nine months pregnant and the delivery kit was brought along.⁴⁴ Lisa Gahns and Ester Johansson from Jarkend should also have been in the group. On their way to Kashgar, their plans were however changed. After having spent a whole long shaky night going to Kashgar, each of them in her cart without springs, there was finally time for a break in the early morning. The two missionaries then ran towards each other, shouting at the same time, “Let’s go back! We cannot leave our children at the girls’ home!” Both have them had been seized with remorse during the night, and they now went back to Jarkend.⁴⁵ Swedish newspapers spoke about “the Mission having been blown up”.⁴⁶

³⁷ Ibid., p. 111.

³⁸ Vakar, 1935/36, p. 121.

³⁹ Hayit, 1971, p. 313. Several ministers were hung. Other leaders managed to reach safety abroad.

⁴⁰ Ellen Söderberg in the *Sunne Tidningen*, January 18th, 1934.

⁴¹ Sigrid Larsson’s diary, February 3rd, 8th, 1933.

⁴² Törnquist to the missionaries of Jarkend, February 7th, 1933.

⁴³ Roberntz to Nyström, February 15th, 1933. John Andersson to Nyström, February 13th, 1933.

⁴⁴ Palmaer, 1942, p. 226, 1938, p. 118. Interview with Elisabeth Höök, August 20th, 1979.

⁴⁵ Interview with Ester Johansson, February 27th, 1973.

⁴⁶ The *Stockholms Tidningen – Stockholms Dagblad*, March 23rd, 1933. The *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 23rd, 1933.

At the Muslim revolt in Kashgar, in May 1933, the missionaries took refuge at the British Consulate. They were forced to remain there for three months. Mission activities were at a standstill apart from medical care. Those alternating in power gave orders and the missionaries tried to give help at the hospital and out in the battle-field. The hospital and all other premises at the mission station were finally crammed with wounded and frightened people. "Finally they all became our friends" says John Andersson. "We could trust the wild Kyrgyz. The Tungans came to us with their problems, and the Chinese found in us the Samaritans of mercy."⁴⁷

Sometime in the summer the situation became better. The Christians who had been imprisoned during the spring were now released and the missionaries could go back to their work. The period from autumn of 1933 up to spring 1934 was a very changing and unstable time in Kashgar, but there were no new attacks on the Mission.⁴⁸ When the Tungan general Ma came to Kashgar in the spring he also visited the Mission. Hedin describes the visit in the following way, "The General was polite and courteous and spoke kindly to everybody."⁴⁹

In February 1933, the mission station of Hancheng was left without missionaries when John Törnquist and Sigrid Larsson went home to Sweden. On leaving, they asked the servant of the Mission, the young Christian Turk Abdullah, to stay on for as long as he could and look after the station.⁵⁰ One of the Tungan generals soon took the station as his Head quarters.⁵¹ Hedin says that in a couple of months Hancheng turned into "a regular hell, where the MCCS missionaries (from Kashgar) were fully occupied taking care of wounded and destitute people".⁵² Some of the Christians had time to take refuge at the British Consulate. Others were executed.⁵³ During all this, Abdullah managed to stay on and when Törnquist came back in 1935, he was still faithful on his post.⁵⁴

In Jarkend the rebels united with the Tungans from Khotan. Here too, the missionaries were very active at the hospital and at the fronts. In the course of one single day, some

⁴⁷ SMT, 1934, p. 119. Palmaer, 1942, p. 246.

⁴⁸ In the autumn of 1933, the situation had been so normalized that the missionaries had time to look to their own personal problems. Wedding and marriage were among them. It has already been describe above how Waldenström tried to obtain right of marriage for the missionaries, without success. In the year 1917, Raquette however obtained this right. (Sjöholm to Törnquist, January 25th, 1917. Eastern Turkestan Conference minutes, 1917). When Raquette left the mission field in 1921, Nyström was appointed legal officiator of marriages. At Nyström's departure in 1926, Palmberg took this office. During the 1930s, Nyström served again. When the Roberntz couple wished to have their marriage from 1929 legally confirmed, problems arose concerning the procedure of banns. This had to be handled by the Swedish Consul of Shanghai. (Nyström to Roberntz, January 5th and 19th, 1933.) The consulate's licence only lasted until a certain date and when finally the message reached Kashgar, this time was out. So they had to apply for a new licence, followed in due time by a new announcement by the Consulate. After some months the message arrived from the Consul. The announcement of their marriage had been published in the newspaper *North China Daily News* (!), but no objection was heard so there was nothing stopping the marriage. (The Swedish Consul in Shanghai to Nyström, October 2nd, 1933.) The long distances caused the missionaries a lot of trouble. When Roberntz became impatient because of necessary papers not arriving and the wedding not being able to take place as scheduled, Nyström comforts him saying that to start with he could count on the "wedding" of 1929. That was what he himself had been obliged to do, he writes. When he and his fiancée married in 1911 there was no legal person to officiate at the wedding in Kashgar. They had to promise each other fidelity in the circle of missionaries. Not until many years later the Nyström couple was finally married officially. Their children were then already grown up. Nyström also says that he managed to have the Kashgar marriage entered into the parish register in Sweden. (Nyström to Roberntz, January 5th, 19th, 1933.)

⁴⁹ Hedin, 1935, p. 330.

⁵⁰ The Törnquist report of 1935, p. 5.

⁵¹ Sigrid Larsson's diary, September 28th, 1933.

⁵² Hedin, 1935, p. 329.

⁵³ The *Ansgarius*, 1942, p.94 f.

⁵⁴ The Törnquist report of 1935, p. 5.

hundred wounded were bandaged, says Nyström.⁵⁵ One day the Muslim emir Sabit Da Mullah (also called Abdullah, and “King of Khotan”) gave the missionaries the order to leave the country without delay. After that all the medicines of the Mission were confiscated and the missionaries had to instruct the Emir’s personal physician how to use them.⁵⁶

Instead of driving away the missionaries, the Emir now had all the men missionaries put in prison. They had destroyed the religion of the people and therefore they must die. Nyström, Arell and Hermansson were tied each to a stake in the courtyard of the Emir. Facing them there were soldiers with lifted guns. At the last moment the Emir however changed his mind and let them know that their lives would be spared if they were out of the country within eight days.⁵⁷ But there was no trip home this time either. For the time being the missionaries stayed on in the Emir’s house and were later on interned in the Mission’s home for young girls, which was at the time empty. The Emir also took Arell’s spectacles. Ellen Söderberg writes, “...he has had some trouble seeing because of the lack of his spectacles.”⁵⁸

At the mission station there were now only a couple of women missionaries left. The yard was full of soldiers, speaking in a threatening way. “As a matter of fact, we ought to cut your head off, but we’ll be merciful and just send you back to your home country.” Another possibility was of course, said the soldiers that they stayed on, became Muslims and married them.⁵⁹

The same day that the men missionaries were arrested, all Christians were imprisoned. One young Christian, on a temporary visit, Habil, was immediately executed, in front of all the others. His fate was to be a warning to them all.⁶⁰ The Christians were then exposed to hard questioning. Everything they knew about the Mission was forced out of them. Most of them gave in, disowned their Christian faith and turned back to Islam.

As has already been described, the field evangelist Josef Khan was working in Jarkend during the spring of 1933. He too was arrested and maltreated. Because of his activity he was considered particularly dangerous and was sentenced to crucifixion. Awaiting the execution he was in prison. Some days later he was brought to the Swedish men missionaries, on the orders of the Emir. They were ordered to give a written statement and needed a person able to write. When Josef entered the room everybody rose to his feet – friends and enemies alike – in deepest respect. His feet were dragging heavy fetters, his face was swollen and badly hurt and his whole body was full of marks from the maltreatment.⁶¹ Naemi Terning who was in Jarkend during the persecution says that Josef was tied to a stake in prison. But his charisma was so strong that all the other prisoners cried, “Take him down, or else we will all become Christians.”⁶² In the final analysis, the Emir did not dare execute Josef who was a British subject. And after some time he was released.

In Jarkend the Mission also had orphanages, one for boys and one for girls. When the Christians were imprisoned, the children were first interned at the orphanage. After that the boys were put in a school. After some time, they themselves had to take over the teaching as

⁵⁵ Nyström to the Head quarters in Stockholm, April 13th, 1933. Concerning the evolution of the revolt in Jarkend, cf Arell et al. *Din broders blod ropar* (= The Blood of your Brother is Calling), Stockholm, 1935.

⁵⁶ The *Ansgarius*, 1937, p. 146 f.

⁵⁷ Arell, 1935, p. 75 ff. Thomson Glover, 1937, p. 440. Wu, 1940, p. 244. Thomson Glover, British Consul General in Kashgar 1933-36, points out that the reason why the Emir changed his decision so rapidly was the fact that some Indian merchants intervened. The missionaries themselves believe that it was after all the British Aksakal who intervened on their behalf. A.K. Wu is however of the opinion that it was the Emir’s elder brother, who was a more moderate person, who managed to bring his brother to reason. (Wu, 1940, p. 244.)

⁵⁸ Ellen Söderberg in the *Sunne Tidning*, February 24th, 1934.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Arell, 1935, p. 90.

⁶¹ Ahlbert, 1935, p. 54 ff.

⁶² The *Svensk Veckotidning*, 1975, p. 16.

they knew so much more than their fellow pupils. Text-books were a problem. One had to use what there was, and thus the Mission song book became a text-book in more than one Muslim school.⁶³ The girls were thrown into prison or were given away to the soldiers. The smaller children were put in schools or handed out to various local families.⁶⁴

Several times during these difficult spring months the missionaries turned to the British agent in Jarkend, the so called Aksal. He offered no help however.⁶⁵

During the summer, there was intense correspondence between the Jarkend missionaries and the Consul General Fitzmaurice in Kashgar. At the beginning of June, the missionaries give an account of the persecutions carried out during the spring against Christians also letting him know that the British agent had told them to leave the country. They also let the Consul know that they prefer staying on until the new government has established itself. Some days later the missionaries send a new letter to the Consul giving once again an account of the situation. They let him know that they are now interned. Towards the end of June, they receive the reply from the Consul, referring to a report by the Aksal. According to this report the missionaries were allowed to carry on medical work in Jarkend, but they were not allowed to open schools or have any religious activities. The Consul General goes on to say, "For the time being, you must realize how impossible it is for you to carry on your work among the Muslims or to reopen your children's homes." In two more letters towards the end of June the missionaries keep the Consul informed of what was happening. They cannot leave the field, they say, until they have the permission of the M CCS Board. And by the way, things have definitely calmed down, they say. They also mention that they have tried to get the girls back to the girls' home. Right away there is an irritated reply from the Consul. Isn't this religious activity, he asks. The wisest thing would be to hand the girls back to their parents. The Consul also points out that he cannot do anything the religious issue. "We have enough of our own trouble without having to meddle with religious disputes with the Muslims." The missionaries write in their reply that it was just in order to be able to hand back the girls to their families that they wanted to have them back in the first place. The Aksal had promised to do this, but instead he had given them away to the soldiers.⁶⁶

During the latter part of the summer, things calm down. No more Christians were killed, and those in prison were gradually released. Arell writes home to Sweden in October saying that the missionaries were now busy handing out clothes and money to the victims of the war. Medical care was also in full activity. "And then we have also secretly started a continuation school for some Christian young boys."⁶⁷

In Jengi-Hessar the revolt evolved more or less according to the same pattern as in the other towns. The Christians were dispersed or imprisoned. At the end of 1932, there were no more missionaries at the mission station. One of the Turks, medical orderly Khelil Akhun, took care of the station. Strangely enough he managed to stay alive and remain in liberty during the revolt. The rebels came there several times, but Khelil watched over the belongings of the Mission. Emir Abdullah who had the missionaries imprisoned in Jarkend also came there with his people. In spite of the threat of shooting Khelil if he did not yield the names of the Christians, Abdullah got no reply from him.⁶⁸ Abdullah died in the fighting there in the spring of 1934. His killers nailed his head first at the gate of the mission station and then in

⁶³ Interview with Arell, October 27th, 1973.

⁶⁴ Arell's report, 1935.

⁶⁵ Arell to the Board in the summer of 1933. The missionaries soon found out that the Aksal was in collusion with the Emir "in order to annihilate our Mission."

⁶⁶ The missionaries to the British Consul General, Kashgar, June 3rd, 6th, July 1st and 21st, 1933. The Consul General to the missionaries, June 10th, July 4th, 1933.

⁶⁷ Arell to the Board, October 16th, 1933.

⁶⁸ Törnquist's report, 1935, p. 5 f.

the marketplace.⁶⁹ Khelil helped the wounded and all by himself carried out important medical work among the suffering.⁷⁰ Some wounded soldiers were also transported to the hospital of Jarkend where Nyström gave them help.⁷¹

Consul General Thomson Glover says that when on his way to his post in Kashgar in October 1933, together with his wife, he stopped in Jengi-Hessar. The mission station was deserted, he reports sadly.⁷²

3. Interwar Years – Russian Years (1934 – 1936)

In the summer of 1934 the Tungans – the most militant ones – had had to withdraw into the Khotan area where they set up their own administration for some years. The rest of the country was ruled by the Chinese. The following years would now be filled up with issues concerning relationships to foreign powers, particularly the growing Russian influence.

The Russian influence was not new. Already during the last years of the rule of old Yang, this influence was important. When for example Chiang Kai-shek broke with the Russians in 1927, the Russian newspapers wrote about the cordial relationship still prevailing between Russia and Sinkiang.⁷³

The Russian economic and commercial grip became stronger during Chin's year in power. After Chin's fall in 1933, their economic predominance grew even more. Chiank Kai-shek says that in those days the province was economically exploited by the Russians. The commercial company Soviet-Sinkiang Trading Company had for example given Governor General Sheng Shih-tsai a loan of 5 million golden Roubles in exchange of ever more generous commercial rights.⁷⁴ And M.R. Norins writes that the country was totally in the hands of the Russians.⁷⁵ In 1935, Peter Fleming noticed the overflow of Russian goods in the bazaars. He also remarks that even British goods came to the country via Moscow and Tashkent.⁷⁶

In the mid-thirties, the Russian influence was also increasing rapidly in the cultural and administrative fields. A Communist new order was established within these areas. Social life was organized according to certain annual plans. At big popular meetings, speeches were held underscoring “a front against old priest rule, corruption, capitalism and imperialism in favour of the reconstruction of Eastern Turkestan and progress, unity among the different populations in the country and friendship and unity with the Soviet Union”.⁷⁷ Instructors and advisors of all sorts came from the Soviet Union. In towns and villages schools were opened and all pupils got their uniforms from the State. Teachers and doctors came from the Soviet Union. Clinics and hospitals were built and medical care was free. The many beggars of the country were assembled “with violence into big poor-houses.”⁷⁸ In the schools the languages used for teaching, apart from the local ones, included Russian too.⁷⁹ In the towns, squares were getting bigger and streets broader. Heavy Russian lorries were seen everywhere. There were taxis around, just like regular bus lines.⁸⁰ Sign posts and street signs were written in both Chinese

⁶⁹ Palmaer, 1942, p. 236.

⁷⁰ Törnquist's report, 1935, p. 6.

⁷¹ Nyström's account: *Oroligheterna i Östturkestan* (=Unrest in Eastern Turkestan), p. 19, p. 23.

⁷² Thomson Glover, 1937, p. 440.

⁷³ Lattimore, 1950, p. 63.

⁷⁴ Chiank Kai-shek, 1957, p. 99.

⁷⁵ Norins, 1944, p. 69.

⁷⁶ Fleming, 1936, p. 257.

⁷⁷ Palmaer, 1942, p. 84.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁷⁹ Platt, 1966, p. 234 f.

⁸⁰ Teichman, 1937, p. 91, 119, 133, 142.

and Russian. This was also valid for shop signboards.⁸¹ For money borrowed from the Soviet Union, roads were built for the increasing traffic. In 1933 there were only 20 trucks in the country, but five years later the number had reached 400. During the same period several hundreds of kilometres of telephone cable were built.⁸² At the street corners groups of people gathered listening to music, lectures or instructions from the loudspeakers. Telephones and electric light became more and more common in the houses and in their homes people listened to radio programs in various languages.⁸³

From the middle of the 1930s Russians held all important posts. The country's administration was run by the Russians.⁸⁴ The military administration was also governed by Russian agents. In Urumchi the Russians had opened a Military Academy with among other things a school of aviation.⁸⁵

The youth of the country was put into schools. The number of students rose from 3,000 in 1933 to 250,000 in 1936.⁸⁶ Primary and secondary school became compulsory and many were encouraged to study abroad, especially in the Soviet Union.⁸⁷ There some hundreds of students were doing higher studies in order to become for example physicians, veterinaries, engineers and agronomists.⁸⁸ Tens of thousands of young men from the province were also studying in the Soviet Union to get a general, lower education.⁸⁹ They returned back home again after about a year as dedicated communists.⁹⁰

Among the soldiers there was an intense "sovietifying" going on. Peter Fleming speaks about the troops often marching to communist songs that could also be heard in the streets of Tashkent or Samarkand.⁹¹ The lyrics too came from the Soviet Union. A word so frequent as "Soviet" was not even translated but was transcribed directly from Russian into Chinese.⁹²

Westerners travelling in the country all noticed the Russian influence. Journalists, scientists, Consuls, officials and missionaries write about this development. The Swiss reporter Ella Maillart exclaims, "Heaven knows where Eastern Turkestan is heading!"⁹³

The Russian political grip hardened during the 1930s. In order to influence the political development the Soviet Union sent a commission to Urumchi meant to lead the reconstruction after the chaos caused by the Muslim revolt. The Commission was lead on the highest level by Stalin's brother-in-law, Svanidze.⁹⁴ The establishing of Russian consulates in Eastern Turkestan also tied the province closer to the Soviet Union. The Russians looked upon these consulates as representing them not in China but in Eastern Turkestan.⁹⁵

The Tungans were the ethnic group that resisted the Russian pressure longest. But in the end without success. A Tungan deputation visited Moscow in 1935. After a couple of months it came back to Kashgar, everybody a dedicated Communist. They also brought with them a

⁸¹ Marthinson, 1972, p. 178 f.

⁸² Lattimore, 1950, p. 75.

⁸³ Platt, 1966, p. 234 f.

⁸⁴ Teichman, 1937, p. 151.

⁸⁵ Fleming, 1936, p. 476. (Common edition 1948). Davidson, 1957, p. 114 f.

⁸⁶ Lattimore, 1950, p. 73.

⁸⁷ *The Muslim World*, vol. XXV, 1935, p. 190. Some go the Soviet Union on business, others for studies, writes Rachel Wingate, and they all marvel at the modern society they see and many are influenced by the Communist propaganda. When an Eastern Turk comes home again after some months, he feels like a man of the world, and feels obliged to leave his old faith. He then spreads his atheism among his friends. (Wingate, 1929, p. 326 f.)

⁸⁸ Lattimore, 1950, p. 73

⁸⁹ *The Muslim World*, 1935, p. 186.

⁹⁰ Fleming, 1936, p. 476. (Common edition 1948).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

⁹² Snow, 1977, p. 382.

⁹³ Maillart, 1940, p. 215, p. 219.

⁹⁴ Whiting, 1958, p. 27.

⁹⁵ Wu, 1950, p. 252.

document regulating some important issues concerning the two countries. Among other things stipulated it said that experts and advisors from the Soviet Union were to be invited to Eastern Turkestan. If the province were attacked from outside, the Soviet Union would assist politically, economically and with armed forces. If the province were to break free from China, the Soviet Union would give assistance.⁹⁶ The Soviet grip on the Tungans was however not equally strong all over the province. When the Khotan Tungans rose in 1937, marching northward, some people saw in that the end of the Russian era in Eastern Turkestan.⁹⁷ That was however not the case.

Militarily too, the Soviet Union governed the province from the beginning of the 1930s. Jan Myrdal writes in a summary way, “In 1933 Sheng Shih-tsai came to power... On Sheng Shih-tsai’s invitation, the Soviet Union then sent six regiments... in order to guarantee Sheng Shih-tsai’s position against the war-lord Ma Shung-yin. In 1936 he invited yet another regiment... In 1937 yet another one...”⁹⁸

In 1935 a Turkish magazine published in Nanking wrote about the Russians’ “Annexation of Chinese Turkestan”. Everywhere one meets Russian troops, says the reporter, and the governor was totally in the hands of the Russians. It was just a question of time before Turkestan was proclaimed a free state under Soviet protectorate.⁹⁹

Formally the province was never annexed however. The Russians refrained from annexation among other things, according to Edgar Snow, for the reason that an occupation would have been a pretext for the nearing between China and Japan.¹⁰⁰ And Sven Hedin writes that it would cost the Russians too much to take over the whole country militarily and administratively.¹⁰¹ The political and military attitude of the Soviet Union towards the province was made clear by the Russian Consul in Kashgar, when missionary Moen visited him, during an exploring trip to the old mission field in 1946. Russia had no political aspirations on Eastern Turkestan, said the Consul. Supposing that Russia wanted to annex the province was an absurd statement. “Don’t you think Mr Moen, that if we had such plans, we would have taken the country long ago? That would be the easiest thing in the world for a nation like Russia.” A friendly attitude towards Russia from its neighbour would not be to ask too much, the Consul continued.¹⁰² The Russian Consul’s assurance of the possibilities of the Soviet Union does not appear to be a boastful one. If the Soviet Union had tried to conquer Eastern Turkestan in the 1930s, China would not have had much to say. The problem of the divided China at that time was Japan, as we have already mentioned, and the Russians would certainly have had free hands to operate militarily in Western China if they had wished to do so.

Many people however reacted against the fact that a whole population was “raped” in this way. It is of course difficult to say how big the opposition was. But this is what one could hear in 1935, “Old Sinkiang does not exist any longer. The old, friendly Chinese mandarins who lived there are now dead or expelled; the squares are deserted; the nomads have fled or

⁹⁶ The Muslim World, 1936, p. 414.

⁹⁷ Lattimore, 1950, p. 213.

⁹⁸ Myrdal, 1977, p. 288.

⁹⁹ Vakar, 1935, p. 118.

¹⁰⁰ Snow, 1941, p. 330. Tryggve Lötveit points out that from a policy of power point of view, it was totally possible for the Soviet Union to annex Sinkiang in the 1930s. One reason why this was not done could be that one did not want to give the anti-Russian forces in China to great propaganda advantages. (Lötveit, 1961/62, p. 17.)

¹⁰¹ Hedin, 1935, p. 333.

¹⁰² Report from and exploring trip in 1946. The Consul’s reply acquires even more weight when one considers that in 1943/44, Eastern Turkish Kazaks revolted against China’s supremacy. They then got support from Moscow. This led up to the forming in the autumn of 1944 of “The Eastern Turkestan Republic” in northern Sinkiang. The temporary nation had its own flag and currency. (Mehnert, 1962, p. 163.)

live on as rebels. The well-equipped bazaars, the cheap food, the well fed happy-go-lucky Turks and the general pleasant, trouble-free existence have all gone. And in exchange we are given the joys and advantages of Communism with state regulated trade, implying a total denial of all liberty.”¹⁰³ Thomson Glover calls Sinkiang the “new-new province”.

