

## **FOREIGN PRESENCE IN MONGOLIA: CURRENT STATUS AND PROBLEMS**

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During my recent visit to Erlian—a border town on the Chinese-Mongolian border—I saw in a local electronic appliance shop a photo of Jiang Zemin with a group of Chinese businessmen in Ulaanbaatar, probably taken during the Chinese President's visit to Mongolia in July 1999. The owner of the shop was very proud that a small Chinese local community in Mongolia had received such attention from Chairman Jiang Zemin. The change in Erlian illustrates the change that has occurred in Chinese-Mongolian relations during the last decade. Erlian, which only ten years ago was an obscure local town of five to six thousand inhabitants, is now experiencing a “development boom” and is home to a population of fifty to sixty thousand. Construction is going on everywhere, ranging from the enlargement of roads to the completion of a new border control station.

The 1990s have been a time of great prosperity for both China and Mongolia, especially in the border regions. On both sides, economic relations have been accelerated by national policies of openness, but with differences. For Mongolia, international openness has brought an unprecedented opportunity for so-called suitcase traders and business people who aim to set up a kiosk-type economy in Ulaanbaatar. For China, the location of Erlian as an important Northern gate was quickly realized, and it soon became a transit point for both Chinese goods and people eager to enter Mongolia.

### **Historical and Cultural Factors**

The process of resettling Chinese nationals in Mongolian lands has a long history. This history began in 1725 when, by decree of the Qing emperors, the first Chinese settled in the fertile lands of the Orkhon and Tuul river basins; in 1762 more Chinese settled in the Khobdo region. The basic duty of the Chinese settlers was to provide food for Chinese soldiers stationed in Mongolia to fight the rebellious Jungar Khanate. Farming was scaled back with the onset of peace and the withdrawal of the Chinese soldiers.

During more than two hundred years of rule by the Manchu Qing dynasty, Mongolia was effectively sealed off from foreign - especially Chinese - presence. Knowing that the nomadic Mongols did not like the Chinese and despised Chinese sedentary culture, the Manchu rulers of Qing China were careful not to mix the two cultures.

Moreover, the Manchus, who were interested in maintaining the Mongols as a strong ally, introduced and implemented several anti-Chinese laws that remained effective well into the beginning of the twentieth century. These laws forbade the Chinese from crossing the Mongolian border, from cultivating Mongolian pastoral lands, and from marrying Mongolian women.

Trade was the main Chinese activity in Mongolia. Virtually every monastery had either a small branch of a Chinese trading company or a commercial agent which would collect raw animal materials from the Mongols in exchange for tea, tobacco, chinaware,

fabrics, and the like. In order to limit an increase in the number of Chinese traders, the Manchu court carefully devised a policy whereby a special license was issued to traders in order to prevent their permanent residence in Mongolia. Beginning in 1720 Chinese merchants were required to get special permission to enter Mongolia and, in addition, their return to China was mandated.

After the 1850's the Manchu court gradually weakened its strict policy toward Chinese merchants and those who wished to settle in Northern Mongolia. Chinese trading houses like Da Shenkui, Yuan Shende, and Tian Yide, which had built their fortunes throughout the nineteenth century, became increasingly aggressive and expansionist. Chinese merchants were concentrated in Khobdo, Uliastai, Ulaangom, and Yihe Khuree. By some estimates, there were about 500 Chinese firms and 100,000 (or 50,000 by other estimates) Chinese settlers in Northern Mongolia by the end of the nineteenth century. The money-lending practices of these Chinese firms (operating both wholesale and retail trade throughout Mongolia) reached a critical level that threatened Mongolia's whole financial system. The Chinese commercial network dominated