The reasons for this new situation were many. Governor General Sheng Shih-tsai himself was maybe the main reason. He was a communist and in him the Russians had a good ally. One of the items in his political program was “Eternal friendship with the Soviet Union”.¹⁰⁴ Another important reason was the geographical border between the two countries. It was long. Klaus Mehnert calls it “the longest border in the world”.¹⁰⁵ Out of the 12,000 kilometres of the border, 2,000 kilometres were the border to Eastern Turkestan. Jan Myrdal points out that there was actually no border among the rugged mountains.¹⁰⁶ It was therefore easy for Russian agents to get into the country illegally. Add to this the geographical situation of the country which facilitated the Russian infiltration. To reach the capital of China from Kashgar there was a distance of 3,000 - 4,000 kilometres to cover. And in the 1930s there were neither railways nor air service, hardly even main roads. Strangely enough, at that time, the Nanking government got its information about its most western province via London or Moscow.¹⁰⁷ In the 1930s Sven Hedin was assigned by the Central government to stake out two motor roads between China proper and Sinkiang.¹⁰⁸ The isolation of this province from its mother country gave the Russians boundless possibilities. In the 1930s these possibilities were even more increased after the extending of the Turk-Siberian railroad to Alma Ata and other places. The railroad came to “sweep” along the border of Sinkiang.¹⁰⁹ In less than 14 days one could now get from Moscow to Kashgar and there, “at the door of Sinkiang” offer goods and ideologies.¹¹⁰

But Sinkiang did not only have a value in itself for the Russians. The province was also an important country of transit to China proper. In the 1930s the Soviet Union sent huge quantities of war material to China via Sinkiang. It was essential for the Soviet Union to meet the threat from Japan at all costs, and that was best done by strengthening China. China at that time was divided between Chiang Kai-shek’s party, the Kuomintang, and the Communists. The Soviet Union gave help to both sides. Most of the help went to Kuomintang. Stalin did not hesitate to cooperate with Chiang even he considered him “a fascist wretch”.¹¹¹ Stalin remained hesitant towards Mao to the very last.¹¹²

¹⁰³ Anonymous writer in JRCAS, 1935, p. 105. – Thomson Glover, 1937, p. 452.

¹⁰⁴ Hayit, 1971, p. 314.

¹⁰⁵ Mehnert, 1962, p. 138. Vasel, 1935, p. 88.

¹⁰⁶ Myrdal, 1977, p. 40 ff, p. 61 f. Lötveit, 19667, p. 3 ff, 15 ff. The border between Sinkiang and Afghanistan was also unclear. (Latourette, 1964, p. 29) People from the Soviet Union could easily cross the border illegally to Sinkiang, which was also the case from the Russian Revolution and onwards throughout the 1930s. Georg Roberntz has an interesting theory about refugees from the Soviet Union. They literally streamed into the country, he says, and one cannot but feel that this was done with the consent of the Soviet authorities. They were to play an important role at the coming revolution in Sinkiang. (Roberntz, 1945, p. 251 f.)

¹⁰⁷ The Muslim World, vol. XXV, 1935, p. 186.

¹⁰⁸ Hedin, 1935, p. 5 ff. Hedin has described this research in his trilogy: *Stora hästens flykt*, *Sidenvägen* and *Den vandrande sjön* (=The Flight of the Big Horse, The Silk Road and the Wandering Lake). Jan Myrdal says there are now railways being built in Sinkiang. From Urumchi there is a railway track towards Korla. This track will be finished in 1985 and ready to be taken into use. (Myrdal, 1977, p. 147.) Already in the 1950s the railway from Central China was extended to Urumchi and further north towards the Russian border. (China in Maps, 1968.)

¹⁰⁹ Snow, 1941, p. 326.

¹¹⁰ Norins, 1944, p. 69.

¹¹¹ Snow, 1941, p. 329.

¹¹² Snow, 1941, p. 329. Mehnert, 1964, p. 132. Latourette, 1964, p. 30. T.G. Wikbom points out that Moscow supported Nationalist China to the very last. When Chiang Kai-shek fled to Formosa in 1949, the Soviet Russian ambassador accompanied him there. (Wikbom, 1963, p. 11.)

So the Russians feared Japan. And Japan had important interests in Central Asia, says Lattimore. “The Japanese shadow” also fell over Eastern Turkestan. Already after World War I Japan had sent observers to the province. A military alliance with Eastern Turkestan via Manchuria and Inner Mongolia could very well be of interest. The fact that this alliance did not materialize was due to the failure of the campaign of Ma in 1933/34, says Lattimore. Ma had Japanese agents in his head quarters. After Ma’s escape from the country in 1934, the Japanese stayed on and worked in the silent. As late as 1937, when the Muslims rose again, they were accused of being involved in the final phase of the civil war.¹¹³ If Japan was behind the Muslim upheaval then the Soviet Union had a motive for its massive intervention in the province.¹¹⁴ McLean, British Consul in Urumchi in the 1940s is of the opinion that the enormous efforts deployed by the Soviet Union in various areas in Sinkiang were completely ruled by fear of Japan.¹¹⁵

4. Reconstruction of the Mission

Faced with the new situation for the congregations in Eastern Turkestan, the missionaries were not at a loss. In the winter of 1934/35, a reconstruction of the work was initiated. Already in the autumn the missionaries came together in Jarkend in order to examine the situation thoroughly. They could report from the different mission stations that the revolt had been devastating for the congregations. At the same time, and happily enough, surprisingly many of the former opponents of the Mission now showed their support openly. The Conference decided to dissolve the congregations and that those who wanted to be a member of the new congregations would have to ask especially for that. A personal declaration professing Jesus Christ as Saviour was asked of the new members. Moreover the Christians had to abstain from certain religious Muslim acts like *namaz*, the Muslim prayer.¹¹⁶

Carl Persson writes about how he returned to Eastern Turkestan full of forebodings. Would all the Christians keep away for ever? How great was not his joy when it turned out that quite a few came back to the mission stations. They confessed openly having deserted and said that in the future they wanted to be members of the congregation.¹¹⁷

Not until Easter Day, 1935, could the congregation of Kashgar come together for reconstruction and a Holy Communion service. The crowd of those celebrating the Holy Communion was surprisingly large, and they had all expressed their wish to be a member of the congregation. Apart from the members of the congregation there were a few other people wanting to take part, says Roberntz. The commander-in-chief of the Chinese army in Kashgar, General Liu also wanted to take part. And so did the British Vice Consul. A Roman Catholic, working at the customs office in Kashgar also came and wanted to take part. And finally there was an Orthodox couple also taking part. They had fled from the Soviet Union and lived at the mission station for some years.¹¹⁸

So everybody had not deserted. After coming back to the mission field in 1935, Törnquist reported home about a highly admirable faithfulness among some of the Christians. Among others, he mentions the case of Khelil in Jengi-Hessar. As has already been mentioned above

¹¹³ Lattimore, 1950, p. 209 f., p. 72.

¹¹⁴ Norins, 1944, p. 70.

¹¹⁵ McLean, 1948, p. 132. *China Handbuch*, Düsseldorf, 1974, states categorically that England supported the Republic.

¹¹⁶ Eastern Turkestan Conference minutes, November 28th, 1934.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Carl Persson, September 23rd, 1972.

¹¹⁸ Lundahl, 1945, p. 249 ff.

Khelil was left all alone at the mission station during the revolt of 1933/34. When Törnquist came back in the autumn of 1935, Khelil was still there, faithful on his post. Törnquist writes,

“After my travelling in deserted land, upon arriving at Jengi-Hessar, I felt like having come straight to paradise. There was no missionary at the station, but that was hardly noticed under the care of Khelil... I rested there for one day, walking around like in a dream in the well-kept garden. In all the wretchedness, when I had nearly lost my faith in people, these three men (Törnquist also mentions two other men) stand out as beams of hope in total darkness...”¹¹⁹

Ella Svedberg came to the mission field as late as 1935. She was surprised by the young Christians she met there. They had gone through hard times. Some of them were not more than teenagers, but they had already been in prison, suffering for their faith. They had been offered important posts and other advantages if they left their Christian faith. Nonetheless, they had come back and continued their work with the Mission.¹²⁰

The new situation in which the Mission found itself asked for a great amount of flexibility. This was valid for instance where the children's homes were concerned. The work among children and young people was one of the most important tasks of the Mission, but for the moment it had to wait. When the worst unrest had calmed down the missionaries could however visit their former wards in town. Some of them were living in great misery and were totally broken down. One of the girls found by the missionaries was Hava, Habil's sister. She was now married to a man belonging to the new regime, a School Inspector, and she herself worked in a Chinese school. The missionaries recognized much of the material used in the school as that of the Mission.¹²¹

At the Missionary Conference of November 1934, the matter was taken up anew how to act in the case of the children that had been snatched away. The Conference decided to let the matter rest there. Time was not yet ripe, they said, for any new measures. If on the other hand some children came back to the Mission, it was the task of the persons responsible of the children's homes to decide what measures were appropriate.¹²² And as a matter of fact some children did give signs of life. The boys had been taken care of by different Mullahs who were now teaching them the Muslim order of service. Several times, the younger boys sent a message to the children's home that they wanted to come back. The missionaries however did not dare to act.¹²³

Some of the girls came back. That was the case of Tura Khan for example. She came fleeing to the children's home one day, and no one came asking for her. Several girls came by themselves, and others were left at the children's' home by their parents. They stayed on there until 1936 when the unrest in the country increased again, and they were taken away.¹²⁴ Another girl who came back was Tor-Nisa. Already in the summer of 1933 she had sent a message. In a letter to Lisa Gahns she told about the other girls having been given as wives to the Muslims. “I look upon the Muslims as garbage”, she adds.¹²⁵ Naemi Terning says about Tor-Nisa, that when she came back to the mission station, she often accompanied her on sick-calls and at deliveries. She took careful notes of what she observed. After some time she was capable of taking care of some normal cases all alone. When Mrs Terning returned back to

¹¹⁹ Törnquist's report, 1935.

¹²⁰ Palmaer, 1942, p. 244. Wingate, 1951, p. 18.

¹²¹ Palmaer, 1942, p. 195.

¹²² Eastern Turkestan Conference minutes, 1934

¹²³ Lundahl-Walder, 1938, p. 132.

¹²⁴ *Friska Vindar*, 1939, p. 10 f.

¹²⁵ N.N. to Lisa Gahns, May 16th, July 23rd, 1933.

Sweden in 1934 and when Frida Lundell died unexpectedly the same year, Tor-Nisa had to step in as midwife in Jarkend.¹²⁶

During the winter of 1933/34 the normalization of the situation for the Mission continued. It was surprising to see how many Muslims who had earlier - apparently - been against the Mission, now stepped forward wanting to support the work. In December 1934, John Andersson points out the Mission had won an enormous lot during the recent hard times. Never before had it happened that a missionary was greeted with "Peace to you" by true believers in Islam, but now that greeting was heard in the streets of Kashgar and Jarkend.¹²⁷ Nyström reports from Jarkend that some persons had come to believe in Jesus Christ. On the very day of the reconstruction, Good Friday, 1935, the missionaries could hold a baptismal service. The hospital was full. Nyström also mentions that he has been to Kashgar for some time where he had carried out 25 cataract operations. The Russian doctor had worked together with him.¹²⁸ Also in Jengi-Hessar, the smallest one of the mission stations, things were quite hopeful. The station had no missionaries, but the work was led from Kashgar. The Christians were few, but close friends of the Mission came to the moments of worship that could gather 15-20 people.¹²⁹

The missionaries began to hope that the revolt of 1933/34 was a temporary event, and the progress from the beginning of the 1930s would now continue. In a survey from 1935 it says that "in this unstable corner of China, the work has now been taken up again, with an attendance sometimes even larger than before".¹³⁰ Things continued to stabilize and at the beginning of 1936, the missionaries could report back home that in certain areas the work was going on just like it had done before. The missionaries themselves enjoyed great confidence among the people.¹³¹ People came to the hospitals in great multitudes and at the morning prayers, some 40 patients took part every day.¹³²

The problems were however numerous. Strains from the years of unrest had marked the missionaries. An incident from the life of Lisa Gahns can illustrate that fact. She was a strong person. On her way to Kashgar and freedom, going home to Sweden, she and Ester Johansson had returned back to their tasks at the girls' home in Jarkend, as has already been described above. There the two missionaries had a hard time. Finally the children were taken away. Lisa Gahns then had a mental breakdown. She had to lie in bed and there she lived through "complete darkness". Ester Johansson relates how she was once sitting at her bedside trying to comfort her. Then Lisa Gahns rapidly rose from her bed giving Ester Johansson a stinging box on the ears, crying out, "Don't you see that God does not care about us! What's the use expecting something from him?"¹³³

Sickness and death were trials for the missionaries. In 1934, Frida Lundell died from typhoid fever. Two years later Lisa Gahns died. She was then back in Sweden after having entered matrimony with Carl Persson only a couple of months earlier. In the field, several missionaries contracted severe illnesses. Ivar Höök for instance lay unconscious with typhoid fever for 10 days.

¹²⁶ The Svensk Veckotidning, June 5th, 1942. Palmaer, 1942, p. 166 ff. Interview with Naemi Terning, July 24th, 1973, October 26th, 1977. Since the end of the 1960s this lady has entertained regular correspondence with Mrs Terning and other missionaries.

¹²⁷ John Andersson in the *Svenska Morgonbladet*, December 3rd, 1934.

¹²⁸ Nyström to Grönkvist, January 27th, 1935, to Palmaer, March 31st, 1935. Nyström in "*Ljusglimtar från Östturkestan*" (=Glimpses from Eastern Turkestan), April 25th, 1935. (Typewritten, Borås.) Nyström in "*Vardagsliv i Jarkend*" (=Everyday Life in Jarkend), July, 1935. (Typewritten, Borås.)

¹²⁹ Nyström, *Ljusglimtar*... see above!

¹³⁰ SMT, 1935, p. 59.

¹³¹ Ibid. 1936, p. 54.

¹³² Nyström to Palmaer, June 2nd, 1936.

¹³³ Interview with Ester Johansson, February 27th, 1973.

A personal problem for the missionaries was their salaries. During the 1920s and the 1930s there was chaos within the national monetary system. The price of daily goods was doubled many times over during the same period. This was especially true for imported goods with expensive freight costs. But the missionary salaries remained more or less the same as they had been at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1906 a male missionary earned 1,440 SEK a year and a female missionary had 1,260 SEK, and in the 1930s, the respective salaries were 1,550 SEK and 1,350 SEK. Finally the missionaries had to point out to the Board their personal economic problems. “We venture to ask for a raise of 30 %” said the missionaries.¹³⁴ What an encouragement it had been if this initiative had come from Stockholm instead!

Another heavy burden for the missionaries was the fact that especially during the 1930s there were mission leaders and mission friends in Sweden who did not believe in the mission in Eastern Turkestan. John Andersson indignantly quotes how MCCA people talked disdainfully about the “tiny little set of Christians”. Someone had written, “I looked at the feeble results of the Eastern Turkestan Mission ... and I thought it was quite a sad story.”¹³⁵ Sigfrid Moen came across the same kind of depressing ideas in the mid thirties in the person of Mission Secretary Palmaer, “I regret I didn’t send you to the Congo instead”.¹³⁶ Many people did not believe in the Eastern Turkestan Mission. The evident conditions for Christian mission were not prevailing there according to some people. In their opinion, says Moen, the target for mission work ought to 1. be black, 2. live naked, 3. worship idols. And nothing of all that was valid for the Muslims of Eastern Turkestan. A representative of the MCCA leadership said to Moen, “You are living among civilized people who are not worshipping idols, so why are you there?” Moen replied, “They do not believe in Jesus Christ, that’s why we are there.”¹³⁷

Literature work and printing were activities that fulfilled their aim also during the troubled thirties. In 1935 a new and extended edition of the Mission Hymnal was printed. It had 255 songs. It is more than strange that the Mission had the courage, at that time, to engage in such bold undertakings. Among the missionaries, it was Hermansson and Roberntz who had written most of the songs, translations or original versions. Roberntz says about Hermansson that over the years he had acquired considerable language skills and had a rare gift of “catching the beauty of the language, the sublime and sincere.”¹³⁸ There were also some Christian Asians among the composers.¹³⁹

During the 1930s many books were published in translation. Among Hermansson’s works were *The Great Name of Christ*, a translation from Arabic. *Sadu Sundar Sing*, *The Dream of the King*, an English tract and *A Rosary of the works of Franciscus*. Ahlbert translated from English *Prophecies about Christ in the Old Testament*. As late as 1936 Hermansson translated Lewis Wallace’s *Ben Hur*.¹⁴⁰ During the latter part of the 1930s a new translation of the New Testament was also completed. (See more about that below.)

The Mission printing office also produced publications of different kinds for the authorities. Among other things, the Mission was ordered to print bank notes. Roberntz writes,

“When the revolution came with its many changes of regimes – Kashgar changed “owners” seven times – we started printing bank notes for the authorities. And in this period of change, the note printing was the

¹³⁴ Eastern Turkestan Conference minutes, 1936, §25. Often the MCCA mission finances did not allow any raise of salaries, and less they could consider new employees.

¹³⁵ Lundahl, 1946, p. 214.

¹³⁶ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Palmaer, 1942, p. 203.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 202 f.

¹⁴⁰ Hermansson to Palmaer, April 6th, 1936.

only stable point because money was always needed both by the Chinese, the Tungans, the Turks and the Kyrgyz. So the Mission had the dubious pleasure of contributing to the weakening of the currency. Night and day the printing presses were at work. We printed until we ran out of paper...”¹⁴¹

Carl Persson who was in charge of the printing office during these last years also speaks about the printing of bank notes. To begin with, appropriate bank note paper was used, but when they ran out of this kind of paper they printed on ordinary newsprint. And when they ran out of that kind of paper, they used “white domestic”.¹⁴² The printing office was exploited by all the different regimes. For several years during the revolution a couple of national newspapers were printed there, in the local languages. The Turk in charge of the printing office was not always very scrupulous about the contents of these newspapers. In 1935, Arell writes home about this newspaper printing as being “a shame for our Mission.”¹⁴³ The circulation counted only 300 copies and the papers came out with two issues a week. By the way, one of these revolutionary papers was called “The New Life”.¹⁴⁴ In this forced situation the missionaries however tried to see the positive side of all this; people were trained in reading newspapers which could also have good effects for the Mission. The missionaries saw to it that some important world news was also printed. It was easy to get hold of the Reuter telegrams at the British Consulate. If people became interested in newspapers maybe the Mission could later on publish its own paper and get it spread and read. This mission newspaper project could never be carried out though.¹⁴⁵ This was bitterly regretted by the missionaries for this hope had been nourished ever since 1912 when the printing press arrived in the mission field.¹⁴⁶

5. One Missionary’s Fate – Among others...

In the year 1935, a group of missionaries went home to Sweden via the Soviet Union. The group consisted of the Roberntz family with two small children and three women missionaries, among them the ailing Lovisa Engvall. Georg Roberntz was the leader of the group. He remarks dryly that on top of the ordinary travelling troubles he also suffered from a “a football knee”.¹⁴⁷

As has been described above, Lovisa Engvall had broken with the Mission already in 1913. As a private nurse she had lived alone in the northern part of the province up to 1924, when she turned up in Jarkend and worked there within medical care for some time, until she disappeared into her solitude, back in the town of Kutja.

Towards the end of 1927, the English Colonel Schomberg visited Kutja where he met Lovisa Engvall. Kutja was a dreary place, he says. He also says that Lovisa Engvall was highly appreciated for her medical skill. She did not mention that she was a missionary, or that she had anything to do with the Swedish Mission in Kashgar. Schomberg also speaks about the biting cold and that Engvall had been spent by the hard climate. About a year later Schomberg visited Kutja again. He once again met “the Swedish doctor”, whom he praises. In the winter of 1930 he is back again in Kutja. Miss Engvall was as usual extremely kind and hospitable. She felt very lonely though, and was planning to go home to Sweden.¹⁴⁸ She was probably divorced from her Muslim husband by then, as he is not at all mentioned. In the autumn of 1928, she was searched out by the British Vice Consul George Sherriff. She was

¹⁴¹ Palmaer, 1942, p. 203 f.

¹⁴² Interview with Carl Persson, September 23rd, 1972.

¹⁴³ Arell’s report, 1935.

¹⁴⁴ Palmaer, 1942, p. 205.

¹⁴⁵ Jarring, 1970. Interview with Carl Persson, September 23rd, 1972.

¹⁴⁶ Lundahl, 1916, p. 142.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1972.

¹⁴⁸ Schomberg, 1933, p. 48 f., 225.

suspected of conducting anti-British activities. After having met with her, he writes that she had no idea of politics, but he adds that she was “an impossible woman”.¹⁴⁹

Nils Ambolt also came across Lovisa Engvall in Kutja where he found himself in the spring of 1931. He talks about “old Miss Engvall” who offered him coffee and ginger snaps. After a couple of days, Ambolt had to continue his travels, and he writes,

“Miss Engvall had saddled her stately black horse and accompanied me on horseback for some five kilometres. When I parted from her – it was Easter – I had in one pocket a small jar of jam and in the other one a bag of beautifully painted eggs. She did not return home empty handed either. She was given a small flag, a pencil of high quality and a box of Swedish matches. And these gifts were not at all to be considered as having been exchanged just for fun. We separated mutually moved and highly pleased with our respective gifts. She was a fine representative of our country. All alone she lives a life of hardship helping the sick in the region. After that I was to meet several other members of the Swedish Mission, and I was to find in them too characters worthy of admiration, and persons worthy of love.”¹⁵⁰

In 1932 she broke her long silence. In a long letter to the missionaries in Kashgar she is pleading for missionaries to Kutja.¹⁵¹ And then there was silence again. The same year Carl Persson and Otto Torvik meet her in Kutja. She was then 67 years old. She was living in an ordinary Turkish house with earth floor and walls of mud. Her hair was all white. She wanted to hear everything about the Mission. She told them that for many years she had prayed to God for a missionary to Kutja. She had also bought a site in the centre of the town where a mission station could be built. During the last years she had turned to many Mission Societies asking for help, but all had been in vain. When she now heard about Torvik being here examining the possibilities for Norwegian mission work, she saw that as an answer to her prayers. During the ensuing moment of prayer she already thanked God for having answered her prayers.

Through the agency of Engvall the missionaries could stay in a new house, owned by a Muslim. When they were having an evening prayer, singing some hymns, the host was scared to death. He came rushing to Engvall reproaching her of having led these maniacs to his house. They were sitting in a circle on the floor, crying at the top of their voices, said the man.

Before the missionaries left, she beseeched Torvik to come back to Kutja and start mission work there. She herself felt so old and tired. Her gout troubled her and she also complained of severe pains in the back. In order to calm the pain she had put a scarf around her, tying it as hard as possible with her bony fingers. She was afraid of dying all alone here. Then the Muslim leaders would whip her dead body and say Muslim prayers over it. They would thereby convert her to Islam and the Mullahs would spread rumours about the Swedish missionary having died as a Muslim. That would ruin all her life-work. A couple of young men had shown interest in Christianity and she had sent them to Kashgar where they had been baptized. In Kutja there were no Christians.¹⁵²

Not even the revolt of 1933/34 could drive her away from Kutja. On several occasions her life was threatened. With her resolute manner she however averted the incidents. Ella Maillart, travelling through the country in the 1930s met with Engvall in Kutja. She relates who the Tungan soldiers wanted to buy medicine for worthless paper money. Indignantly Engvall then showed them the papered walls, crying “I already have paper, better than yours. I want money that I can use for buying food.”¹⁵³ The soldiers also tried to steal her horse, but on several occasions they had to slink away, crestfallen, after having been dealt a good blow

¹⁴⁹ Sherriff's diary, October 24th, 1928.

¹⁵⁰ Ambolt, 1935, p. 95 ff.

¹⁵¹ *The Missionsförbundet*, 1932, p. 119.

¹⁵² Torvik 1946, p. 75 ff.

¹⁵³ Maillart, 1940, p. 254.

between the eyes by the Swedish lady.¹⁵⁴ The British Consul General at the time, Thomson Glover, writes about Engvall's difficult situation, adding that she was "a brave old Swedish lady... who taught the population obstetrics".¹⁵⁵

In 1935 she abandoned her isolation and went to see the missionaries in Kashgar. She was by then nearly 70 and had lived for 22 years totally alone among Muslims. In Kashgar she immediately started working within medical care. On one occasion she was all alone with a complicated case of delivery with Caesarean section. She then sent for the Russian doctor, Dr Ossipoff, "and he arrived presently and started working with Lovisa like an old friend", says Törnquist, who had just come back from Sweden.¹⁵⁶ Later the same year she joined the missionaries who were going home to Sweden. Just before their departure from Kashgar the China Inland missionary Hunter from Urumchi came to Kashgar and bought the land Lovisa owned in Kutja in order to start mission work there.¹⁵⁷ All plans for mission work were however thwarted by the ongoing revolution.

When Engvall started her journey home all her forces were gone. She had great difficulties during the trip across the high mountains. Doctors had to be called in at the halting places to give her injections. When the long railway trip via the Soviet Union started she gave up. She died in the train and was buried in Moscow. The Roberntz found grains of gold stitched into her clothes. That was probably her way of paying for her last journey.¹⁵⁸

6. Guarded Optimism – in Spite of Everything

The Eastern Turkestan Conference appealed for more workers, something that indicated that the missionaries in the field found that it was possible to carry on the work. They wrote home proposing that measures should be taken making possible a yearly admission of students at the Mission School (Theological Seminary), guaranteeing necessary new workers. It was also pointed out that the missionary body would be substantially reduced within the coming four-five years because of old age and medical reasons.¹⁵⁹ The Conference of 1936 appealed once again for new missionaries. Missionaries on furlough ought to be given a new possibility go to Eastern Turkestan, and new ones ought to be trained.¹⁶⁰ Up to 1936 there were new

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Thomson Glover in *The Muslim World*, 1938, p. 204.

¹⁵⁵ Thomson Glover, 1937, p. 446.

¹⁵⁶ Törnquist's report, 1935.

¹⁵⁷ The *Ansgarius*, 1936, p. 144 f. Thomson Glover says that at that moment Hunter had come on horseback the long way from Urumchi. (*The Muslim World*, 1938, p. 205.)

¹⁵⁸ Interview with the Roberntz couple, April 16th, 1972.

¹⁵⁹ Eastern Turkestan Conference minutes, 1934, § 19.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 1936, § 14. In 1936 there was an appeal from the Wellington Bible Institute in England to the MCCS head quarters in Stockholm asking whether they could send out missionaries to the Swedish Mission in Eastern Turkestan. At that time the missionaries however judged the situation so unstable that they could not take the responsibility of letting them come. If the Englishmen took the risk all the same, it would be more logical for them to contact their own countrymen in Urumchi. (Raquette to Palmaer, April 9th, 1936. Arell to Palmaer, undated, arrived in Stockholm, June 2nd, 1936.) The English missionaries never came to Eastern Turkestan however.

In 1934 Gottfrid Palmberg was ready to leave for Eastern Turkestan. His luggage was already packed and he had obtained his visa. He then contracted a severe ulcer and the departure was made impossible. (Interview with K.E. Palmberg, Falköping, November 25th, 1978.)

The Eastern Turkestan Conference of 1937, appeals to the MCCS Board for a qualified person to come out and take care of the printing office and the mission funds and accounts. If that was done one missionary could be freed for missionary work. Both Jengi-Hessar and Hancheng were without missionaries at that time. (Eastern Turkestan Conference minutes, 1937, § 21.)

At the same time Carl Persson turned to the MCCS youth section, suggesting a collection for a "Flying Mission to Eastern Turkestan of the MCCS Youth". (*Friska Vindar*, 1937, p. 128 f.)

missionaries coming to the field. The two last ones were Ella Svedberg, a nurse, who came in 1935, and Stina Rydberg, a teacher, who came in 1936. When Ella Svedberg left for the field, in the company of Elisabeth Höök and Sigrid Larsson and others, they met the two journalists Ella Maillart and Peter Fleming, who were worried about the Swedish ladies and their possibilities to cross the mountains; they “looked like roses and lilies”.¹⁶¹ And as late as 1937 missionaries who had just come home expressed hopes of being able to return to the mission field.

Some years later, “when all was over” in Eastern Turkestan, Ester and Sigfrid Moen who were then working in India wrote a letter to the Mission Board. They pointed out that the unhappy ending of the Mission in Eastern Turkestan was caused mainly by the fact that there were too few missionaries. During the last 10 years only two new male missionaries had come out to the field, one of whom fell ill and had to go back home.¹⁶²

A help for the missionaries was their personal relations with the high officials. This was especially valid for Kashgar. During the revolutions of the 1930s the relations were strained, but in “the interwar period” those contacts were a real asset for the missionaries. This was true not only for the national administrators but also for the foreign embassies. The Russian General Consulate was against the Mission. This was valid for the whole mission era, but especially after 1925 when the staff was made up of communists. All the same, the Consul General helped to get visas via the Soviet Union for groups of missionaries. In the 1930s three groups went home to Sweden. And in 1936 a group even obtained the permission to travel to the field along this route. That trip took only three weeks. “Never before have we travelled so quickly.”¹⁶³

Relations between the missionaries and the British Consulate were often personal and confident. During the time of Macartney (1892-) 1909-1918, “the missionaries went in and out of the Consulate like one of the family”. Also with his substitute for a couple of years in the 1910s, Sir Percy Sykes, the missionaries entertained good relations. The same thing was valid for P.T. Etherton (1918-22), Sir Clermont Skrine (1922-27) and Frederick Williamsom (1927-30). Fitzmaurice was Consul General up to the disastrous revolt of 1933 (1930-33). After him came Colonel Thomson Glover (1933-36), Packman (1936-38), H.H. Johnson (1938-40). During the first part of the 1940s Sir Eric Shipton and M.C. Gillett were Consuls General. Apart from the help and encouragement most of these officials gave the missionaries, they have also written appreciatively about the Mission in their diaries and other publications.¹⁶⁴ Captain George Sherriff was Vice-Consul during the years 1927-1931. His diary, recently on show in the British Museum, gives accounts of many personal details from the relations with the missionaries. He mentions tea parties and dinners and he speaks about the everyday life of the missionaries, of their hobbies, praising their well kept gardens. Törnquist was often busy taking photos, he says, and “Gustafsson was very talkative”. Once he received six missionaries. The atmosphere was tense and the conversation not very successful. Then they resorted to the record-player. One of the female missionaries wore silk stockings, he remarks, “something I had never seen before”. He visited all the mission stations and speaks highly of all the missionaries. This could appear somewhat strange as many of the

¹⁶¹ Maillart, 1940, p. 296. Fleming, 1948, p. 558 f., 588.

¹⁶² Ester and Sigrid Moen to the MCCS Board, October 5th, 1943. At the beginning of the 1930s there was a young man and his fiancée at the Mission School wanting to go to Eastern Turkestan. They were however stopped by the leadership of the School. In 1935 two male students finished their studies at the Mission School, intending to become missionaries to Eastern Turkestan. None of them came to the field however.

¹⁶³ SMT, 1936, p. 189.

¹⁶⁴ For example Thomson Glover in *The Muslim World*, 1938, p. 204 and JRCAS, 1937, p. 445 f. Shipton, 1951, p. 39.

missionaries were considered pro-German by the Englishmen during the First World War.¹⁶⁵ This appreciation being mutual is seen for example from a remark in Sigrid Larsson's diary, "Captain Sherriff is leaving. The Swedes follow him to the other side of the river. Goodbye. Thanks for all the good moments we have had together!"¹⁶⁶ Another Vice-Consul, Barlow, was a committed Christian and partook regularly in the Mission work.

But social life also had its problems for the missionaries. Only one of them will be mentioned here, "social drinking habits". Sigrid Larsson says about a dinner at the Russian Consulate that it was "a proper boozing party. Ugh!"¹⁶⁷ Normally this problem appeared in the relations with the Chinese officials. If the missionaries refrained from drinking, would that be considered impolite?

The matter became highly topical in connection with a dinner party in the spring of 1935. Rikard Nyström asked the question: Can a missionary drink spirits when in company with the Chinese authorities? He had been temporarily in Kashgar and taken part in a dinner party given by a high Chinese official. When back home again he wrote a letter to Roberntz mentioning how ill at ease he felt during the evening. Liu-Pin had got drunk, and still he says he is a Christian, says Nyström. He cannot be allowed to take part in the celebration of the Holy Communion at the Mission. The worst part of it all was however to see missionaries drinking, he said, even if they did so with great prudence.¹⁶⁸ At the same time Nyström sends a letter to Moen asking him to try to make the missionaries refrain from liquor in all its forms.¹⁶⁹

He got an immediate reply from Kashgar. Roberntz writes in his letter, "I should like to express the wish that, in brotherly love, we try to understand the different standpoints of each and everyone... and not take for granted that our own opinion is the only correct one..."¹⁷⁰ In a common letter all the Kashgar missionaries reply the letter from Nyström, saying that Liu-Pin will not be excluded from the Holy Communion. And as to the "social drinking habits" of the missionaries, opinions vary.¹⁷¹

Nyström sent a question to the upcoming Missionary Conference in the autumn, "Should missionary drink liquor?" At the same time he motivated his reaction at the party during last spring in Kashgar saying that the example of the missionaries could be the cause of a fall for the native Christians.¹⁷² At the Conference, where Nyström was not present, the matter was discussed for more than two hours, and thereafter the Conference decided to answer the question with a unanimous **no**.¹⁷³

Guarded optimism was cherished concerning the future. Sigrid Larsson's diary witnesses spontaneously to this optimism. She was working at that time within medical care in Kashgar and her diary speaks both of her pleasure in work and of her well-being. She writes the following in November 1935, "What joy to be able to feel happy, glad and free and to have a job and not being all alone. Thank you God!" And on Christmas Eve, 1935, "Christmas Eve with the Moens. Everybody in good health and merry. Real Christmas atmosphere. Christmas gifts also from the Consulate, from General Liu-Pin and from Dr Ossipoff. This is my tenth Christmas in Eastern Turkestan, and the best Christmas Eve I have had. Grace abounding!" At the beginning of January, 1936, "My great day. I assisted Dr Ossipoff at an operation.

¹⁶⁵ Sherriff's diary, August 1st, December 17th, 1927. April 14th, May 3rd, October 24th, 1928. February 25th, 26th, April 3rd, 4th, May 6th, 1929.

¹⁶⁶ Sigrid Larsson's diary, September 11th, 1931.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, October 11th, 1931.

¹⁶⁸ Nyström to Roberntz, April 7th, 1935.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, to Moen, April 7th, 1935.

¹⁷⁰ Roberntz to Nyström, April 15th, 1935.

¹⁷¹ The Kashgar missionaries to Nyström, April 12th, 1935.

¹⁷² Nyström to the Eastern Turkestan Conference, September 5th, 1935.

¹⁷³ Moen to Nyström, September 26th, 1935.

Elisabeth (Mrs Höök) has been ever so nice and helpful to me.” In the middle of February 1936, ”Operation day. Two hernias, one large and heavy cyst, three circumcisions, one gunshot injury.” And in August 1936, “The hospital is opened with Andersson (John Andersson) as Director. That is not bad either.” “... 1936, my happiest year in Eastern Turkestan.”¹⁷⁴

In the autumn of 1936 the Mission was struck by a hard blow. The schools had to close down, on the order of the authorities.¹⁷⁵ The School situation was discussed at the Missionary Conference in November, and it was decided, with regard to the delicate situation, to do nothing in order to make the authorities revoke their decision. The teachers would be given other jobs within the Mission. It was also decided to start a school for foreign children, especially Indians. This so much more as the British Consul General was a great supporter of these plans.¹⁷⁶ The winter of 1936/37 was by the way a rather calm and good period for the Mission. Roberntz says for instance that it had never before been so easy to sell Christian literature.¹⁷⁷ And the medical care work was highly intensive. At the hospital of Kashgar, the missionaries were greatly helped by the Russian Consular doctor, Dr Ossipoff. He was a competent surgeon says Sigrid Larsson, and he seemed to get along very well with the Swedes.

7. The New Testament in the Language of the People

A sign of the hope in the future was the new translation of the New Testament, which was completed during this period. Maybe the missionaries had the feeling that “their days were counted” in Eastern Turkestan and that they therefore wanted to hurry up the publishing of the Bible so that they could continue the mission work from outside with its help.

Chapter III contains a description of the work with the Bible and its development over the years from 1914 when the Avetaranian (-Raquette) translation of the New Testament was ready for distribution. Then nothing happened in the Bible-issue until 1922 when David Gustafsson and Oskar Hermansson published a revised version of the Gospel of Luke. The printing took place at the Mission printing office in Kashgar. At the beginning of the 1930s the Missionary Conference took a decision about a new printing of the whole Bible, but first the New Testament.¹⁷⁸ In their request to the MCCS Board they also put forward their wish

¹⁷⁴ Sigrid Larsson’s diary, November 23rd, December 24th, 1935, January 2nd, February 12th, May 15th, August 8th, December 31st 1936.

Sigrid Larsson’s light and happy testimony was of course due to the fact that the missionaries felt that their work was meaningful, in spite of everything. In Sigrid’s case, she also felt thankful and happy for her life on a personal level. During two earlier terms in the field she had been stationed in Hancheng where she did not get along with Törnquist. Add to that the personal tragedy she went through already in 1924, her first year in the field, that plagued her for a long time. She had a broken engagement with Carl Persson. Her diary often testifies to the pain she felt. For example May 15th, 1924, “Hilda Nordquist has died. I envy her.” – But when she came back to the field in 1935, for the third time, she is stationed at the hospital of Kashgar. Then her old pain, and the solitude she often felt in Hancheng are forgotten. “It is wonderful to be a missionary!” In this way, life presented its ups and downs for many of the missionaries. At times, they were lonely and life was hard, at other times it was full of pleasure in the work and a feeling of meaningfulness.

¹⁷⁵ Törnquist to Palmaer, September 3rd, 1936. At that time all schools in the country were registered. The schools run by the Mission had a good reputation among the population, and the missionaries hoped that they would be acknowledged by the State. But the opposite happened. K.B. Westman writes about the Mission’s schools that they had been under fire ever since 1924 and were “accused of being the hotbed of for foreign imperialism”. (Westman, 1929, p. 221.)

¹⁷⁶ Eastern Turkestan Conference minutes, 1936, § 24.

¹⁷⁷ *The Ansgarius*, 1942, p. 92.

¹⁷⁸ The Eastern Turkestan Conference minutes, 1931, §21.

that Ahlbert and Hermansson be the persons charged with this assignment. They also pointed out that a revision of the Avetaranian translation was not enough. A whole new translation ought to be done based on the original languages of the Bible.

At that time an invitation was made by the China Inland Mission missionaries in Urumchi concerning cooperation in the new Bible translation project. Missionary Hunter had already translated some of the New Testament books. He now suggested that they share the tasks. He himself would be going on with other Bible portions and the MCCS missionaries would be responsible for the rest of the New Testament. This suggestion was however not adopted by the Swedish missionaries. Missionary Hunter was an old man, they said, and most probably would not have the forces to finish this translation work which it would take years to achieve. Moreover they were hesitant about Hunter's linguistic capacities. Furthermore cooperation in this field was inappropriate because the dialects spoken in the two parts of the country were different. And in view of the prevailing political conditions, correspondence between Kashgar and Urumchi would be highly unreliable. All these things considered the missionaries stuck to their original plans of a translation of their own, independent of Hunter's work.¹⁷⁹ Ahlbert and Hermansson had now been assigned by the MCCS Board to do the translation work.

The translation was done from the Greek original text, but it was constantly compared to several other translations, both Oriental and Western ones.¹⁸⁰ The missionaries were living at the mission station of Jengi-Hessar during these years. Times were unstable and political tension kept disturbing their work. For some time they withdrew to Boston Terek, the mountain station of the Mission, where they were able to get more peace and quiet to do their work.¹⁸¹

During the translation work, missionary Hermansson wrote home to Mission Secretary Palmaer, saying,

“Ahlbert and I are working on the revision of the New Testament. The translation is practically altogether a new one. I have just read the nice words of Sven Hedin on the Mission here. And it is true that the Mission has been of great importance for the written language of this country. There would hardly have been a written language here but for the Mission. The missionaries have actually created a written language, based on a polished spoken language. The hand-written books existing here have an archaic language, based on Arabic and Persian usage. Now the people have books of the following kind at their disposal, written in modern everyday language: Biblical History, Christian Dogmas, Geography,... Arithmetic, Spelling, Grammar, Central Asian History, Syllabus and other text-books. These text-books are being used in many different places, also by other schools than those of the Mission...”¹⁸²

On the 10th of September, 1937, a small caravan left the mission station of Jengi-Hessar. In one of the packing-cases the precious manuscript lay hidden. The caravan goods did not have the required customs stamps. There was a revolution going on in Eastern Turkestan and no civil servant departments were working. The chances of getting past the guards at the nearby fort were small. Suddenly there was a sand storm. In a couple of minutes the whole town was covered in a haze of shifting sand, changing day into night. When the sand storm comes, people go indoors. And this was what happened now too, and the caravan could continue on its way ahead without being discovered.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 1934, § 16. Hunter's translation of some Bible books was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society (Annuals of the Society for the publications of the last decades.) These portions were spread up to the last copy by the British Consul in Urumchi, Mr Holmes. This diplomat who took up his duties in Urumchi in 1943 was also an active missionary. (Moen to Hultvall, June 3rd, 1974.)

¹⁸⁰ Bredberg, 1946, p. 240 f.

¹⁸¹ Stina Rydberg to Hultvall, March 8th, 1978.

¹⁸² O. Hermansson to Palmaer, April 6th, 1936.

¹⁸³ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1973,

The British and Foreign Bible Society had declared themselves willing to pay the cost of the printing. A couple of years earlier the Bible Society had adopted a negative attitude towards the translation by the Swedes, wanting to support only the Hunter translation. Then Mission Secretary Palmaer came up with the somewhat optimistic suggestion that the MCCS itself print the New Testament with its own resources.¹⁸⁴ When the manuscripts arrived in Stockholm, in 1937, the Bible Society had however decided to finance the printing of it, and the place chosen for the printing was Cairo where the work would be done by Nile Mission Press. In the autumn of 1938, Hermansson travelled to Cairo to supervise the printing and to proof-read the text. The edition would be amounting to 2,000 copies with 500 separate copies each of the four Gospels. In late summer, 1939, just before the outbreak of the Second World War, the New Testament in Eastern Turkish was printed and bound.¹⁸⁵ One year earlier, the missionaries had been expelled from Eastern Turkestan. The translation of the Old Testament came to be finished in India, as will be described below.

8. Sheng Shih-tsai Strikes (1937 – 1938)

In Eastern Turkestan, the political reorganization was continuing. The orthodox Muslims, the Sunnites, had since long been carried away by the movement, but when they started to realize that reforms also concerned themselves, and that the cultural, ideological and political attacks were directed towards Islam, they opposed themselves to the development taking place. They felt however too weak to withstand the revolution all by themselves, so one night, in the winter of 1937, the Turkish army left Kashgar and walked on Jarkend. When the Tungans in Khotan heard about this insurrection, they thought the time was ripe for a new campaign. They marched northward and in Jarkend they united their forces with the Turkish troops from Kashgar. The united armies first conquered Jarkend and then they marched northward, conquering for instance Jengi-Hessar and Kashgar. The Chinese town Hancheng was also taken after hard battles. The insurrection now spread like it had done in 1933, but this time in the opposite direction. From the south it went on to the north and the east, and in all this, the Muslims rose to liberate themselves from the Chinese.¹⁸⁶

But now came the moment of Governor General Sheng Shih-tsai to strike, and crush the insurrection definitely. It was however clear that his forces were not sufficient. He writes himself that he commanded more than 10,000 soldiers of different branches, aircrafts and tanks. Facing him was an army of maybe 15,000 men. He could not count on any help from Nanking. His only possibility was to ask for Russian help, once again. The Russian forces that had intervened in 1933, at the beginning of the revolt had returned to Russia after their victory over Ma. In May 1937 however, a new armed regiment of 5,000 men arrived.¹⁸⁷ This time the Russians were stationed in Kashgar.¹⁸⁸ The presence of the Russian troops in the country was justified among other things by the non-aggression pact concluded between China and the Soviet Union in 1937, in the face of the Japanese menace.¹⁸⁹ The Chinese and Russian united forces now finally knocked down the insurrection. In the autumn the fighting was over, and a cruel and ruthless purge followed. Crowds of people suspected of having had to do with the

¹⁸⁴ Palmaer to Raquette, March 28th, 1935.

¹⁸⁵ *The Ansgarius*, 1939, p. 129 ff. Palmaer, 1942, p. 211 f.

¹⁸⁶ Palmaer, 1942, p. 248.

¹⁸⁷ Whiting, 1958, p. 50.

¹⁸⁸ Myrdal, 1977, p. 288.

¹⁸⁹ Whiting, 1958, p. 46.

insurrection against the government were arrested and many were executed. Only in Khotan, says a telegram, 18,000 Tungans were arrested.¹⁹⁰

So Sheng got military help from Russia. He got other help too. Among other things he received a new major loan – nearly 15 million Roubles – for reconstruction work and modernization of the country after the war. With this money, Sheng made up a three-year-plan after the Russian pattern.¹⁹¹ On the whole it could be said about the latter part of the 1930s that there was an enormous increase of the Russian influence in all fields of society. This was facilitated by the fact that the highest leader of the country, Governor General Sheng was totally in Russian leading-strings, the motto of his policy being, “Friendship with the Soviet Union”.¹⁹² K. Wu remarks that Sheng could not be bothered with the Nanking government. All his sympathy was with Moscow.¹⁹³ Chiang Kai-shek points out that Sheng was invited to Moscow in 1938, where he was taken up in the Communist Party.¹⁹⁴ Jan Myrdal remarks about Sheng’s visit to Moscow that it is said that Stalin wanted to forbid Sheng to enter the Chinese Communist Party, something that Sheng had intended to do. Instead, Stalin gave him number 1859118 in the Soviet Communist Party thereby putting him under Soviet party discipline.¹⁹⁵

The Russians did not do anything for nothing for Sheng and Sinkiang. In exchange of the aid they gave they provided themselves with favourable trading conditions, extraterritorial rights concerning the mineral riches of the province and above all unlimited possibilities for political and ideological infiltration. Myrdal is of the opinion that the Soviet policy in Sinkiang in the 1930s was nothing but a follow-up of the intentions of Russia’s old intentions dating back a hundred years.¹⁹⁶ Behind the Russian helpfulness lay, as has been already pointed out above, the fear of Japan. Consul McLean maintains that, already during the last years of the 1930s, the Russians were prepared to sidestep Sheng in favour of one of their own people. All this in order to build up the strongest possible resistance against Japan.¹⁹⁷

If it is correct what has been insinuated above, that Sheng was under Stalin’s party discipline, it is easy to understand his indifference both towards Kuomintang and China’s communists. Lattimore says that Sheng invited a group of communist advisors from Yenan to Sinkiang. Shortly afterwards he executed some of them and the rest were thrown into prison.¹⁹⁸

Jan Myrdal mentions the fact that during these years, there was a hunt for Trotskyites going on in Sinkiang.¹⁹⁹ In 1927, Trotsky had been expelled from the Russian Communist Party and been exiled into Russian Turkestan. When he did not stop his agitation there he was expelled from the Soviet Union. Up to 1933 he was living in Turkey. Suspicions that his agitation had spread to Sinkiang were thus not totally unfounded. Sheng discovered these conspiracies, as he meant them to be, and reported them to Moscow, according to Myrdal. Even the Russian Consul General was said to be involved. The whole of Sinkiang was therefore considered “contaminated”. Great purges followed where many people were

¹⁹⁰ Palmaer, 1938, p. 124, 138. The *Svenska Morgonbladet*, January 29th, 1938.

¹⁹¹ Lattimore, 1950, p. 75. Norins, 1944, p. 103.

¹⁹² Snow, 1941, p. 327.

¹⁹³ Wu, 1950, p. 257.

¹⁹⁴ Chiang Kai-shek, 1957, p. 100.

¹⁹⁵ Myrdal, 1977, p. 291. Clubb, 1971, p. 322. Sheng’s own version in Whiting, 1958, p. 200 ff.

¹⁹⁶ Myrdal, 1977, p. 288 f. Bräker, 1971, I:2, p. 342 f.

¹⁹⁷ McLean, 1948, p. 132.

¹⁹⁸ Lattimore, 1950, p. 74 f, note.

¹⁹⁹ Myrdal, 1977, p. 289.

imprisoned, tortured, executed or just disappeared.²⁰⁰ In his memoirs, Sheng defends himself and all these cruelties by stating that Moscow demanded these purges.²⁰¹

Spies everywhere! Denunciations and detentions anytime! Sheng's secret service was everywhere. Myrdal calls Sheng "A Soviet Vassal", adding. "Sheng Shis-tsai's Sinkiang in the 1930s became a strangely distorted reflection of the Soviet Union."²⁰² Already in 1935 a person living in Kashgar told Ella Maillart about the spying. Even in ones own home one had to think of what one was saying, according to the man in question.²⁰³ In order to accentuate the development, the Chinese national emblem was taken away and replaced by a six-pointed red star.²⁰⁴ (The Soviet star has five points.)

As has already been mentioned, Sheng did not pay any attention to the Chinese central government apart from keeping up relations for the transit traffic of war material from Soviet to China. At this time this was especially important for China for in July 1937, the Japanese conquered Tientsin and Peking and occupied the whole surrounding province of Hopei. In August the same year, a large Japanese army was landed in Shanghai and at Christmas Nanking fell. The government was then transferred to Hankow. In the autumn of 1938, the Japanese conquerors had reached Hankow, and Chiank Kai-shek fled further west with his government to Chungking in the distant province Szechuan.²⁰⁵

9. The Mission is Crushed

As far as the Mission was concerned, Sheng's battle came to be the final combat. In order get a grip of the evolution in detail, we choose to sketch the course of events from place to place where the Mission was actively engaged and where Asian congregations had been created.

In the spring of 1937 Jarkend was for some time in a state of siege and was later on conquered by Turks from Kashgar and Tungans from Khotan, as has already been mentioned above. Like in 1933, the missionaries came to serve where the fighting took place, attending to the wounded. One of the generals was especially cruel, says John Andersson, who was at the time stationed in Jarkend. He ordered the prisoners of war to physical exercise, and when their way of doing the exercises was not to his satisfaction, they were simply shot down. The Commander-in-chief, General Ma (not to be confused with the General Ma of the beginning of the civil war), forced Andersson to play tennis with him 3-4 hours daily, during the month of July, when the weather was at its hottest.

The new leaders took the children from the schools and the orphanages. A violent campaign of agitation was organized against the Mission, and people were threatened and warned not to have anything to do with the Mission. One of the effects of these menaces was that sick people did not dare to go the hospital any longer. Around fifty persons, Christians and staff, were living at the mission station and the orphanages at that time. Worship services could however be held, the last of which being held on the Sunday before Advent, in 1937.²⁰⁶

In December, the Mayor came to the mission station in a Russian car, obtaining by force a list of all the Christians. They were later on called to him for questioning, and after that they

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 291, 295.

²⁰¹ Whiting, 1958, p. 52, 176 ff.

²⁰² Myrdal, 1977, p. 291 f.

²⁰³ Maillart, 1940, p. 245.

²⁰⁴ Shipton, 1951, p. 52 f.

²⁰⁵ Henrikson-Hwang, 1967, p. 342 f.

²⁰⁶ John Andersson in *Ansgarius*, 1967, p. 77.

were led in a procession through the town to the City Hall.²⁰⁷ None of the Christians came back. At the mission station there were now only the four missionaries, John and Judith Andersson, Ella Svedberg and Stina Rydberg. But late one night, they heard someone knocking at the door. When the missionaries opened they found two of the schoolboys from the Mission. They had crept through the water tunnel of the Mission into the premises of the mission station. They said to the missionaries, “Who will baptize us when you are no longer here? They say in the bazaars that you will soon be expelled.” – “What happened after that was the simplest baptism ceremony that I have ever experienced”, says John Andersson. “Finally we committed each other into the hands of the Lord, and the thirteen-fourteen year old boys crept back through the tunnel and disappeared.”²⁰⁸

In February 1930 the Mayor ordered the missionaries to leave the town without delay. When drivers had been found, they started to journey towards Jengi-Hessar. Before leaving the mission station, the missionaries destroyed the archives containing registers, diaries, etc. to prevent these documents from falling into the hands of unwarranted readers. Finally, Andersson was forced to hand over all the keys of the houses of the mission station. At that moment the missionaries had put all personal property in packing cases. They thought that they would most probably never see these packing cases again, but to their great astonishment, one day in Kashgar after their arrival there, a caravan with 18 carts arrived, bringing all their belongings.²⁰⁹

There were no missionaries at the mission station of Jengi-Hessar from October 1937, When the Jarkend missionaries passed through the town in February 1938, they saw the havoc made at the station. Most of it was devastated. The Church was still there but had been ravaged by fire. The missionary couple Andersson had been working there previously for six years and had made many friends during those years, also outside the Mission. They met a few of them in town, but no one dared to greet the missionaries. They did not even dare to look in their direction, but turned away and disappeared. Andersson says, “We felt terribly deserted and sad.” In his report describing the exile from Jarkend and the trip via Jengi-Hessar to Kashgar, Andersson adds that the missionaries sought help from the British Consul General, Packman who had determinedly rejected the missionaries saying that he could in now way help them.²¹⁰

The worst destruction was however reserved for the station of Hancheng. Missionary Moen writes about that in the following way,

“The wreckers had indeed done a thorough job. They had not only contented themselves with destroying the mission station... the picturesque bazaars was not there any longer... Many horrible scenes had taken place here... all those who did not manage to escape in the chaos were herded together in the corner between the church and the school, where they were shot down like dumb animals... when the soldiers had finished this bloody work the put fire to the mission station and left.”²¹¹

And missionary Roberntz says that when the mission station of Hancheng was destroyed and burnt down to the ground, all old people, women and children who had taken refuge at the mission station were either burned to death or killed in some other way.²¹²

²⁰⁷ *Ungdomsvännan*, 1938, number 7, p. 128. Stina Rydberg speaks about Jacob, one of those led away. In response to those lining the streets, he shouted, “We are not the ones to be pitied. We are free; you are not!” (Interview with Stina Rydberg, April 3rd, 1973.)

²⁰⁸ *The Ansgarius*, 1967, p. 78

²⁰⁹ Interview with Stina Rydberg, May 15th, 1973.

²¹⁰ John Andersson’s report, 1938.

²¹¹ Moen to “Dear friends of the Mission”, March 11th, 1937. *The Missionsförbundet*, November 16th, 1937.

²¹² *The Ansgarius*, 1942, p. 95.

The destruction of Hancheng took place only a couple of months after the death of John Törnquist, the faithful old servant of the Mission and likewise founder of the Hancheng station. The station of Hancheng was exclusively his work and he had worked here for 33 years. He was a singular personality. Rachel Wingate praises his great talent. He spoke Chinese like a native. He had also got a special gift of mixing with authorities. Gunnar Jarring who saw him at work in the 1930s gives him his unstinted praise.²¹³ Sigrid Larsson who took care of him during his time of illness – he died from pneumonia – testifies to his indomitable tenacity, to the very end. Added to that he was a devoted homeopath and refused stubbornly to take the medicine prescribed by the doctors. When the British Consul General, accompanied by the British physician arrived in the consular car in order to transport him to the hospital of Kashgar, he refused categorically to go with them in that “coffin”, which was his name for the car.²¹⁴ His funeral in the Kashgar MCCA church was honoured by the presence of the Mayor of Kashgar, two generals and the British Consul General.²¹⁵

During the last days of May 1937 the revolt reached Kashgar, where the Mission was at once affected by the fighting. Sigrid Larsson writes in her diary on the 30th of May, that people at the mission station were woken up at night. Turks and Tungans were conquering the town. Some wounded had come to the hospital. The following night there was “desperate shooting”. Everybody at the station had moved into the church. At night the shooting started again “from both sides, over our heads and above our station”. This went on for a couple of nights. More and more wounded came to the hospital. There were now many holes in the walls of the mission station from bullets having passed through the houses. “There are bullet-holes in my wall” says Sigrid Larsson on the 3rd of June. And on the 6th of the same month, “Terrible shooting tonight. It sounded as if the whole station would be crushed... This afternoon, the Tungan officer came back again asking us to stay inside.” The diary also speaks about some Chinese soldiers coming into the mission station, murdering everybody hiding there, Turks and Tungans alike. Before leaving they put fire to the dwelling-house and the lodgings of the servants. In this connexion Sigrid Larsson also speaks about the above mentioned Abdulla and Islam who escaped miraculously.²¹⁶ The fighting parties however tried to spare the missionaries. At times their benevolence was touching. When one side was going to advance the commander could send a message to the missionaries, “Take shelter immediately, we are advancing!” Missionary Moen who speaks about the consideration of the soldiers adds that “the other side” was just the same. From there, they could a message like, “Keep away, we’ll soon be attacking.” In the midst of all this wretchedness, there could even be funny interludes. One day the missionaries heard violent shooting. They feared the worst, but it turned out to be the Chinese, who in order to calm down the Muslims were shooting their pigs.²¹⁷ Sigrid Larsson says that the united Muslim armies won a temporary victory. The Tungans had hoisted the flag on the city wall, and the captured Chinese had to march to Hancheng. Crowds of wounded were taken care of at the hospital, where the windows had been blocked up with bricks for protection.²¹⁸

During the summer and the autumn certain activities could be run. In August, Sigrid Larsson married the doctor of the British Consulate, Dr Selvey. She then took leave from the Mission and moved to the Consulate, but keeps giving precious information from the Mission in her diary. In September she went to the Mission church on a couple of Sundays for worship service. She also indicates that there were new disappearances on a daily basis. “Red, red,

²¹³ The Missionsförbundet, 1937, p. 404. Jarring, 1979, p. 127 ff.

²¹⁴ Sigrid Larsson’s diary, December 29th, 31st, 1935, January 10th – 23rd, March 5th – 7th, 1937.

²¹⁵ The *Ansgarius*, 1937, p. 144 f. Sigrid Larsson’s diary, March 10th, 1937.

²¹⁶ Sigrid Larsson’s diary, May 30th, 31st, June 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 8th, 1937.

²¹⁷ Interview with Moen, September 3rd, 1973. The *Bollnäs Tidningen*, March 14th, 1938.

²¹⁸ Sigrid Larsson’s diary, June 8th, 11th, 1937. The *Svenska Morgonbladet*, December 22nd, 1937.

red” she writes. On the 21st of November Ismail, a worker in the printing office, was captured in the street, right before the service. The following day Ibrahim, Suleman and Talih were taken by the police, at work, “and all the other servants of the Mission had run away, apart from some boys helping in the kitchen”. On the 23rd of November, the diary lets us know that Sha Gada had been found murdered outside the Consulate. Some other persons from the Mission, Peter and Jamel, managed to hide in the Consulate. Everybody at the Mission has now been taken, she writes in December, the boys, the milk lady, the laundry lady everybody has been taken away. Salamat, an Afghan, was there doing some chores. Just before Christmas the station was surrounded by the police, searching through every corner of the Mission to see if there was anybody hiding there. They found nobody however.²¹⁹

The MCCS Annual report of 1937 is despairing and mentions some of the adversities that had befallen the Mission.

“The Eastern Turkestan Mission goes through a hard time full of such trials that both the Christians and the missionaries find themselves at the brink of despair ... The schools are forbidden ... The printing office staff has been captured... The Hancheng station burned down in the month of June... Other cases of arson in Jarkend and Jengi-Hessar. Jengi-Hessar in ruins... The servants taken away from the missionaries ... The population forbidden to have any relations with the missionaries... The Christians taken away...”²²⁰

All missionaries were gathered in Kashgar at the beginning of 1938. They were altogether 17 adults and two children. They were totally isolated from the rest of the world. The Afghan mentioned above who had been helping out with various little jobs was also captured one day. There was however an old Indian man who could help the missionaries to buy some food. The proofs of wholehearted commiseration from the part of the population were however many during these last trying days of the missionaries. It now turned out that the Mission had many more friends than one had dared to believe. Missionary Moen says that people came in the middle of the night with food and other necessities. A young man even came creeping through the water pipe into the station in order to hand over his gifts. And then he disappeared, the same way he had come. Another young man came at night with a basketful of food that the missionaries could haul over the wall with a rope on a fixed signal. One great asset was the Ford lorry that the missionaries had purchased. When nobody in town dared sell food to them, they could take the car and drive into the countryside and buy some food. There they had friends too, and the risks were smaller.²²¹ With the help of the car they could also fetch water from the river when the water supplies in the dams of the station were finished.

All ordinary missionary activity was now impossible. Not even medical care could be supplied.²²² In April the MCCS Board wrote to the missionaries advising them to go home to Sweden. It was also proposed that one person stay on to supervise the interests of the Mission and its property.²²³

During the coming spring, the isolation continued for the missionary group. As soon as one of them was seen in town he was shadowed. Day and night the mission station was surrounded by spies.²²⁴ In the month of June, 14 missionaries started their journey back home to Sweden. The group also included one baby and one two-year-old child.²²⁵ Now the lorry of

²¹⁹ Ibid., August 1st, 19th, September 12th, 19th, November 21st, 23rd, December 1937. Palmaer, 1942, p. 247 ff. Sigrid Larsson often adds the following words to her diary entries “No comment”. This indicates that she feared that the book would come into the hands of the authorities. – When the “milk lady” was taken from the missionaries, they bought some cows. (Sigrid Larsson to Adèle, January 1st, 1938.

²²⁰ The MCCS Annual report of 1937, p. 14 f.

²²¹ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

²²² MCCS Board minutes, April 13th, 1938.

²²³ Palmaer to O. Hermansson, April 21st, 1938.

²²⁴ The *Göteborgs Posten* number 19, 1939.

²²⁵ Palmaer, 1942, p. 252 f.

the Mission was of great use. The whole group and the entire luggage were packed into the lorry, and missionary Moen drove towards the Russian border as far as the track was accessible. Never before had the missionaries' journeys been organized in such a rapid and "comfortable" way. After three weeks the whole group was home in Stockholm.²²⁶

On their arrival, the missionaries express despair and hopelessness. Elin Svensson for instance says that everything was now closed for the Mission. The medical care agents were gone, the printing house staff was gone, the school children were gone. "Don't ask me where they have gone. We know nothing, only that we have been totally isolated from the natives since November last year."²²⁷

When the missionary group left the country in June 1938, three missionaries stayed on behind them: G. Ahlbert, John Andersson and Sigfrid Moen. They wanted to look after the interests of the Mission and see if there was anything they could.

These three continued their forced isolation for the next few weeks without any real disturbances. In the middle of July the Kyrgyz army left the town with loads of weapons. After a night of shooting they went north.²²⁸ At the same time the missionaries got other things to worry about. They were called to the British Consulate where Mrs Selvey was just about to give birth to her first child. Mrs Selvey writes the following in her diary concerning that night, "At 3.40 a.m. Anne Karin was born. John Andersson has been acting like a professor of obstetrics. Calm and determined all the time."²²⁹ John Andersson served as "midwife" and Moen was "a children's nurse" during the days to come.²³⁰

The missionaries considered it safest to burn the archives of the Mission. There could be found notes concerning the natives that might facilitate their capturing, if the documents fell into the hands of the authorities. Moen however tried to save one single document. It was a confession written by a Christian. He had been in prison for some time but had been released. During his time in prison he had been forced to witness against the Mission. Moen realized how precious this document was and intended to give it to the British Consul to be forwarded to Sweden. Moen carried this document in a book in his pocket when the missionaries were to be searched at their expulsion. Everything was examined. Moen was in anguish when standing there beside the soldiers. The book with the document was already in his hand and he was ready to give it to the soldier. If the document were found, this would mean sure death for the Christian Turk who had written it. Suddenly Moen had an impulse. He pointed to the door crying, "Look, what is he doing there?" Everybody turned to the door and quickly Moen extracted the document from the book and put it in another one of his pockets. Seconds later the soldiers took the book and looked through it. But now it was the turn of Moen's clothes to be gone through. Suddenly he seized his stomach simulating gripes. The soldiers waved to him to go behind the wall. There he managed to tear the document to pieces and hide the pieces in the earth.²³¹

One day the missionaries were summoned to the Provincial Governor who ordered them to leave the country without delay. They then turned to the British Consul to get a visa for travelling through India. While waiting for a permit to travel, they packed most of the property of the Mission. Some of it was taken to the British Consulate. It was later to be given to Christians who might turn up presenting themselves. The car too was left there.²³² When the visas took their time the authorities became impatient and the missionaries were taken

²²⁶ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

²²⁷ *The Svenska Morgonbladet*, June 28th, 1938.

²²⁸ Sigrid Larsson-Selvey's diary, July 13th, 1938.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, July 16th, 1938.

²³⁰ Sigrid Larsson-Selvey to Ella and Stina, August 22nd, 1938.

²³¹ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

²³² Sigrid Larsson-Selvey's diary, August 5th to 6th, 1938.

from one instance to another. Everywhere they were met with hatred and contempt. When the day of departure finally arrived, on the 17th of August, the three missionaries were escorted by the police to the Indian border.²³³

10. Separate Destructive Forces Sealed the Fate of the Mission

The political chaos created by the revolution could be considered the reason why the Mission had to cease. The Mission happened to be just there where the Revolution took place, and it was squeezed between different interests. But in the political evolution there were also forces turning destructively against the Mission in a clear way. Between these forces there was political tension, but against the Mission, they had a united front. First there was the aversion of the Muslims where faith turned against faith. Furthermore Chinese nationalism played an important role. To them the missionaries were nothing but “foreign imperialists”. And finally Soviet communism, through its infiltration in all spheres of life, became the ultimate reason for the expulsion of the Mission.

The aversion of the Muslims was evident not only in their intolerance against dissidents on the whole. It was also concrete and killed many Christians. The Turkish Mullahs had for long tried to get rid of the Mission. During the revolution, the militant Tungans also levelled devastating attacks on the Mission. People on the whole however had a friendly attitude to the Christian activities, also in the turmoil of the 1930s. So when missionaries and others speak about the “fanaticism” of the Muslims, they think of the leaders of the people. Nils Ambolt for instance writes in 1935, concerning the Mission, “Fanaticism was rampant – the cruelty of the Muslims is unbelievably horrible.”²³⁴ Swedish Muslims also tried to get the Mission out of Eastern Turkestan. Already in the autumn of 1932 a letter of protest had been handed in to the Chinese legation in Stockholm, demanding that the Chinese authorities take measures against the Mission.²³⁵ At the same time a Muslim living in Sweden wrote a long article with similar ideas in the *Svenska Morgonbladet*. Raquette defended the Mission in the same paper.²³⁶

The aversion of the Muslims may seem inexplicable. What had happened in Eastern Turkestan? The answer was: a bit over one hundred people had become Christians. Some tens of converts, most of them poor and insignificant in society – was that anything to fear? It is surprising to see how seriously the Muslim leaders took the Mission. There must have been something else behind this strong aversion. And there was. What meant more than the tiny congregations was the increasing influence that the Mission was acquiring over people on the whole. Added to that was the expanding medical care work. The Muslim leaders felt threatened. Never before had anybody questioned their faith and their conception of society in such a clear way. Just as life-threatening as the Mission was for the faith of the people, so was it also for the power of the Mullahs. Therefore it had to go!

In many cases, the Mullahs did not succeed in getting the people with them. Many were those among the simple people who had become friends of the Mission over the years. They could never forget how the missionaries had tried to help them when they were in pain or needed comfort.²³⁷ There had been many proofs of that, particularly during the last hard years.

²³³ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

²³⁴ Ambolt, 1935, p. 135 f.

²³⁵ Palmberg to Ahlbert, March 27th 1932.

²³⁶ The *Svenska Morgonbladet*, November 21st, 1932.

²³⁷ The MCCC Annals of 1938, p. 176.

It would be to say too much that there was a national Chinese attack against the Mission. It was rather a provincial, Chinese hatred against the missionaries – the foreigners - “the imperialists”.²³⁸ Surely the Central government had come up with many new laws during the past few years, limiting the rights of foreigners, also those of the missionaries. One law for instance forbade exportation of archaeological findings.²³⁹ Furthermore all schools had been nationalized. No foreigner was allowed to teach any longer. This meant the end to the schools of the Mission, when no Asian dared to work as a teacher during the prevailing political unrest.²⁴⁰ What gave the Mission the final kiss of death however was the personal power policy of Governor General Sheng.

Sweden had agreements with China about rights of carrying out mission work within its borders. These treaties however lost their importance over the years. During the unrest of 1923 Mission Secretary Westling realised that “during the prevailing lawless conditions in China” it was meaningless to refer to agreements convened upon.²⁴¹

At the “bitter end”, these treaties were however referred to again. At that time Moen wrote home saying that Chinese authorities had threatened to take the station away from the Mission. Were the missionaries totally without legal rights, asked Moen, or were the clauses of the treaties still valid?²⁴² Palmaer answers Moen that he has been in contact with the Foreign Ministry of Sweden, who had immediately promised to ask for protection with the Foreign Office of London for the missionaries and the property of the Mission through the British Consul of Kashgar. The Swedish Consul of Shanghai had also been informed. In the treaty in question, Palmaer goes on to say, it is stated that “Sweden has the right to own churches, hospitals and burial places”. In an article further down, it says,

“Swedish Missionary Societies shall be permitted to rent and to lease in perpetuity as the property of such societies, buildings or lands in all parts of the Empire for missionary purposes, and, after the title deeds have been found in order and duly stamped by the local authorities, to erect such suitable buildings as be required for carrying on their good work.”

Palmaer adds to this. “According to this text you see that we have a right to the land we have bought or rented.”²⁴³

Referring to this treaty was of no result. Nor were the efforts to help the missionaries via diplomatic contacts.

At the beginning of 1938, new diplomatic efforts were made in the hope of changing the missionaries’ difficult situation. The direct reason for this was a telegram from Kashgar. The telegram had come to the Foreign Ministry of Sweden via the Foreign Office of London. Palmaer was summoned to the Foreign Ministry in order to partake of the telegram. It was signed Ahlbert and read, “The Mission bereaved of all its servants and collaborators since

²³⁸ The Swedish missionaries had this drawback, wittily expressed by the leader of Overseas Missionary Fellowship (former China Inland Mission), Michael Griffiths, “One problem with being a missionary is that one has to be born somewhere.” (Griffiths, 1977, p. 99 f.)

²³⁹ Hedin to the missionaries, November 11th, 1928. When in 1935 he was staking out car roads to Sinkiang, on the order of the Central government, Sven Hedin was strongly forbidden to make any archaeological collections. (Hedin, 1936, p. 270.) Jan Myrdal calls Aurel Stein, Le Coq, Sven Hedin and others thieves. (Myrdal, 1977, p. 244.)

²⁴⁰ Palmaer to Moen, December 17th, 1936.

²⁴¹ Westling to O. Hermansson, July 31st, 1923.

²⁴² Moen to Palmaer, October 21st, 1936.

²⁴³ This clause in original in a letter to Moen, December 12th, 1936, “Swedish Missionary Societies shall be permitted to rent and to lease in perpetuity as the property of such societies, buildings or lands in all parts of the Empire for missionary purposes, and, after the title deeds have been found in order and duly stamped by the local authorities, to erect such suitable buildings as be required for carrying on their good work.” – During the mission era the so called exteriority was valid (= meaning that foreigners should be judged according to the laws of their respective countries). (Westman, 1929, p. 169.) Translated into Swedish by CHH.

four weeks. The Mission boycotted on orders from the authorities. Arson has been tried twice at the station of Jengi-Hessar. Diplomatic help needed at once.” The British Consul General of Kashgar had added that he could do nothing for the missionaries. He advised both the Foreign Office and the Foreign Ministry of Sweden to turn directly to the provincial authorities of Urumchi.²⁴⁴

After repeated talks between Palmaer and the head of division at the Foreign Ministry. Berencreutz, they finally agreed upon the following: 1. The Swedish General Consulate of Shanghai should be informed. 2. Efforts should be made to get through a message via the Swedish ambassador in Moscow to the authorities of Urumchi, with a protest against the treatment of Swedish property. 3. The Chinese Consulate of Stockholm should be informed. 4. The Foreign Office should be told to give the Consul General of Kashgar more instructions and greater power to act. 5. Missionary Ahlbert should be sent the following telegram, “Diplomatic negotiations again initiated. Do your best. If conditions are impossible, leave the country.”²⁴⁵

It was until August 23rd, 1938 before the M CCS Head quarters of Stockholm got a message about the result of the diplomatic activities. At that time the Mission was already liquidated and all missionary, even the three last ones were home in Sweden. Once again, diplomatic efforts had led to no result whatsoever.²⁴⁶

So, formally speaking, the Chinese provincial authorities were the ones that drove away the Mission. An important part of their policy was Russian communism. As a matter of fact, it was Soviet forces deciding the fate of Eastern Turkestan at the time. The missionaries were also aware of the increasing communist influence as being the decisive factor behind the attacks on the Mission. Moen for instance writes that behind the expulsion of the Mission, there was an “anti-religious group”.²⁴⁷ The atheism of Communism was often called “Godlessness”. In 1937, Ahlbert writes that “the godlessness has become even more insolent”.²⁴⁸ “Spies of godlessness” were everywhere, adds Ahlbert, and their task was to shadow persons visiting worship services in order to arrest them later on.

Eastern Turkestan was now ruled by Communists, and the crowds were force to accept the new ideology. Communism replaced religion. Religions were looked upon as reactionary and “opium for the people”.²⁴⁹ Everything that was old was to be thrown away, and among old things was faith in God. And the Christian Mission was also “imperialistic”. The worst imperialists, according to the Soviets, were the English, and they were close to the Mission.²⁵⁰

Everybody was not carried away by the Communist torrent however. The majority of the Christians resisted up to “the bitter end”. Many Muslims came to the missionaries in their perplexity at the growing Communist pressure. They said how powerless Islam was in face of the rage of atheism. They wanted to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Never before says Ahlbert had the influential Muslim leaders shown such friendship as now. They kept coming

²⁴⁴ Palmaer to the members of the M CCS Board, January 25th, 1938.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Copies from the Missionary Archives, Lidingö. File two.

²⁴⁷ Palmaer, 1942, p. 247 f.

²⁴⁸ Ahlbert to Palmaer, January 9th, 1937.

²⁴⁹ Edsman, 1971, p. 36 f.

²⁵⁰ It seems as if the British Consul General Packman saw the Mission as an encumbrance for the Consulate. All mail for the Mission came via the Consulate at this time. But it happened that the Consul refused to forward it to the mission station, only a few blocks away. Instead it so happened that he sent it back to Sweden. On one occasion when Moen entered the Consulate he saw a pile of mail for the Mission. He quickly grabbed it and hid it. (Interview with Naemi Terning, July 24th, 1973.)

in crowds, both to morning and evening prayers, as long as such services could be held, and several came in secret, asking to be baptised.²⁵¹

When the Christian Mission was crushed, the death-blow was also given to all other faith in God. The great religions of the country were more or less devastated. In Hancheng for instance all Chinese temples were destroyed.²⁵² And mosques all over the country were turned into Communist club houses,²⁵³ and many shrines were vandalized.²⁵⁴ The anti-religious propaganda placed Mohammed in the same category as Jesus and Buddha. Believing Muslims were caricatured. Influential Mullahs, thrilled by Communist propaganda, could on the other hand profess that the ideals of the Koran were not different from those of Communism, and that Mohammed and Stalin actually taught the same thing. Such Muslim leaders were spoken of as progressive, renewing Islam.²⁵⁵ Those who did not adjust had a hard time. The Muslim League was forbidden²⁵⁶ and great numbers of Muslims had to share the fate of the Christians and were executed.²⁵⁷ Ahlbert speaks about the rich and mighty family Kerimbaj, which was practically eradicated; all men above 10 were killed.²⁵⁸

²⁵¹ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972, when he related the experiences of Ahlbert. Wingate, 1951, p. 19.

²⁵² JRCAS, Vol XX, 1935, p. 104.

²⁵³ Vakar, 1936, p. 123.

²⁵⁴ MCCA Annals, 1938, p. 176. The *Missionsförbundet*, 1935, number 17, p. 341.

²⁵⁵ The Muslim World, 1934, p. 249, 254. See also Bräker, 1971.

²⁵⁶ Latourette, 1945, p. 356. The International Review of Missions, Vol XXIX, p. 48.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

²⁵⁸ Ahlbert to Raquette, June 24th, 1940.

VII. The Church of Christ in Sinkiang.

The Russian influence and pressure continued well into the 1940s. In the autumn of 1942 when the whole Soviet force was concentrated on the war with Germany, Sheng Shih-tsai saw a favourable moment for breaking away from the Russian dominance. This is the background to the situation of the Christians at this time. The Mission was now gone and many Christians had been executed during the severe persecutions that swept over the church. For the survivors Mrs Sigrid Larsson-Selvey was seen as "God's surprising providence". She was able to help some Christians at the same time as she maintained contact, although sparse, with Sweden. The Mission soon took up work in India, where some pieces of wreckage from the storm in Eastern Turkestan had come up and been taken care of. Another possibility for continued mission work among the peoples of Eastern Turkestan was offered in the form of the new Bible translation which had been completed in India. The Mission counted on this means of continuing the work from outside. During the first part of the 1940s, the missionaries kept nourishing dreams of going back to Eastern Turkestan, but the exploratory trip carried out by a couple of missionaries in 1946/47 came up with discouraging results. Sporadic signs of life from Christians in Sinkiang had however reached Sweden. By all appearances, the Christian Church of Sinkiang leads a life more or less underground, and maybe in martyrdom. The Mission is gone. On the surface, it depended heavily on the British Consulate. When the Russians made the work of the English impossible, that was also the end of the Mission. But the heritage from the Mission was apparently taken care of by young and old survivors and has been kept and developed.

1. "Red Exodus" and "Sheng Shih-tsai's Exodus"

In the autumn of 1939, many people feared that China was about to follow the fate of Poland, with the Red Army marching in and "liberating the oppressed masses". The Japanese radio also sent messages about a Russian invasion¹. The development was however not so drastic, but the constant Russian pressure was maintained and their influence increased. Hence Sheng Shih-tsai concluded a treaty in November 1940 with the Soviet Union, the so-called "Sin-tin-Treaty". Apart from the fact that this treaty guaranteed Soviet's "exclusive right" to the minerals of the country, it also gave the Russians complete control of the nation's economy for 50 years. Power stations, power lines, communications, hospitals, schools, etc. came to lie in the hands of the Russians. Klaus Mehnert remarks that through this treaty, the Soviet Union came to stand out as an unmitigated colonial power.²

In the years around 1940, Sheng adopted complete independence towards the Central Government. Lattimore points out that he ruled the province as an absolute sovereign, equipped also with the distrustfulness so typical of such a ruler.³ His suspicious nature

¹ Snow, 1941, p. 323.

² Mehnert, 1964, p. 162. Sheng in Whiting, 1958, p. 280 f. Clubb, 1971, p. 322 (indicates that the treaty was concluded in 1939.) Jackson, 1962, p. 58.

³ Lattimore, 1950, p. 73 f.

had its reasons. Among other things the Japanese infiltration continued. There were for example advanced plans of organizing in 1940 a Japanese society in Sinkiang.⁴

To Central China, the value of this province still lay in its geographical position as a transit country for war material from Soviet to China. "20,000 camels carried military necessities through Sinkiang from the Soviet Union."⁵ In the year 1941, however, the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression treaty with Japan. After that the deliveries of military equipment from the Soviet Union were reduced, which also reduced the importance of Sinkiang. Deliveries however continued but on a smaller scale.

In this tense situation, in the summer of 1941, when Germany was attacking the Soviet Union all along its borderline, the Russians began to adopt a threatening manner when addressing Sheng. They were especially interested in the oil fields in Tushantze in the northern part of the province, near the Russian border.⁶ Sheng had a feeling that his personal security was threatened. In the spring of 1942 a conspiracy was unmasked, intended to overthrow Sheng, replacing him with a Soviet Russian regime.⁷ Sheng responded with a wave of arrests whereby also communists from Yen-an temporarily staying in Sinkiang were executed. Among others Mao Tse-min, the brother of Mao Tse-tung was killed. Sheng's brother Shih-sh'i and his wife, who were thought to be pro-Russian, also fell victim to the purge.⁸ This purge went on until 1944 and about 80,000 persons were executed or thrown into jail.⁹

In the autumn of 1942, when all Russian military resources were invested in the war against the Germans, Sheng found the time ripe for breaking away from the Soviet Union.¹⁰ In October he handed over a dispatch to the Russian Consul General in Urumchi, demanding all Russian staff of all categories to be out of the country within three months.¹¹

The following months have been called the "Red Exodus" by Whiting.¹² Great crowds of Russians now left the country. And they were not only technicians, teachers, doctors and political and financial advisors. There were also large military units. The Soviet forces having intervened in 1937 had stayed on until now.¹³ In April 1943 the evacuation was finished. At the exodus, all Russian technical and military material was either brought along with those leaving or was destroyed.¹⁴

After the Russian exodus, Sheng had only got 20,000 Chinese soldiers under his command against the large multitude of the non-Chinese population.¹⁵ And it was not long before the unrest started again. In the winter of 1943/44, the Muslim population in the northern part of the province started a revolt. Towards the end of 1944, the "Eastern

⁴ Whiting, 1959, p. 64.

⁵ Ibid., p. 62.

⁶ Whiting, 1958, p. 84.

⁷ Chiang Kai-shek, 1957, p. 101.

⁸ Clubb, 1971, p. 323 ff. The communists of Yen-an were called "bandits" by Sheng. (Whiting, 1958, p. 83.) Jackson, 1962, p. 54.

⁹ Lattimore, 1950, p. 78.

¹⁰ Lötveit, 1961/62, p. 17.

¹¹ Clubb, 1972, p. 234, 1972, p. 326. Sheng in Whiting, 1958, p. 255 f.

¹² Whiting, 1958, p. 79 ff. Hayit, 1971, p. 317 ff.

¹³ Lötveit, 1967, p. 15. The "Sovtorg" bureau with which the Soviet Union had controlled the economical life of the province was closed. (McLean, 1948, p. 132.)

¹⁴ Clubb, 1971, p. 327 f.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 328.

Turkis Republic” was founded there.¹⁶ The Russians were now able to resume the conspiracies from the beginning of the 1940s, but this time on the side of the Muslims.¹⁷ The Republic lasted up to the invasion of the Maoist forces in 1949.

In the spring of 1944, Sheng unmasked another conspiracy in Urumchi. A number of officials from Kuomintang staying in the province were suspected of being behind these plans for a coup. Three hundred of them and crowds of others were arrested, among others a large number of students and teachers. In his difficult situation Sheng once again asked the Russians for help. He went so far as to asking Stalin to incorporate Sinkiang in the Soviet Union. Stalin however did not listen to him any longer. The Central Government finally intervened and Sheng was removed from his post in Urumchi to Chungking where he was appointed Minister of agriculture and forestry. Sinkiang was now invaded by national troops headed by Chu Sha-liang, who also became its new Governor.¹⁸ Chungking took complete military and civil control of Sinkiang which was now incorporated as a province among all the others in China.¹⁹

Sheng’s “exodus” was not grieved over. Especially the Turkish population hated him. During his years in power, he threw some 100,000 persons into jail, thousands were tortured and executed.²⁰ These facts do not tally with his own figures however. In his apology he writes that during the years 1933 to 1944, only 1,934 persons were arrested and 213 executed.²¹

In 1949, Sheng disappears into oblivion in Taiwan, where he fled to with Chiang Kai-shek. He has been described in various ways by posterity. Lattimore calls him “the chameleon”.²² Edgar Snow is positive and points out that he became the leader of what is known in Sinkiang as the “April Revolution”, which was the official beginning of the new Sinkiang.²³ The American Wendell Wilkie, Republican candidate for President in 1940, visited Sinkiang in 1942. He gives an account of a conversation with Sheng, where Sheng talked about murderers, intrigues, espionage and counter espionage. It all seemed a bit weird, says Wilkie.²⁴ The official Soviet reaction is also of interest. The great Soviet encyclopaedia has a summary of the evolution in Sinkiang during the 1930s and the 1940s. During his first years, Sheng led a progressive policy, says the encyclopaedia. He was then under the influence of the masses of the people. Commercial and cultural relations with the Soviet Union were lively. At the beginning of the 1940s however his policy became anti-popular, reactionary, in favour of Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang regime. This led to a revolt in the north, and in 1945, the Kuomintang officials were chased away from the northern districts.²⁵

¹⁶ Whiting, 1950, p. 100 ff. The revolt comprised three districts: Ili, Tacheng and Altai. (Whiting, 1958, p. 110). Mehnert, 1964, p. 163. McLean speaks about how he saw a publication in 1946, in Urumchi, published in Tashkent (The Soviet Union!) where Jakub Beg is being praised as a great hero in the fight for the liberation of the Turkish people (McLean, 1948, p. 133).

¹⁷ Whiting, 1958, p. 100.

¹⁸ Clubb, 1971, p. 330.

¹⁹ Chiang Kai-shek, 1957, p. 102.

²⁰ Clubb, 1971, p. 330.

²¹ Sheng in Whiting, 1958, p. 270.

²² Lattimore, 1950, p. 69.

²³ Snow, 1942, p. 327.

²⁴ Whiting, 1948, Preface, p. XI.

²⁵ Bol’skaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia. Vol. 23, column 1315 ff.

A Kuomintang army of some 100,000 men controlled the major part of the province from the mid forties.²⁶ Diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union were resumed when their General Consulate was reopened in Urumchi, in 1945.²⁷ The US and Great Britain had opened Consulates there already in 1943.²⁸ In the winter of 1946/47 however conditions changed once again. The Kuomintang troops then started to lose control over the province.²⁹ As a matter of fact their task was an impossible one, controlling militarily and administratively this immense area. When the Russians left the country in 1942 a vacuum was created which in many cases led to chaos. Hundreds of thousands of professionals left their posts and there was nobody to replace them. Thus the country was practically void of doctors. In the Kashgar oasis with several hundred thousand inhabitants there were only three doctors active in the area after the Russian exodus. In Jarkend the hospital was decayed and there were only a couple of junior physicians working there. In Jengi-Hessar for example a typhoid epidemics broke out and 600 people died. People were helpless.³⁰

Towards the end of 1949 Maoist liberation troops moved into the province and took control.³¹ During the spring when the Maoists were on their way towards Sinkiang, the Russians made a final attempt at turning the province into their territory. They suggested that Sinkiang should declare itself free and after that join the Soviet Union as a federal state.³²

At the Maoist takeover of the province in 1949 a provincial popular democratic government was formed with 31 members, representing different ethnic groups within the province. The Chinese got two seats and the Uighur (Turks) nine.³³ The strong position of the Uighur Muslims in the government accelerated the reconstruction of the mosques for instance and the restoration of the shrines destroyed and vandalized during the war.³⁴ Only in Kashgar there were 120 mosques.

Initially there was strong resistance against the Maoists. The response to this was terror. Up to the winter of 1950/51 more than 70,000 persons had been executed. Only in Kashgar 15,000 persons had been arrested and more than 5,000 killed by shooting. The terror caused a massive flight out of the country. Over 150,000 Turks fled, most of them to India.³⁵ During the 1950s the Soviet influence became very strong again. In the schools for instance, pictures of Lenin and Stalin were more common than those of Mao Tse-tung.³⁶ In an interview made by a Soviet periodical in 1957, the chairman of the Sinkiang government makes a statement. He talks about "old Sinkiang" compared to "what it is like today". The development had been an enormous one within various areas of society,

²⁶ Lattimore, 1950, p. 84.

²⁷ Chiang Kai-shek, 1957, p. 103.

²⁸ The first US Consul was the person frequently quoted in this chapter, Edmund Clubb.

²⁹ JRCAS, Vol 38, 1951, p. 80 f. This new unrest was felt by the missionaries on their tour of exploration.

³⁰ Davidson, 1957, p. 138 f. In the three cities mentioned, the Mission had been carrying on medical care work with extensive activities.

³¹ Chiang Kai-shek, 1951, p. 103. Lötveit, 1967, p. 16.

³² Whiting, 1958, p. 117.

³³ Central Asian Review, Vol IV, number 1, p. 73, London 1956.

³⁴ Davidson, 1957, p. 145 f. It is a totally absurd speculation that the mission stations would have been rebuilt if the Swedish Mission had remained in the country. The Mission was looked upon by the authorities as a foreign parasite.

³⁵ Hayit, 1971, p. 322 f.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 324 f.

he points out. The educational system for instance had developed by leaps and bounds. In “old Sinkiang” there had been one single college with 100 students. Now 61,000 students were taught in 135 colleges. Art and music were flourishing. Medical science had a high status. In “old Sinkiang” there were hardly any hospitals. Now there were hospitals and medical depots within every county council, he says in the interview.³⁷

The Russians take the credit for all this development. The above mentioned encyclopaedia says: “During the 1950s...with the help of the Soviet brother people considerable progress was achieved in the political, economical and cultural spheres.”³⁸

2. “God’s Surprising Providence”

In view of the political upheaval and the end of the mission work, the question which comes to mind is: What happened to the Christians who survived the revolution? Is it at all possible to speak about the Church of Christ in Sinkiang? Information from the former mission field has been very sparse. There is some evidence, however, that not everything came to an end when the missionaries were forced to leave.

One thing concerning the first few years following the expulsion of the missionaries has been described by Mission Secretary Palmaer as “God's strange arrangement”. This expression refers to Mrs. Sigrid Selvey³⁹ who stayed on after the last three missionaries had left Kashgar in August 1938.⁴⁰ The family lived in Kashgar until 1943 when Dr. Selvey was transferred to India. During those five “missionary-less” years up to 1943, Mrs. Selvey was a tremendous encouragement to many people especially those who were Christians or had been closely associated with the Mission.⁴¹ Her limited correspondence with Sweden reflected something of the political development and also gives glimpses of the fate of the remaining Christians.

In a letter dated January 1938, Mrs. Selvey describes recent events. She writes about her wedding in August 1937, first a civil ceremony led by the British Consul Major Packman, then a church wedding conducted by Sigfrid Moen in the Mission Church. “The Church was full”, she writes.⁴² “Hundreds of people were present and were unafraid. The Mission was still accepted and people were not threatened for going to Church.” In the spring, however, the situation worsened. Mrs. Selvey recounts how both the Swedish Mission and the British Consulate were boycotted. The Swedes and the Consulate had lost all their national workers as many of them had been arrested. Only British citizens were safe to walk outside the walls of the Consulate compound.⁴³

In August 1938 she describes her situation as being very precarious. All the Swedish missionaries had left the country, including the three who had remained after the revolution. Before they left they had participated in the baptism ceremony for her

³⁷ Central Asian Review, Vol VI, number 1, page 77 f. London, 1958. The periodical dedicates some numbers to the accounting of Soviet Russian sources, and to how they estimate the evolution in Sinkiang before and after the Communist takeover. See for example articles in Vol. III – VII.

³⁸ Bol'shaia Svetskaia Entsiklopediia. Vol 23, column 1315 ff.

³⁹ Palmaer to "Dear missionary friends", July 1st, 1939.

⁴⁰ From Sigrid Selvey (among others) to "Dear Adele", January 10th, 1938.

⁴¹ The MCCA Annual Report, 1938. Palmaer, 1942, p. 261.

⁴² Sigrid Selvey's diary, August 19th, 1937. Sigrid Selvey to Adele, January 10th, 1938.

⁴³ Ibid to Adele, January 10th, 1938.

daughter Anne. Ahlbert had baptised the child. Three China Inland missionaries from Urumchi had also attended the ceremony. They had been staying in Kashgar for a couple of weeks and were planning to travel overland via India with three Swedish missionaries to Europe. The Mission in Urumchi had met the same fate as the Swedish Mission and the three British missionaries were now on their way home after having received orders to leave the country. Mrs. Selvey also writes that the Swedish missionaries had left goods and money in her home to be distributed to any Christians who might possibly turn to her. She received additional money so that she could try to arrange travel to India for some children whose parents had already managed to get there. Mrs. Selvey writes that she hopes the children would be able to go to India; otherwise they would be in a very difficult situation. She continues, "None of the Christians have shown up, and I never go outside the Consulate compound."⁴⁴

In November 1938 a new letter arrived giving some details from Kashgar where Major Johnson, the new Consul General, had recently been installed. On his journey out he had met the "three brothers". He sent greetings from them and said he was sorry the Mission had had to end in this way. The letter also says that some of the women from the Mission had shown up. In particular, Mrs. Selvey mentions a couple of widows who had received food and money. They had been coming regularly during the autumn to receive their "allowance". Mrs. Selvey mentions in the letter that some had even come from the country districts. She did not talk to them much because "you never know whom you can trust these days". News about other contacts was given as well; a servant, Jamal, whom the Consulate had taken over from the Mission, looked after the distribution of goods to those seeking help; Samuel, one of the young men from the Mission, had become an informant and guarded the entrance to the Consulate; Khan Sahib, a British Citizen, had travelled to India. The children mentioned previously had been able to travel with him to join their fathers. Right down to the last minute there had been doubts whether or not they would be able to go. "It feels like a great burden has been lifted now that they have gone", says Mrs. Selvey concerning the children's departure to India. The children's fathers were Josef Khan (Ryehan) the evangelist from Jarkend and his brother Peter. She continues, "May the children be fruitful sheaves from our Mission. I do not, however, have much confidence in Peter in this case." Thieves were vandalising the old Mission station property, she continues, and were selling whatever they found in the bazaar and on the street. Mrs. Selvey adds, "One day a man came to the Consulate peddling a water jug with a lace pattern and gold trim and which bore the Rörstrand trademark."⁴⁵ A letter from March 1939 mentions that the Mission station had been taken over by military personnel.⁴⁶

The British Consulate was boycotted at this time. The British could no longer travel freely; their servants had difficulty shopping in the bazaars and nobody dared talk to them as they were under constant surveillance by spies.⁴⁷ In the spring of 1939, a law was issued ordering all foreigners in the southern part of the Province to hand over their

⁴⁴ Ibid to Ella and Stina, August 22nd, 1938. Mrs. Selvey received money from the mission headquarters in Stockholm for distribution among the poor. (Palmaer to "Dear Mission Friends", July 1st, 1939).

⁴⁵ Sigrid Selvey to "Dear Stina", November 13th, 1939. She wrote, among other things, about the new Consul, Mr. Johnson: "What I appreciate most about the Consul is that he brought us greetings from our three brothers."

⁴⁶ Ibid to unknown, March 2nd, 1939.

⁴⁷ Shipton. D, 1950, p 129.

belongings to the authorities and leave the country. The foreigners concerned were British citizens, especially Indians who for many years had been engaged in commerce across the Himalayas. If they did not leave quickly enough they were forcefully expelled. Such was the situation for 35 British Indians, including nine women and 12 children, who arrived in Gilgit in July, starving and bereaved. They had been forced to cross the mountains at the most unsuitable time. They had been driven out of Sinkiang accused of being involved in imperialistic activities. When this news reached Kashgar, the Consul General, Major Johnson, travelled to Urumchi to discuss the situation with Government officials there. The authorities were negative in their response partly because they believed the British had supported the Muslim rebellion and given help to the Tungans.⁴⁸

It is quite clear that if the missionaries had remained in the country until the summer of 1939 they, too, would have been expelled. The missionaries were criticised for their relationship with the British Consul in Kashgar. The Consulate had worked practically, if not formally, as a protecting power for the Mission during the last few years. The fact that the Mission was no longer formally under British protection is shown by the fact that in connection with the dismantling of the Mission work in 1938, there were orders from London, as has already been mentioned, that the Consulate should offer protection to the missionaries and their belongings. This proves that the British protection was not an obvious matter.

During the early years of the Second World War, Mrs. Selvey was almost totally isolated from her home country. Some brief messages came from her, but they were mostly sad ones. The Christians seemed to have been assigned to labour camps, and some did not survive because of the extremely poor conditions. A couple of thousand Kirghiz and Turks fled to India.⁴⁹ In a letter written in 1943 she writes about some women from the Mission who had come to the Consulate to receive a small amount of money. During all these years people had come from the Mission asking for help, not once does she mention a man.⁵⁰

In another letter written in spring 1943 she describes the political developments after the great evacuation of all Russians. "We are now much freer," she writes, "People are no longer afraid of us." The situation seemed more relaxed and people were quite happy to come to the Consulate. In her letter she even mentions the possibility of the missionaries returning.⁵¹ Coincidentally, the same thought was expressed in a letter from Mrs. Diana Shipton, the wife of Sir Eric Shipton, the Consul General in Kashgar. In her letter she says that during an official journey to Urumchi in the winter of 1942, the Consul was overwhelmed by the hospitality and friendliness he was shown.⁵² Another fact adding to the changing political situation was the opening in 1943 of an American Consulate in Urumchi with Mr. Edmund O. Clubb as the first Consul. Later the same year, Britain also established a Consulate here with Mr. Holmes, the Consul, also working as a missionary.⁵³

⁴⁸ Wu, 1939, p 678.

⁴⁹ Palmaer, 1942, p 300.

⁵⁰ Sigrid Selvey to "Efraim", January 27th, 1943.

⁵¹ Ibid, May 19th, 1943.

⁵² Shipton, 1950, p 128.

⁵³ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

3. The Mission Continues in India

Through the sporadic contact with Sigrid Selvey the Mission leaders were able to obtain some information about the developments in Eastern Turkestan after 1938, but the question remained as to how the work should be continued since the missionaries had had to leave the field. Some were thinking of returning and, with this in mind, began to plan an exploratory trip. Meanwhile the natural thing to do was to follow the refugees who had fled to India in the late 1930s. There was a real desire to continue work among the many Muslims who had settled in India and to use the experience the Mission had gained among Turkic Muslims in Eastern Turkestan.

Already in 1939 the General Assembly of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden in Stockholm had decided to start mission work in India,⁵⁴ and the following year, the first missionaries travelled to the new field. Initially they planned a mission station on the Indian side of the border to Kashmir where the missionaries would be able to reach many refugees and help them. When the last three missionaries from Eastern Turkestan had been escorted to the border in August 1938, they had not travelled far into India before they began to explore the possibilities of developing a work there. Upon their arrival in Srinagar, a stop-over place on the traditional route between Eastern Turkestan and India, they were “reunited with many old friends from Kashgar, Jarkend and Jengi-Hessar.”⁵⁵ At the General Assembly in Stockholm in 1939 they presented a report supporting the idea of establishing a border mission station.

The plans for a new mission among the Turks on the border between China and India seemed to be in line with what other missions were doing. Several missionaries from Tibet were already prepared at the border. There were several Mission societies in Kashmir on the border to Tibet, a country hitherto closed to Christian missions that were now waiting to come into the country, among them the Moravian Mission.⁵⁶ When Mr. and Mrs. Roberntz were in Kashmir in 1961 they heard that this Mission was having good results on Indian territory.⁵⁷ The Central Asia Mission was also working there in a similar manner. This Mission had been established by Rachel Wingate’s father, Colonel Wingate. Miss Wingate had often spoken of “my father’s mission” while working in Eastern Turkestan with the Swedish missionaries. This Mission society had no ties with the Moravian Mission.⁵⁸

As it happened, the Swedish Mission never established a Mission station on the Indian border with Kashmir, partly because of the advice of Miss Wingate who was in Sweden while the Kashmir plans were discussed. She strongly discouraged them. She knew the

⁵⁴ Palmaer, 1942, p 260 ff.

⁵⁵ Report from the journey in Northern India in the spring of 1939. Palmaer to the mission leaders, January 25th, 1938. He reported that there were 5,000 refugees from Eastern Turkestan in India.

⁵⁶ Neill, 1971, p 421 ff. 600.

⁵⁷ Roberntz to Hultvall, June 1st, 1978.

⁵⁸ Ibid, The Scandinavian Alliance Mission had also tried to reach Tibet from bases on the Indian border. This missionary organisation was founded in 1900 among Scandinavians in America by Fredrik Franson. A few years prior to this, Franson had himself been working on the Indian/Tibetan border. He had many wild ideas about how missionaries could get into Tibet with Bibles. (Westman, 1960, p 123; Aulen, 1933, p 383; Thomander, 1924, p 90 ff. 108 ff.; Neill, 1971, p 196.)

situation well because of her father's work there. One factor behind her advice was that the Muslim law against a person changing his religion was strongly enforced in that area and for non-British citizens it would be next to impossible to be accepted by the people there. Instead, she advised the Mission leaders to consider beginning work among Muslims further south. Another reason for the decision against mission work at the border was that Mission Director Andersson had made a journey to India in 1938. He suggested that new mission work should rather be established in Bombay. There was already one Swedish missionary, Mr. G. Westmo, who needed help, as he was working alone among 200,000-300,000 Muslims.⁵⁹

Behind the MCCS General Assembly's decision in 1939 concerning mission work in India, there was also a declaration made by the Eastern Turkestan missionaries. They had been gathered in Stockholm during spring 1939, and had sent the following suggestions to the Mission Board,

"...that for the time being, the MCCS should start work among the Turks and other Muslims in India; ... that the Mission Board should allow all missionaries who had previously worked in Eastern Turkestan to remain available for the Eastern Turkestan Mission for a couple of years, and in the meantime, if possible, be given work in India; ...that the Mission Board should send already this year an adequate number of missionaries to Bombay, Karachi and either Peshawar or Srinagar or both."⁶⁰

The MCCS agreed to start work in India and decided that its primary task was to "work among Turks and other Muslims in India, starting in Bombay through an adequate number of missionaries".⁶¹ The idea of continuing work among the refugees from Eastern Turkestan was, however, difficult to put into practice, because many of the refugees did not remain long in India. Most never managed to feel at home there, with a new culture, new languages and foreign conditions.⁶² So India only became a transit place for them on their way to other Muslim countries. For the time being, a number of Eastern Turkestan Muslims did remain in India and the Mission was able to help some of them. One example of the help provided was a reading room for the refugees, opened in Bombay. Turks went there too. Early in 1941, Ahlbert writes of the work in Bombay in its entirety, saying, "Our personal work is mainly concentrated on the Eastern Turkestan Muslim refugees, from our old mission field there."⁶³ In and around Karachi there were many refugees as well with whom the Mission worked⁶⁴ but apart from that they were spread around the country and could not be reached easily by the Mission.⁶⁵

Some of the refugees joined churches in India, and a few of them even started to work with the Mission there. Otto Torvik, the Norwegian missionary who had visited Eastern

⁵⁹ Palmaer, 1952, p 257 ff. Gustav Westmo was from Värnamo. In 1922, he went to India as a missionary with the Swedish Alliance Mission. In 1937 he joined the International Methodist Mission Society. (Albertsson, mission leader of the SAM, to Hultvall, June 14th, 1978) "The International Methodist Mission Society has sent many Swedish missionaries to India. Mr. and Mrs. Westmo, for example, have a fruitful work among Muslims in a town near Bombay." (Westman, 1949, p 86).

⁶⁰ Palmaer, 1942, p 260. The city of Karachi was under Indian rule until 1948.

⁶¹ The minutes of the MCCS General Assembly, 1939.

⁶² Stina Rydberg to Hultvall, March 8th, 1978.

⁶³ The *Ansgarius*, 194, p 144.

⁶⁴ The MCCS Annual Report, 1940, p 94.

⁶⁵ Interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973.

Turkestan in the 1930s, was working in India in the late 1940s and visited the Swedish missionaries there. He spoke about Turks he had known in Eastern Turkestan who had settled in Bombay and were members of the church there.⁶⁶ Mr. Moen mentions Rehmet Jan, who had been employed by the British Consulate in Kashgar. He was a devout Muslim, but a good friend of the missionaries. When they had had to leave the country he had accompanied them to the border, weeping bitterly at their parting. He was a British citizen and, therefore, had less to fear by remaining in Eastern Turkestan. He did not feel quite safe though and he left the country. In the autumn of 1940 John Andersson met him in Kashmir. Rehmet Jan accompanied Mr. Andersson to Bombay, where he became a cook at the Mission. Later, before he died, he became a Christian.⁶⁷ Another refugee was Jacob Stephen. When he was a child his mother had left him in the Mission's care because she was not able to provide for him, and "she knew of nothing better than to leave me in the care of the Swedish Mission," according to Mr. Stephen himself. He was educated by them and became a trained teacher, working at the girl's school in Jarkend until the Revolution in 1933. During the persecution he was arrested and imprisoned. After his release he was able, with the help of Lisa Gahns, to go to India, where he later contacted the Mission. In India he worked as a teacher of Turkish and English among the refugees from Eastern Turkestan.⁶⁸ Mr. Stephen continued his own studies with the support of some M CCS members from Uppsala, Sweden.⁶⁹ He also assisted E. Stanley Jones at his retreat centre in India. Later on he moved to Sweden, where he married a Swedish Christian and became an active member of the M CCS local church in Sundbyberg.

Ruth Ahlbert tells about two women, a mother and daughter from Jarkend who fled to India and sought out the Swedish missionaries there. They had not been Christians in Jarkend, but in Bombay they gladly took part in the services.

Josef Ryehan also fled to India. As has been said above, he had been arrested in Jarkend during the Muslim Revolution in 1933. He was badly tortured and sentenced to death. However, he managed to escape to India and the Mission arranged for his children to join him there later. In India he received an education with the support of the Mission and became a pastor. He made the promise that if it were ever possible, he would return to Eastern Turkestan. When the missionaries arrived in India in 1940 they immediately sought him out. By that time he had started to work among Muslims in Srinagar in Kashmir. A couple of Muslims had become Christians as a result of his influence, one of whom later worked for a while at the Mission in Bombay.⁷⁰ Ryehan continued his work in the area and in 1940 the Mission Board expressed great hopes concerning his work. His work was spread and well-known through the fact that during the cold season the Turks move to warmer areas, according to the Board.⁷¹ The following year, the Mission Board again expressed their appreciation of Ryehan's work. "He is doing a perfect job, as good as any missionary."⁷² After a couple of years Ryehan was still working in the north.

⁶⁶ Torvik, 1967, p 16.

⁶⁷ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

⁶⁸ Stephen, 1947, p 40 ff., 72 ff. and interview with Stephen, July 6th, 1970.

⁶⁹ Anna Andersson in Uppsala to Nyström, undated January 1937, January 21st, 1937 Nyström to Anna Andersson, January 18th, 1937. To Jacob Akhon (Stephen), India. January 28th, 1937.

⁷⁰ Lydia Svärd to Hultvall, February 22nd, 1978.

⁷¹ Palmaer, 1942, p 285; M CCS Annual Report, 1940, p 12.

⁷² Ibid, 1941, p 13, Minutes of the Mission Board meeting, October 1940, §48.

By then most of the refugees had moved on and settled elsewhere, so the Mission Board considered a move to a new location.⁷³ At his post in the north, he was able to assist people who had material and physical needs with means provided by the Mission. But this particular part of the work was more than he was capable of handling by himself. Now, afterwards, the missionaries admit how bad it was to station him all alone in this solitary work in the mountains. It was during his ministry in the mountains that he also experienced a great personal tragedy. While still in Eastern Turkestan his wife had left him and their children. After escaping to India, he remarried. His second wife was a British missionary. The marriage had many difficulties, and one day his wife disappeared. When they found her she was dead.⁷⁴ In the mid-1940s he left India and settled in Cyprus with his children. Later the family moved to England where Ryehan died in 1975.

Another refugee from Eastern Turkestan was Noor Muhammed from Khotan. As a boy he had his left arm crushed in an accident. Just at that time, Mr. Nyström, one of the missionaries, was visiting Khotan. He took care of him and had to amputate the crushed part of the boy's arm so that the stump could heal. The young boy never forgot Nyström, and from then on he too wanted to become a doctor.⁷⁵ When he arrived in India he explored the possibility of studying medicine, but his handicap was a hindrance. Instead he studied languages and later took a degree in Persian, Arabic and Urdu. He then began to study Islamic theology, and was finally accepted into medical school, receiving his Diploma four years later. One day he came across a copy of the Gospel of John. He found himself extremely fascinated with the booklet and read it right through. In Bombay he later met an old friend from Eastern Turkestan who introduced him to the Swedish missionaries there. They soon realised that he was a spiritual seeker, and, after some time of studying the Bible, he wanted to become a Christian and was baptised.⁷⁶ At his baptism he announced that his Christian name would be Luke, after Luke, the physician and evangelist. His baptism in 1941 brought great joy to the missionaries because he was the first to be baptised since the Mission had relocated in India.⁷⁷ After his baptism Luke was exposed to harsh attacks from his Muslim friends. They even tried to kill him. When the Muslim leaders could neither win him back for Islam nor dispose of him, they decided to cancel his diploma and withdraw his doctor's licence. Through his high degree of education and being widely read he was still an uncontested authority even for his opponents. The most distinguished of the Muslim teachers even came to him in secret for private lessons in Islamic law.⁷⁸ With his vast knowledge Luke was also to be a tremendous asset in the continuous work with the Bible translation which will be accounted for below.

4. The Completion of the Bible Translation

⁷³ M CCS Annual Report, 1943, p 96.

⁷⁴ Interview with Stina Rydberg, April 3rd, 1973.

⁷⁵ Roberntz to Hultvall, March 2nd, 1978.

⁷⁶ Lydia Svärd to Hultvall, February 22nd, 1978. Nicklasson, 1955, p 155 ff.

⁷⁷ The *Ansgarius*, 1941, p 145; Stephen, 1947, p 73 ff.

⁷⁸ Torvik, 1967, p 16.

It has been mentioned above how the New Testament, after having been given a new translation, was printed in Cairo. This took place in 1939. When the Mission had settled in Bombay in India, the translation of the Old Testament was continued. This time too, the translators were Ahlbert and Hermansson.

Oskar Andersson, who left the Mission in 1915, had already started the translation of the Old Testament. He translated the first four books of the Pentateuch, parts of the Psalms and the prophets Isaiah and Daniel.⁷⁹ G. Raquette had continued this work by translating the book of Job and by completing the Psalms. The major parts of these translations were however lost in the turmoil of Eastern Turkestan, so when Ahlbert and Hermansson took up the translation work again in India in the 1940s, they had to re-translate the Bible books already translated.⁸⁰ In 1942 Ahlbert reported to Palmaer that he himself and Hermansson had now translated 52 chapters of the Old Testament. Among those chapters was a new translation of the book of Daniel, and Ahlbert remarks that “this book is actually among the most difficult ones”.⁸¹ They had also translated the two books of Samuel and the prophet Obadiah.

The missionaries received valuable help from Eastern Turkestan refugees. The catalogue of the Bible Society in London indicates that the missionaries had been assisted by Nur Luke Sahib, Moulvi Fazil and Mulvie Munshi.⁸² As has already been touched upon above, Doctor Luke came to be of great importance for this work. Ahlbert says about him: “... the converted Mullah, who is the most learned collaborator we have ever had.”⁸³

This time too the Bible Society answered for the publishing and paid the costs. The printing was done, once again, by the Nile Mission Press, and started in 1947. Because of illness and other circumstances it was however not until 1950 that the work was completed. The edition was fixed at three thousand copies. Problems also arose concerning the supply of paper. In Sweden, the country of paper before others, there was no paper to be had. Finally paper was supplied in Egypt, totally acceptable, but far from the fine Bible paper quality produced by Swedish paper mills.⁸⁴

The whole Bible was now available in Kashgar Turkish. It is mentioned in a list of the editions of the Bible Society from 1965 (The Gospel in many Tongues). There are also text proofs given of it in this list.⁸⁵ Supported by competent collaborators Ahlbert and Hermansson had brought this gigantic enterprise to a successful close. They had spent many years first with the New Testament and then with the Old Testament. A strange error has slipped into the Bible Society catalogue. It says about the New Testament that it was published in 1939 and Hermansson and Ahlbert are given as translators. But these names have been crossed over, when and by whom nobody knows, and instead is written the name of L.E. Högberg and another illegible name.⁸⁶ As to Högberg, he left the

⁷⁹ Lundahl, 1917, p. 488 f.

⁸⁰ M CCS Annuals, 1943, p. 100.

⁸¹ Ahlbert to Palmaer, May 2nd, 1942.

⁸² Annuals of the Bible Society.

⁸³ M CCS Annuals of 1943, p. 101. Ahlbert to Palmaer, June 2nd, 1942. In 1957 Doctor Luke finished his service within the Mission and became a full-time general practitioner. (Svärd to Hultvall, February 22nd, 1978.)

⁸⁴ The *Ansgarius*, 1950, p. 103 f.

⁸⁵ Bradnock, 1965.

⁸⁶ Annuals of the Bible Society.

mission field for good already in 1916 and died in 1924. After Ahlbert's death in 1943, Hermansson alone had to complete the Old Testament. Moen says about Ahlbert, "Few, if anyone else, have so penetrated the mysteries of the Turkish language with its unusual features as he has."⁸⁷

Apart from what was considered the primary thing, i.e. the translation of the Bible, the missionaries were also engaged in other literary work, related to the Bible. Among other things they compiled a hymnal for Kyrgyz refugees. They also revised the hymnal that had been used in Eastern Turkestan. A commissioned work was done for the Scripture Gift Mission in London. This was a small book with Bible passages that the Mission Society wanted to have translated into Eastern Turkestan.⁸⁸

The missionaries now put their hope in the Bible translation. Having been driven away from their mission field they could now, through the Bible, reach Eastern Turks widely dispersed, with the Christian message. At best, the old mission field could also be influenced from outside. Ella Svedberg writes in 1938, "Many people ask us: 'Is mission work now over in Eastern Turkestan?' I usually answer like this: 'There are no missionaries there now, the work has been discontinued, but there are still Christians there. Christian sisters and brothers who suffer enormously for their faith. They must remain hidden from their persecutors. The New Testament now exists in Turkish.'"⁸⁹ G. Ahlbert writes from India in 1942, "... We are so lucky to have the New Testament in Eastern Turkish."⁹⁰ And when Oskar Hermansson was in Cairo in 1948 for the proof-reading of the Old Testament, he expresses, in a letter to the MCCS President John Gustafsson, his delight in the fact that the Turkish people now will get the whole Bible in their language. According to an official English periodical, the Eastern Turkestan population now amounted to around five million people. To these people must also be added the millions speaking Western Turkish. Hermansson continues to say that according to the linguist Gunnar Jarring, Western Turkish is closer to Eastern Turkish than Norwegian is to Swedish. Hermansson concludes: "So Eastern Turkish is a highly important language spoken by many millions."⁹¹ Considering the millions of people this translation was intended for, the size of the edition seems ridiculous. As it turned out it would however prove more than sufficient. The dreams cherished by the most optimistic missionaries at that time, of being able, in spite of all, to return to Eastern Turkestan and then be able to give the Bible to the people, never came true.

The missionaries tried to reach the refugees through extensive travelling especially in the mountains between China and India.⁹² Missionary Roberntz describes such a trip to Kashmir in 1952. There the missionaries met quite a few refugees in the mountains and "we handed out Bibles right and left". After this distribution in Kashmir only a few more copies were handed out to Eastern Turks who came to the Mission in India. Part of the

⁸⁷ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1973.

⁸⁸ MCCS Annuals, 1943, p. 100.

⁸⁹ The *Ungdomsvännan*, 1938, number 50, p. 800.

⁹⁰ Ahlbert to Palmaer, June 2nd, 1942.

⁹¹ O. Hermansson to Joh. Gustafsson, August 24th, 1948.

⁹² The *Svenska Morgonbladet*, October 18th, 1952.

edition was then stocked in Bombay where the white ants nearly ate it up, says Roberntz.⁹³

5. Exploring Old Territory

In the 1940s the missionaries cherished a dream that they would be able to return to Eastern Turkestan. When they made their declaration in 1939 concerning the new work in India, some important expressions were to be found in the suggestions. In the first “that” clause, the missionaries say, “...for the time being...” and further down “... that the Mission Board should allow all missionaries who had previously worked in Eastern Turkestan to remain available for the Eastern Turkestan Mission for a couple of years...”⁹⁴ Most were more than willing to work along the border so that they would be ready for the reopening of the roads. In Sweden, this question was also discussed at conferences and meetings. In 1943 Ester and Sigfrid Moen (Sigfrid was then working in India), wrote to the Mission Board urging them to train and prepare new missionaries for Eastern Turkestan. At that time they were fully convinced of the possibility to return to Eastern Turkestan referring to letters they had just received from there. These letters spoke of a new situation in China. People were now turning from the new “Gospel” back to the old one. The Red Star was disappearing and the white sun of China was shining. Some examples of the changes were that both an American and a British Consulate had already been established in Urumchi; many Russians had left the country; and the Christian Sunday had been made the day of rest instead of the Muslim Friday.⁹⁵ A few years earlier, Raquette also expressed hope that the missionaries would be able to return. In *The Muslim World* he writes that the last word concerning the Mission in Eastern Turkestan has not yet been spoken. The day is coming when the Mission will be able to return to a great harvest.⁹⁶

It was decided that to begin with, two missionaries should make an exploratory trip into Eastern Turkestan to investigate the situation. A Swedish Christian morning paper states in January 1946,

“It remains a great desire in the hearts of our missionaries and the Mission leaders to continue the mission work in Eastern Turkestan, from which the missionaries were expelled in 1938. For a start, it has been decided to send a couple of missionaries presently based in India, to survey the situation, according to the Mission headquarters.”⁹⁷

Plans for the trip materialised during the spring of 1946 and from the summer of 1946 to the summer of 1947 the trip was undertaken by Moen and Roberntz. Since the border in India was closed because of political unrest in China, the journey to Eastern Turkestan had to be made through Central China to Urumchi.

⁹³ Interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973. In some places the refugees from Eastern Turkestan came to use the Bible as a general reading book, as there was nothing else printed in this language. (Nyman to Hultvall, November 17th, 1977.)

⁹⁴ Palmaer, 1942, p 260.

⁹⁵ Ester and Sigfrid Moen to Mission Board, October 5th, 1943

⁹⁶ *The Muslim World*, 1939, p 274.

⁹⁷ *The Svenska Morgonbladet*, January 12th, 1946.

The China Inland Mission had been forced away from Urumchi in 1938 in the same way as the Swedish Mission. Seven years later, in 1945, a Chinese postmaster who, as it turned out was a Christian was assigned to Urumchi. Immediately on his arrival to his new post, he placed an advertisement in the local newspaper inviting Christians to attend a meeting.⁹⁸ During the Japanese invasion in late 1930s, great numbers of Chinese from Central China had fled to the western provinces. The Chinese postmaster was hoping there would be some Christians among these Chinese refugees.⁹⁹ Seeing the advertisement for the meeting in the paper, the Governor, an elderly Buddhist, asked him for an explanation. When it was clear that this Chinese Christian's motives were genuine and that there were no political implications, the meetings were approved by the Governor. When Moen and Roberntz visited Urumchi there were 97 members in his church and a further group of 10 who wanted to be baptised. Some of the members had formerly belonged to the China Inland Assembly. Just before the two missionaries arrived in Urumchi, the church had purchased a building with 20 rooms.

On several occasions, the Chinese postmaster and church leader expressed his desire that a mission society would be established in Urumchi and assist the fellowship. He even asked if the Swedish Mission would be interested in doing this. The Mission would then have the opportunity to work in Hami too, a town on the Kansu border, where the Urumchi church was supporting a small fellowship of about 50 members. They also had an "outpost church" in a neighbouring town, east of Urumchi. Moen and Roberntz, however, did not feel it right to accept the offer. They felt that if a mission society was to start work again in Urumchi it should be the China Inland Mission.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ The *Ansgarius*, 1947, p 102 ff.

⁹⁹ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972. Stephen Neill wrote about this work in his report on his trip to Asia a short time before the World Council of Churches was formed in 1948. (Neill, 1950, p 60).

¹⁰⁰ The *Ansgarius*, 1947, p 102 ff. and the Report on the exploratory trip to Eastern Turkestan. Missionaries with the China Inland Mission, who had been working in the northern part of the province (their main station was in Urumchi), were also unable to return. Their mission work was outlawed in 1938 and the missionaries were expelled from the country. Three of them visited Kashgar before finally leaving the country. Others went to East China. One of these missionaries, in Lanchow, Kansu province, was visited by the Swedish missionaries in 1946 on their way to the mission field. (The *Ansgarius*, 1947, p 101). Another CIM missionary, Raymond Joycei, moved to Canada. In 1972 he was to be found working in India and advocating an increase in literature evangelism among Muslims in different countries. (The *Svensk Veckotidning* (a periodical), 1972, No. 42). The longest serving CIM missionary in Urumchi, George Hunter, refused to leave his work and was therefore imprisoned. (MCCS Annual Report, 1941, p 94). After 18 months he was taken to Lanchow, where his imprisonment continued. Hunter was 83 years old when he was finally released. He had lived 50 years in China and had only one furlough during that time. (Platt, 1966, p 201). His co-worker, Percy Mather, who joined him in 1914, died of typhus in 1933 at the beginning of the revolution when he was treating the wounded. Shortly after Mather's death, one of the younger missionaries, Dr. Fischbacher also died of typhus. Fischbacher had arrived on the mission field only a short time before his death. (Cable, 1948, p 92; Hedin, 1935, p 17; Teichman, 1937, p 114). After Hunter was released from prison, he moved to Kanchow, closer to the Eastern Turkestan border. While still awaiting an opportunity to return to Urumchi he died in Kanchow in December 1946. (Neill et al. 1971, p 263; Cable, 1948, p 103). None of the CIM missionaries were ever able to return to Eastern Turkestan. (Eric Malm, a missionary who was in China and Japan with the Swedish Mission, by phone to John Hultvall, February 22nd, 1978). A Catholic mission also worked in the northern part of the province. Missionaries who worked here generally belonged to the German organisation Steyl. Priests from other countries, such as Holland, were also involved in this work however. In 1935-36 the mission had 6 main stations, 5 smaller stations, a hospital and 2 "poor people's pharmacies". The Catholic Church had 738 members in the area, of whom 17 were Europeans. Included in this number were some baptised children.

All the church members in Urumchi were Chinese, except for one person, Mahmud Kahn, who was a Turk. The missionaries were surprised and happy to see him as it turned out he was an old friend from Kashgar where in former days he had belonged to the Kashgar Church but had managed to flee from the revolution. Another happy reunion took place in Urumchi. From the Ili Region, where a Muslim revolution was currently going on, refugees were arriving daily on their way to inner China. Among them were some Christians, including Baptists, Pentecostals and Orthodox believers. They were all Russian refugees who now felt threatened again and were fleeing further east. Among them came an Orthodox family who had lived for some years at the Mission station in Kashgar. They had remained in Kashgar when the missionaries were forced to leave. During the political unrest in Kashgar, the father and the eldest son had been killed. The family now consisted of the mother and four daughters.¹⁰¹

While they were visiting in Urumchi, Moen and Roberntz obtained an audience with the Commissioner of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Liu. Having informed himself about the mission in Kashgar and the commission of the missionaries, he asked them to write a statement explaining the aim of their present trip. A few days later they were called back to Liu. He informed them that he had talked to the provincial government, which for the time being rejected the request of taking up mission work again. As a reason for this rejection Mr. Liu gave a general political survey of the situation in the province. He described the cruel era of Sheng Shih-tsai to them stating that the unrest was still great in the western and southern parts. A peace treaty had indeed been signed in the autumn of 1945 with the rebels of Ili¹⁰², but as late as the spring of 1946 fighting had been going on in the Kashgar and Jarkend areas. Thus it would be impossible for the provincial government to guarantee any protection for foreigners in these regions. But why not start mission work or build a hospital in some other part of the Province, asked the Commissioner? Why not here in Urumchi? The missionaries told him that they were not able to make such a decision without consulting others and at the same time expressed their desire to travel to Kashgar to inspect the old Mission buildings and to consult with the British Consul, who was acting Consul for Sweden as well. When permission was delayed, the missionaries applied to the British Consul in Urumchi for assistance in the matter; when his help was of no avail, application was made to the American Consulate. Through the help of the American Consul they were eventually granted permission to go to the old mission field.¹⁰³

(Loy, 1936/37, p 114, Lindeberg, 1928, p 148 ff.). At the end of the 1930s many Catholics left the area. (Latourette, 1945, Vol. VII, p 344). Ferdinand Loy, a German, was the leader of the Catholic mission from 1931. He became the first Prefect in the mission when Sinkiang was made an apostolic prefecture in 1938. (Dr. Fr Meltzer. SACRA CONGREGATIO PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE SEU DE PROPAGANDA FIDE, to Hultvall, April 19th, 1978). Philipp Moritz and Loy and the missionaries with them continued their work until the Communist invasion in 1949. (Bibliotheca Missionum, Vol. XIV 1, p 369,377).

¹⁰¹ The *Ansgarius*, 1947, p 102 ff. and the report from the exploratory trip. The Russian refugee family reminds us that one of the motives for the Kashgar mission station was to help refugees from Russia. Among the refugees were exiled Russian "Stundists" (evangelical Christian peasant farmers from Russian Turkestan). These plans were never put into practice, however. (Lundahl, 1916, p 129).

¹⁰² The *Ansgarius*, 1947, p 102 ff.

¹⁰³ The report from the exploratory trip and an interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973.

In late December, Roberntz and Moen arrived in Kashgar. They were invited to stay on the British Consulate premises by Sir Eric Shipton who had just begun his second term as Consul. Mrs. Shipton remarks that they were the first guests of the Consulate.¹⁰⁴

After lengthy negotiations with the Governor of Kashgar, an old enemy of the Mission work, the missionaries managed to get permission to visit the Mission station.¹⁰⁵ The inspection was made together with Sir Eric Shipton, who later wrote a report. His report gives a good idea of the property left by the Mission.

Practically all the buildings at the four stations were in ruins. Those remaining were used as stock-rooms or soldiers' quarters. This was the case of the summer station in Bostan Terek.¹⁰⁶ The missionaries were, however, refused permission to inspect the printing house. The printing house was the most valuable of all the buildings and it was clear that ever since the Mission was expelled the authorities had been using the printing press.¹⁰⁷ Most of the Mission's belongings were missing as a result of vandalism or confiscation. This was also the case concerning the personal belongings of the missionaries. The few things that had been salvaged were in the custody of the British Consul.¹⁰⁸

The congregation had been almost entirely dispersed. Most of the older co-workers of the Mission had been murdered. An official report gives the names of 15 people who had been executed. The same thing had happened to some of the younger Christians. All people who were of importance for the Mission had been removed. With few exceptions those who had been allowed to live had been forced to renounce their faith. One survivor writes in a letter about "all our dear friends who were tortured to death in the winter of 1937".

People who recognised the missionaries were both surprised and happy to see them. Seeing the Swedes again brought hope to many. Some asked: "When will you open the hospital again?"¹⁰⁹ Others expressed their joy saying: "Now that you have returned everything will be alright again... there is no medicine like yours."¹¹⁰ Moen speaks of a distinguished Mullah, whom they had met in Kashgar. When he saw the two missionaries he was overjoyed and hoped they would stay and reopen the hospital. Moen explained to him that people could go to the British Consulate hospital for medical care. The Mullah

¹⁰⁴ Shipton, 1950, p 107.

¹⁰⁵ The *Ansgarius*, 1947, p 105 ff.

¹⁰⁶ Report on the inspection of the mission's property by General Consul E. E. Shipton.

¹⁰⁷ Moen, Some impressions from the trip to Sinkiang, Bombay 1947, an unpublished manuscript added to the official report on the exploratory trip.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973. The British General Consulate in Kashgar was subject to the administration in India. When India became independent in 1948, the General Consulate became Indian instead of British.

¹⁰⁹ The report from the exploratory trip. Rachel Wingate, who worked with the Swedish Mission in 1924-1928, returned to England and became a secretary for the Royal Central Asian Society. (Jarring, 1974, p 264). In 1951, she published information she had received about events in Eastern Turkestan. The last Christians were imprisoned in 1938-39. Further news about them was not received until after World War II. Some of them had been executed, while others had been starved to death. The remaining Christians had been tortured. They had been placed in cells that were so small that they couldn't sit or lie down in them. They had to stand until they got gangrene in their legs. Only a few of the strongest ones survived the persecution and stress. They were finally released, but with serious threats against them. (The Muslim World, January 1951, p 20). x to N Terning, April 29th, 1980.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

replied, “You are different! We could come and talk to you about our problems. I do not like your religion, but I completely trust your missionaries.”¹¹¹

When the missionaries enquired about the possibility of re-establishing the Mission work in Kashgar, the local authorities were totally opposed to it. While Moen and Roberntz were in Jarkend, inspecting the buildings there, a telegram arrived for them in Kashgar from the Provincial government in Urumchi. The telegram was originally written to the British Consul, telling him to call the Swedish missionaries back immediately to Urumchi. The reason for this order was said to be that the government had received a letter from the people in the southern part of the Province protesting against the presence of the Swedish missionaries in Kashgar. The missionaries, however, understood that the author of this letter was in fact the District Governor of Kashgar. It was common knowledge that this District Governor, who was a Turk and had been in office for 20 years, was a sworn enemy of the Mission. Nevertheless, the two Swedes thought it best to immediately comply with the order from Urumchi, and received permission from the Governor General to travel to India over the Himalayas. They reported to headquarters in Stockholm saying that “It would be useless to return unless the political situation improves and such a change does not however seem possible.”¹¹² The report adds that the people, in general, including the Chinese officials, were friendly and would have liked the Mission to resettle there. If only the local authorities allowed the Mission to return, many of those who had been forced to renounce their faith would probably come back to the Church.

6. Signs of Life from the Mission Field

In the late 1940s and in the 1950s mission activities in Mainland China were evident, principally directed towards the west. The evangelistic work in Urumchi and the surrounding area, which the Swedish missionaries had seen in 1946, has already been mentioned. The missionaries also experienced other gleams of hope, and in some cases these were related to the Swedish Mission.

When the missionaries, en-route to Kashgar, came to Aksu, they noticed a young man following them. At last the man approached them and asked, “Aren't you Moen and Roberntz?” He turned out to be a boy from the Mission's orphanage in Jarkend. His Chinese name was now Asimon. During the revolution when the Tungans were in command of southern Sinkiang, they had taken all the 14 and 15 year old boys and trained them to be soldiers. The same also happened to the boys at the Mission's orphanage. And Asimon had been one of them. After some time in Khotan he had managed to escape to Central China, to Sinhai, south of the Kansu Province. He had confessed to being a Christian and had therefore been persecuted, so he fled to Lanchow in Kansu. Again, he was mistreated for being a Christian and some Turks he had come

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² The report from the exploratory trip. The Norwegian missionary, Otto Torvik, wrote that during his exploratory trip to India in 1948, he met with the Swedish missionary Roberntz at the Swedish mission station of Bombay. Roberntz was tired and sick, says Torvik, and very depressed over the situation on the mission field that was still very much on his heart. He had not yet given up hope of one day returning to Eastern Turkestan. (Torvik, 1967, p 17).

into contact with even sought to kill him. This time he fled to the east and settled for a time in Tientsin, where he was baptised, and accepted into a military school. After he had completed school, he was employed by the Chinese army. And when the missionaries met him in Aksu he was taking his regiment to Kashgar. Over the years he had matured in his Christian faith, and felt a calling to return to his friends in Jarkend and Kashgar. The only way to return there was to enlist in the army. Once he had come to the old mission field, he intended to remain there as a missionary.¹¹³

Asimon's courage was to be of great importance in yet another instance. His life story became known at the North West Bible Institute in Fengsiang and Shensi and, as a result, many young students expressed their willingness to go to Kashgar as missionaries.¹¹⁴ And when the Swedish missionaries were in Kashgar in the spring of 1947, they received a remarkable letter from this Bible Institute. It was addressed to "The Missionary in Charge, Swedish Mission. Kashgar" and contained the following lines,

"Dear Friends!

Some of the teachers and students from our Institute have felt the Lord's calling to form a 'Gospel Band' with the purpose of sharing the Gospel in Eastern Turkestan and other areas in Western China. After several years of prayer and preparation, we have found that the time is right to send the first missionaries. This summer two young men started out and are now in Singhai. We hope that some young women can be sent after the New Year and that a group will reach Kashgar in June."¹¹⁵

In the letter they also requested help from the Swedish missionaries in finding accommodation for these people and in other practical matters. No information ever reached Sweden about the result of this outreach.

A missionary to the Mongolians, Anders W. Marthinson, also witnessed the eagerness of the young Chinese Christians for missionary work while staying in Sinkiang and Kansu in 1949. At that time Marthinson was there distributing Bibles for the British and Foreign Bible Society with his co-worker, Paul Eriksson, who was also a missionary to the Mongolians. The church in Urumchi, which had given the two MCCS missionaries such a pleasant surprise, was continuing to grow. They now had a pastor and a large church building to meet in, but the building was already too small, so plans were drawn up to build an even larger one. The church was very active and had just started a mission project in Turfan, a place nearby.¹¹⁶ Here, George Hunter and some other British missionaries had been working with great perseverance, but had seen little response. Now this work was being continued by national Christians. In Turfan, some local people told Marthinson and Carlson about an incident from Hunter's work: One day Mr. Hunter had sold an unusual number of Bibles. But, towards the evening, when he took a walk to the town square, he saw a group of Muslims making a fire. They had collected all the Bibles and were burning them.¹¹⁷

Marthinson heard of many small evangelism groups or "teams" working in the province. One such group was working in Hami, a small town southeast of Urumchi.

¹¹³ Interview with Moen, September 30th, 1972.

¹¹⁴ Wingate in *The Muslim World*, January 1951, p 20. *The Ansgarius*, 1947, p 107 ff.

¹¹⁵ *The Ansgarius*, 1947, p 109.

¹¹⁶ Marthinson, 1972, p 182 ff.

¹¹⁷ *Light in the east (Ljusglimitar i Öster)*, 1950, p 21.

There were two Christian congregations there and a large church was being built. The team working in Hami had come all the way from Shanghai.¹¹⁸ The young people belonged to the “Christian Workers’ Mission”. They told Marthinson that they intended to reach places in Sinkiang where no mission had yet penetrated. In 1954 Marthinson received a short message from one of these evangelists concerning the church in Hami: “The church continues to grow and now has many members...”¹¹⁹ Marthinson and Carlson also had contact with some Christians in Aksu, a town about 300 kilometres east of Kashgar. A Chinese Christian there needed some Bibles for distribution among the Muslims and Marthinson sent a supply. Eventually a small Christian fellowship was established. The converted Chinese, the Bible distributor, later wrote to Marthinson, saying: “By God’s grace the church is growing! Presently there is no hindrance to the growth of the church and we can continue our work. We have registered with the authorities.” On another occasion a letter came from a place close to the Siberian border. It read, “All in the church are self-supporting. The church has no connection with anyone else.”¹²⁰

So during the late 1940s and early 1950s there were many active churches only around a hundred kilometres from Kashgar. It would only be logical to assume that there was evangelism work going on in Kashgar as well. And so there was! The missionaries to Mongolia met some Christians who informed them that mission work had been started in Kashgar. “The Back to Jerusalem Movement” had begun to work there. The goal of the small mission was to plant churches right across Central Asia and all the way to Jerusalem. So here the Swedish missionary Højjer’s vision had been revived, only in the opposite direction. Marthinson says that every now and then he sent Bible portions and other literature to this mission in Kashgar.¹²¹ During his stay in Urumchi Marthinson received a dispatch of Turkish New Testaments from John Anderson in India that he later on forwarded to a group of Turkic Christians in Kashgar. The last book parcel was sent at Christmas 1950 from the Bible Society depot in Lanchow. The Bible portions arrived at the destination, and a ‘Thank you Offering’ from the Christians in Kashgar was sent to Marthinson.¹²²

More proof that the church in Eastern Turkestan was alive came to the missionaries in 1967. They were elated when they received a letter from the old mission field, for it had been nearly 30 years since any direct news had reached them from anyone who had been in personal contact with the missionaries. The person writing had been one of the girls in the Mission’s orphanage in Jarkend.¹²³ The correspondence between her and the Mission still continues today. The woman was in her fifties when, in 1967, she made her first contact. It was very courageous of her even to attempt to contact the foreign missionaries at that time, as it was during the peak of the “Cultural Revolution” (1966-1969) in China. All the churches, mosques, Buddhist temples and other places of worship were closed. Bibles, song books and Christian symbols in churches and homes were destroyed, and, in

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 1950, p 20; Marthinson, 1972, p 180.

¹¹⁹ Marthinson, 1975, p 231.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 232 ff.

¹²¹ Ibid., 1972, p 212. The headquarters was in London. (Interview with Roberntz, April 16th, 1973).

¹²² Ibid., p 184; Marthinson to Hultvall, May 18th, 1973.

¹²³ Interview with Naemi Terning, July 24th, 1973. *The Ansgarius*, 1967, p 67.

many cases, Christian leaders were sentenced to work camps or executed.¹²⁴ It would have been more logical for her to have made contact with the missionaries ten years earlier during the 'Campaign of the Hundred Flowers' (1956-1957). During that time China was experiencing more freedom, and everyone was encouraged to express their opinions. Criticism became so severe, however, that Mao had no other choice but to abolish these rights and the critics were severely punished.¹²⁵

The missionaries remember the young woman well. Mrs. Naemi Terning remembers how the girl had left the orphanage and had later written to Mrs. Terning, who was a midwife, asking permission to accompany her on visits to the sick and to assist her in home deliveries. Mrs. Terning approved her request and found the girl keen to learn; she made notes about everything that happened. She accompanied Mrs. Terning for one and a half years. Gradually, she was able to take care of routine cases by herself. At that time Mrs. Terning took leave of absence and was replaced by Miss Frida Lundell who died of typhus only ten days later. Her death left Nyström alone in the medical and obstetric work in Jarkend. It was then decided that she should replace Miss Lundell. She did an excellent job and even succeeded in some very difficult cases where Nyström himself did not succeed. "Her small hands were very effective during deliveries", he said.¹²⁶ In 1940 she was arrested by the authorities and put in prison for two years. She became nearly blind because she was placed in a dark cell and did not see daylight for many months. After two years she was released, set free to die at home.

In her first letter, the woman wrote that she and another woman had been talking for two years about writing to the missionaries in Sweden. She also wrote that she was meeting with other Christians to pray and sing. In a letter dated during the summer of 1971, she describes how old friends of the missionaries were suffering. Some were quite ill and others had died.¹²⁷ In the spring of 1972 another letter arrived from the dear sister in Eastern Turkestan. As always, she was careful to choose the right words, but she wrote 'Jesus Christ' without being censored.¹²⁸ Another letter arrived at Christmas, 1972. These letters had not been censored. It was probably a general rule that letters were handed in

¹²⁴ Oscar Rinell in the periodical "*Religion and Questions in Life*", No. 1, 1978, p 12. During the Cultural Revolution churches were turned into schools, offices and warehouses. The situation was chaotic and Mao had to bring in the army to re-establish order. All religions were severely attacked. One of the slogans was: "Destroy the four old factors!" - Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. (Åke Haglund in *Religion and Questions in Life*, No. 1, 1978, p 5). The Buddhist monks, for example, became museum guards at the former monasteries. (Cecilia Lindqvist in a lecture for teachers, Spring 1973).

¹²⁵ During the Campaign of the Hundred Flowers, many, such as Pastor Marcus Cheng, sharply criticised Communism. Pastor Marcus Cheng was a highly respected leader in the MCCC work in Central China until 1950, who later became one of the main leaders of the Three Self Movement. He criticised Communism and said its activities were worse than digging up the graves of ancestors would be. This accusation was called "the most dishonouring accusation ever made against the Communist Party, against the constitution and against the government's policy on religion." The campaign of the Hundred Flowers was stopped and critics were punished. It is not known how Cheng was punished. The same thing probably happened to him as to many other critics; they lost their political influence and were forced to become industrial workers. (Rinell in the periodical *Religion and Questions in Life*, No. 1, 1978, p 12. Rinell to Hultvall, April 4th, 1978).

¹²⁶ Interviews with Naemi Terning, July 24th, 1973 and October 26th, 1977. In a letter written April 29th, 1980, the woman regrets that she didn't begin the correspondence earlier. Another letter, September 29th, 1980.

¹²⁷ Ibid., July 24th, 1973. The *Svensk Veckotidning*, December, 1968.

¹²⁸ Interview with Vendla Gustafsson, September 11th, 1972.

open at the post offices, and then, after they had been read, they were posted. In her Christmas letter she relates how members of the fellowship were getting on. She continues, "We pray for you. We hope you are praying for us as well. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The same expression occurs several times in letters to Mrs. Terning and Miss Ester Johansson. In one of her letters she writes: "I have tried to get everyone together but it is difficult". Her words were undoubtedly a sign that there were a number of Christians in Jarkend.¹²⁹ In the spring of 1973 another letter arrived. The woman mentions several Christians that the missionaries remembered from old times. She also describes springtime in Eastern Turkestan - the birds singing and the gushing streams. Naemi Terning says, "When I read that I wished I was young and able to go there. Part of me longs to be there."¹³⁰ In the letter the woman also mentions a song that Miss Johansson had sent her. It was surprising that it had passed the censorship because it had a clear Christian message. In another letter in the summer of 1974 she mentions all the missionaries by name.¹³¹ During 1977 several letters arrived. The woman sent greetings from "all friends and brothers and sisters". She mentions a son who does not want to continue his education. She hopes she will soon be able to find a job for him. She is ill and having difficulty in supporting her family. In the mornings she is barely able to get up. Sometimes she has to stay in bed all day. A married daughter and her family are living with her. In several letters she mentions the idea of going to Pakistan, where some of her relatives live. She dreams of meeting her dear old friend Naemi Terning there. In a letter from the beginning of the year 1978 the woman is full of gratitude for money she has received. This money prevented her and her grandchildren from freezing to death. The woman continues, "If all the beautiful flowers in the world were writing paper, if the sea were ink, and the branches of the green pines were pens, my weak hands would never, never give up writing of your great love and compassion day and night."¹³² In the same letter she writes about "the great Dr. Nyström", who helped the sick and delivered so many babies.

Already in the 1960s, Arell had actually sent some American dollars to the woman. Other missionaries advised him not to do this, fearing she would get into trouble. At first the authorities confiscated the money, but later returned it to her.¹³³ On numerous occasions since that time Mrs. Terning sent money to her which she has always received.¹³⁴ In several of her letters the woman expresses sincere thanks and deep appreciation for this assistance. Once at the post office she sat weeping for joy as she read a letter from Sweden. People around her began to ask her what was wrong and when she explained, they were "both surprised and happy".¹³⁵ Apparently she never hid that she was in contact with the missionaries in Sweden. In the spring of 1980 she sent a photo which had been taken in 1932 when Nyström had baptised her and four other women. The others had since died, she writes. Did they die as martyrs?

¹²⁹ Interview with Ester Johansson, February 27th, 1973 and Naemi Terning, July 24th, 1973.

¹³⁰ Interview with Naemi Terning, July 24th, 1973.

¹³¹ *The Svensk Veckotidning*, August 30th, 1975, No. 35.

¹³² X to Naemi Terning, March 19th, 1977, June 28th, 1977, August 3rd, 1977, November 18th, 1977, February 18th, 1978.

¹³³ Interview with Naemi Terning, July 24th, 1973.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, October 26th, 1978.

¹³⁵ X to Naemi Terning, August 3rd, 1977.

Jacob Stephen, who had fled from Eastern Turkestan to India many years ago and who had later settled in Sweden, translates the letters between the woman and the missionaries. Often he includes questions in his letters to her, because he is curious about the developments and changes but she never answers any questions relating to roads, electricity, telephones and other general conditions.¹³⁶ Probably she does not dare. She does mention, however, that she would like to go to Rawalpindi in Pakistan, and that the journey is possible “by machine” and takes only one week.¹³⁷ “By machine” was interpreted as “by bus”. As a rule her letters are very general. She once mentions that a letter which she had posted had been returned to her from the post office.¹³⁸ Probably she had written something that was forbidden.

The letters keep coming. In more recent years, though, she is more open in her letters. She writes about a Christian man whom she had met who was completely deaf. He had been raised in the Mission’s orphanage. Again she expresses how difficult it is to gather Christian friends together on a specific day and time. She mentions one brother who loves to sing when they came together for prayer, and that everyone remembers the days of the Mission and is thankful for its influence and help. Her letters prove that she does not in any way hide her faith. When other women are at their Muslim prayers, she ostentatiously continues her cleaning. She loves to sing Christian hymns and the children gather round her to listen. She openly discusses her faith with her Muslim neighbours and mentions another Christian Turk woman. They often meet a Chinese Christian family and “we talk openly about what it is like to be Christian in this country”. She emphasises that the freedom of religion which Christians are now enjoying is due to the generosity of the government. Although she is thankful to Chinese Communism for her “religious freedom”, she feels a strong aversion towards Russian Communism that had killed so many of her brothers and sisters in faith. Concerning the Muslim leaders she writes, “I despise Islam.”

In an interview with Jacob Stephen the question of Christian groups existing in Eastern Turkestan was brought up. He supposes these are remains from the time of the Swedish Mission engaged in and collaborating with the “Back to Jerusalem Movement”.¹³⁹ He adds that it should be taken into consideration that over the decades many Chinese had moved into the area and there were many Christians among them. Usually, Christian congregations were started by these Chinese, but local people – in the present case in places where the Mission had worked - joined the Christian fellowship and others were won for Christ.¹⁴⁰

This was also confirmed by information reaching the missionaries via London where the Eastern Turk Josef Ryehan lived until his death in 1975. As has been mentioned above, Ryehan was a national evangelist during the mission era. After having fled from Eastern Turkestan to India, he eventually settled in London. From there he entertained correspondence with his old friends in Eastern Turkestan. As late as the spring of 1973 he

¹³⁶ Stina Rydberg to Hultvall, March 8th, 1978; X to Astrid Persson, April 29th, 1980.

¹³⁷ X to Naemi Terning, November 18th, 1977.

¹³⁸ Ibid., June 28th, 1977.

¹³⁹ Interview with Jacob Stephen, July 6th, 1970. X to Jacob Stephen, August 25th, 1980 and September 29th, 1980.

¹⁴⁰ The periodical MED, 1972, No. 4, p 25. (An overview about the population increase in Sinkiang by W J Drew in *Central Asian Review*, Vol. XVI, No. 3. London. 1968). The number of Chinese has increased to over 4 million in the Sinkiang Province during the 1950s-1960s (Gore, 1980, p 321.)

writes to the missionaries about children of church members that they knew. These children were now, in the 1970s, members of the church of Kashgar. He also speaks of other Christian Asians.¹⁴¹ With his knowledge about conditions in Eastern Turkestan and the contacts he could apparently entertain up to the 1970s, his information must be considered reliable. Of course he cannot indicate the sources of his information. The missionaries think the Christians he mentions are immigrants. Many of them have followed the masses to Sinkiang and have come into contact with remnants from the mission era. Thus a more or less clandestine Christian fellowship has been established.¹⁴² Undoubtedly it is a question of so-called house-churches where some families come together in homes without much previous planning and with no connection with the old Missions.

Space does not permit an analysis of the church in China. One quotation will suffice. A Baptist missionary and expert on China, Mr. Oscar Rinell says in 1978: "What needs to be underlined is the fact that hidden, informal, non-political and true churches are sprouting up all over China. Many Christians have broken away from the church officially recognised by the Communists as they are dissatisfied with the politicising of the church. Christianity is developing underground in forms free from denominations. The believers call themselves Christians and do not want to represent any particular denomination."¹⁴³ What is said here about China in general is probably relevant to Sinkiang as well, which has now become more Chinese than ever. When MCCS Director Mr. Gösta Hedberg visited Hong Kong in the autumn of 1973, he observed what others had already learned, that Bible distribution was now legal.¹⁴⁴ On the basis of this information, it is possible that even the Swedish missionaries' translation of the Bible is again in circulation.

Gunnar Jarring also conveys a short message from the old mission field. A colleague of his, a Pakistani diplomat, visited Kashgar in 1975. Later on he wrote to Mr. Jarring saying that his hosts in Kashgar had shown him a medical school and mentioned that it was situated in the same area as the Swedish Mission had had its hospital.¹⁴⁵ This incident serves as a reminder of what the Mission meant to the people.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Naemi Terning, July 24th, 1973. In the summer of 1966 Ryehan visited Sweden and participated in the MCCS General Assembly. There he mentioned that he knew of Christians in Eastern Turkestan. (*Svensk Veckotidning*, 1966, No. 25, p 6 ff.).

¹⁴² Interview with Naemi Terning, July 24th, 1973.

¹⁴³ Oscar Rinell in the periodical, *Religion and Questions in Life*. No. 1, 1978, p 12. Rinell has spent over 60 years in Far East Asia of which 30 years was as a missionary for the Swedish Baptist Mission to Shandong. Rinell wrote that the Lord's Supper is celebrated in these house churches. "When the Christians pray they don't fall on their knees and usually there is no set form in their meetings." (p. 12). Karl-Axel Elmquist, the Chief Editor of the weekly newspaper "*Svensk Veckotidning*", also wrote about these "secret, half-secret or well-known" house meetings, after his visit to China during the spring of 1978. He was allowed to travel to Chengdu in Sichwan province, an area which foreigners had not previously been allowed to visit (*Svensk Veckotidning*, 1978, No. 16, p 7 ff.). There are many different opinions about the situation for Christians in China after the Revolution. (See for example, SMT, 1973, p 59 ff., 218 ff.; Sommarström, 1952, p 67 ff. 92 ff., 139 ff. 160 ff.; Nyström, 1953, preface, 22 ff. 95 ff., 112 ff., 172 ff., 183 ff., 190 ff.; Rundblom, 1961, p 13-45, 429-439. 1973, p 124-132).

¹⁴⁴ The *Svensk Veckotidning*, 1973, No. 50, p 8. The Bible in modern Chinese was completed and printed in Hong Kong in 1978. This version is as easily understood by the Chinese as the wall-newspapers in their villages. The Bible can be brought into China by, for example, Chinese Christians, when they visit their relatives and friends in their home country.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Gunnar Jarring, June 21st, 1976. Jarring to Hultvall, November 22nd, 1977.

In 1976, the author Jan Myrdal had an opportunity to make a short visit to Kashgar. During his stay there he could find no trace of the Swedish Mission. Nobody he met could remember exactly that there had been missionaries there. He writes, "It is as if the work never existed. The work of the missionaries is not even 'writings in water'....In Kashgar they are forgotten." Myrdal however admits that he had not had enough time to investigate the matter further.¹⁴⁶ His opinion of the missionaries was, "Wasted lives."¹⁴⁷

Gunnar Jarring stayed in Kashgar for a week in late summer of 1978. He reports that the Mission's houses are gone. He had, however, met a couple of people who remembered the Mission but it was hard for them to recall any clear memories. And this is quite normal, says Jarring. It is unreasonable to expect people to remember details after more than 40 years.¹⁴⁸ It had to be a real coincidence if a visitor could trace anyone who had been living during the period of the Mission work in a city that now has 120,000 inhabitants.

However, neither Jan Myrdal nor Gunnar Jarring were able to visit Jarkend where the Mission had had its largest work including two orphanages. Most of the children were around ten years old at the time of the revolution in the 1930s and would now be in their 50's. Many of them still live in Jarkend and some are even Christians. The woman writing to the missionaries speaks of the Mission buildings still remaining. She has also been to Jengi-Hessar and seen houses from the mission era there.

7. The Mission's Heritage

We have already considered some circumstances which make it possible to think that the Gospel continued to live on after the Mission's evacuation. The Church of Christ – be it in a modest way - took over the heritage after the Mission. It is probable that through the years there have been many more signs of life than those we are aware of. Some further aspects should also be considered even if they are less tangible.

The last thing known about the people is that their attitude towards the Mission was one of trust and great appreciation. The Mullahs, of course, encouraged fanaticism, but the people were generally friendly. This was true of people from all walks of life, the poor as well as some upper class families.

Over a period of 40 years of work, acceptance of the missionaries and confidence in them had been established among the people. This did not develop overnight nor did it disappear overnight, so it is illogical to imagine that people suddenly became hostile and that the numerous friends of the missionaries suddenly became their enemies. One could suppose that the old friendship lasted for a long time. And this was also confirmed, for example, when the missionaries revisited the mission field in 1946-47. Then they met many friends who wished that the Mission would come back. The same old friendship suddenly manifested itself in 1959 when some young Eastern Turks turned up at the MCCA Mission headquarters in Stockholm. One of them was the grandchild of a man who had been one of the richest men in Kashgar during the 1930s. The missionaries remember the family well. The young man had been asked to find the missionaries when

¹⁴⁶ Myrdal, 1977, p 69 ff. Jan Myrdal on Swedish Radio January 1977.

¹⁴⁷ Myrdal, 1977, p 78.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Jarring, December 18th, 1978. Jarring, 1979, p 161.

he got to Sweden. Their visit proves that the friendly ties with the Mission lived on through generations.¹⁴⁹

The new conditions brought about by the Mission, albeit in a limited way, did not simply disappear in the air. This could not have been just “writings in water”. The Mission introduced professional skills so that people could build better houses, forge better tools, cultivate their fields and gardens in a more rational way and take care of their homes and families in a better way. The Mission cared for children and women and gave them a sense of human dignity and security. When the children learned to read and write, a new world opened to them. The Mission gave help to the sick and unhappy, but also taught those who suffered how to overcome some of their diseases. The Mission gave the Gospel to all those longing for a good God.

All this had been going on for more than 40 years. In 1912-1913, when L.E. Högberg built the British Consulate in Kashgar he could already at that time employ over 100 people there during the construction; people who had all received their vocational training at the Mission. In a lecture in 1979, Gunnar Jarring described the Mission as one that was far ahead of its time providing technical help to an underdeveloped country as early as the 1910s.¹⁵⁰

When all was over, not only emotional memories remained. What the Mission had given was “in the hands, in the hearts and in the minds”. What had been taught made life a little bit easier to live. Such a heritage cannot easily be forgotten.

Many of the people who were associated with the Mission were executed. There were reports stating that the congregations had been nearly completely wiped out. Still, some individuals must have survived the persecution; some of those who escaped later established contact with the Mission. And maybe there were more who managed to get away. Some fled to safety in India or further east in China. When the situation improved in Sinkiang in the beginning of the 1940s, many of them probably returned home again.

Another group of people were the secret believers. No one knew that they were Christians or were sympathetic to the Christian faith. Therefore they did not undergo the same persecution. They survived. They had always been there. Törnquist writes: “Personally, I know of many in this country who believe in Jesus Christ in their hearts although they have not yet been able to be baptised.”¹⁵¹ David Gustafsson says that the lives of these secret believers reflected Christ, their way of life being entirely different from their old ways.¹⁵² Mrs. Vendla Gustafsson speaks of one woman in the 1930s who to all intents and purposes was a Christian. Mrs. Gustafsson got in touch with her when visiting her in her home when she was ill. The woman then confessed to Mrs. Gustafsson that on Fridays she went in secret to the Mission while her husband went to the mosque. On Sundays she would make up reasons to do some shopping so that she could go to Church. The missionaries noticed the woman because she was completely veiled and sat in the same place at every meeting. This happened in the early 1930s.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ The *Svensk Veckotidning*, October 2nd, 1959.

¹⁵⁰ Jarring, January 25th, 1979, A lecture for the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography.

¹⁵¹ Törnquist, 1928, p 486.

¹⁵² Palmaer, 1942, p 131.

¹⁵³ Interview with Vendla Gustafsson, September 11th, 1972.

Towards the end of the Mission period, one of the national evangelists was on a journey from Kashgar into the countryside. While riding along he saw some turban-clad pilgrims bound for Mecca, resting at the side of the road. As he approached the men he recognised them and was surprised to see that they were reading the New Testament. One of the men in the group said to the evangelist, “We know that the new regime is an enemy of yours, and it will surely force the missionaries to leave and even kill some of you. Do not fear, we will continue the Mission work. We are gathered here to read the New Testament and to pray in the name of Jesus because we are fed up with Islam.”¹⁵⁴ Maybe the heritage of the Mission was passed on by secret Christians who had the courage to step forward when the storm had died down.

Other “remnants” from the mission era were the children. Some of the older boys, who professed to be Christians, were executed but the girls and the younger children were spared. Miss Ella Svedberg, one of the last missionaries to leave, writes about the spiritual maturity she found in the children. Boys 15-16 years old were willing to give their lives and their freedom for their Christian faith.¹⁵⁵ And the woman in Jarkend, mentioned above, a young girl when the mission work ended, continued to write regularly to the missionaries in Sweden witnessing about her living faith. There must be others as well, who passed on the Mission’s heritage. It is absurd to imagine the contrary. Maybe “Paul” of whom Elsa Andersson writes, is one of them. He barely escaped during the revolution and the last thing the missionaries heard about him is that he was a teacher in Jarkend. If he survived the following years says Miss Andersson in 1942, “he is one of those for whom God undoubtedly has a future ministry among the Turks”.

As has been said above, letters keep coming regularly from the former mission field, bringing news of the children and grandchildren of Turks who were members of the congregations when the missionaries worked there. News of other friends and some of the children from the orphanages has also come. Some of them have spent some years in India but are now back. Others have been elsewhere. Some are doctors; others work in a textile industry. “Talib” practices as a hair-dresser, and “Rona” has just finished eighth grade of Chinese school and will now go on in a Turkish school, in order to become a nursery school teacher. “Elis”’ mother is at school at old age. All this is told to the missionaries as if they knew all about the families. And the missionaries remember and rejoice at the greetings. These letters show that “the Mission’s children and grandchildren” keep in contact with each other. One letter writer says that she often tells her grandchildren about the Mission “from the very beginning”.¹⁵⁶ It would be strange if they completely forgot the heritage for which their parents and grandparents had risked their lives. This is confirmed by a comparison with Mainland China. Elfie Kallberg, a missionary and expert on Chinese affairs, underlines the fact that totally new people are Christians nowadays, compared with the days before 1949. The generation which experienced the Communist Revolution has now disappeared, but their children are carrying on the Christian heritage.¹⁵⁷ It is logical to believe that the development is the same in Sinkiang. This is supported by the fact that other religions, such as Islam, which

¹⁵⁴ Palmaer, 1942, p 150.

¹⁵⁵ The *Friska Vindar*, 1941, p 6 ff.

¹⁵⁶ X to Stephen, autumn 1978. Ibid. to Naemi Terning, December 6th, 1978, September 1st, 1979, October 18th, 1979.

¹⁵⁷ Elfie Kallberg in MED, 1975, No. 1, p. 28 ff.; SMT, p 73 ff. (Especially p. 83).

has the largest number of adherents, are experiencing freedom as well. In the summer of 1978, Gunnar Jarring visited Kashgar and saw the great mosque. From what he observed religious life was continuing in a normal way: The graves of the saints were kept trimmed and neat. Muslims were allowed to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the Muslim schools were functioning.¹⁵⁸

A legitimate conclusion is that the Church of Christ is alive in Sinkiang, even though the Swedish Mission has left. It seems as if the safety – and the fall – of the Mission depended on the foreign consulates. The Russian Consulate was never more than half-hearted towards the Mission. After 1917 their attitude changed to active resistance, which grew to open hostility in the 1930s. It also turned against the British Consulate, hindering much of the work in the British Consulate and making it impossible for them to protect the missionaries. This meant that the Mission, which had at least been partly protected and helped by the British, was now left alone and unprotected.

The Mission work was not, however, an isolated episode. Fragmentary facts, supported by circumstantial evidence, say that the Church is alive. If the Swedish Mission as such has now been forgotten, “as if this work never was”, is of less importance. What matters is that to all probability there are now Christians in the cities where the Mission was active. The Mission work was not an episode but the introduction of an era where people believe in Jesus Christ. And probably these Christians are now missionaries among their own people. Dr. David Wang, a young Chinese Mission leader who has been a refugee in Hong Kong for a number of years, visited Sweden in 1974 and shared news about the situation in China. He stated that foreign missionaries working in China was a thing of the past. The hope of the Church lay with national Christians and the house churches.¹⁵⁹ His opinion has been proved right during recent years. For instance, news came recently from Inner Mongolia, where the Swedish Mission work ended in the same way as in Sinkiang, that the church there is alive and that there are many Mongolian Christians.

And maybe the future will give us complete assurance about the Church of Christ in Sinkiang. The Swedish Mission to Muslims in Pakistan which has now been decided upon will surely play an important part here. This Mission work which will be carried out by the Swedish Lutheran Church and the MCCS, along with the Pakistani Church, will be just across the border from the old mission field in Eastern Turkestan. It will probably be possible to establish contacts across the border. This will be made easier by the opening of the Karakoram Highway, making travel between the two places less difficult. The highway has already been finished to the border on the Pakistan side and is used by lorries and buses and will soon be open to tourists. The drivers tell about Christians they have met in Sinkiang. Nowadays it is easier for a Muslim in this area to become a Christian. Norwegian Bishop Arne Rudvin, who is one of the leaders of the Pakistani Church, visited the MCCS General Assembly in 1979. He said that, on the “birthday of the Prophet”, their church had baptised a Muslim who wanted to live as a Christian, and the Muslims had not reacted at all.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Jarring in a lecture, January 25th, 1979. Jarring, 1979, p. 209 ff.

¹⁵⁹ The *Svensk Veckotidning*, 1974, No. 42.

¹⁶⁰ Bishop Arne Rudvin at the 1979 MCCS General Assembly and in a personal conversation with John Hultvall, June 14th, 1979. Rudvin explained that if the road between Pakistan and China had existed in 1938, the refugees from Sinkiang would not have gone to India, but to Pakistan. Rudvin himself had

In northern Pakistan, on the Chinese border, an Eastern Turkish population is found. Their relatives and friends live on in Eastern Turkestan, and in letters to the Swedish missionaries they speak about many of them, especially in Jarkend who have plans to travel over the mountains to visit their relatives in Pakistan. This trip is now possible both by plane and bus.¹⁶¹ When Bishop Rudvin returned to Pakistan after his visit to Stockholm, he brought with him a copy of the Swedish missionaries' translation of the Bible into Eastern Turkish. This is a cassette edition produced by Mission Secretary Folke Björk and Jacob Stephen. It is hoped that this edition will be used among the Pakistani Eastern Turks, and possibly even reach into Sinkiang.¹⁶² By the way, this cassette edition is the only thing left of the missionaries' translation. The whole edition is out of print. A new project for the Mission is to have the Bible written in Romanised script as the children in Sinkiang now go to Chinese schools where they learn to read Turkish in Romanised script.¹⁶³ Concerning this Bible translation made by the missionaries, it is remarkable that in all the letters received since 1967 nothing is said about it. Probably no copies reached Jarkend. A parcel of Bibles was, however, sent to Kashgar, as has already been mentioned, in the late 1940s by the Bible distributor Anders W. Marthinson. The assumption that the Turkish Bible is not to be found in Jarkend is confirmed by the fact that the letter writing woman from Jarkend asked the missionaries, in the summer of 1980 to send her a Bible and a hymn book in Turkish. The writer did not think this would cause any problems, since the Muslims could send for copies of the Koran from Mecca. And thus, she as a Christian ought to have the right to read the Bible, she adds.¹⁶⁴

Christians in Sinkiang live under the double pressure of Communist China and the Muslim majority in the province. Lately, this opposition has, however, slightly decreased from both sides, making it bearable to live as a Christian. A letter dated 1979 further confirms this assumption. The letter writer, the woman mentioned above, says: "Quite often we gather to pray and sing with our old friends from the Mission in Jarkend." One of them is mentioned in the letter, a girl from the orphanage who had a hard time during the revolution of the 1930s. There is also a Chinese Christian family taking part in the meetings.¹⁶⁵ The conclusion is clear and unambiguous: the Church of Christ in Sinkiang is alive today. It is active in house-groups without formal organisation. One of these house-churches has been mentioned by the woman in Jarkend. Maybe there are more house-churches in Jarkend with its more than 100,000 inhabitants? The fact that there are Christians in Kashgar has also been confirmed. It's an astonishing thought! It is quite plausible that groups are meeting, scattered here and there all over the former mission field. Without knowing about each other or having contact with each other, these small Christians groups are persevering, witnessing about their faith and passing on the Mission's heritage.

planned to travel to Eastern Turkestan as a missionary at the beginning of the 1930s. As already mentioned, the Norwegian Mission was at this time trying to establish work in the northern parts of Eastern Turkestan. Their only missionary to the area was Otto Torvik, who was expelled in 1935.

¹⁶¹ X to Naemi Terning, October 18th, 1979.

¹⁶² Björk in conversation with Hultvall at the MCCS General Assembly in 1979.

¹⁶³ X to Naemi Terning, September 1st, 1979. This reform had already been planned at the end of the 1950s. (Jarring, 1979, p 41).

¹⁶⁴ X to Josef Stephen, August 25th, 1980 and September 29th, 1980.

¹⁶⁵ X to Stephen, December 9th, 1979.

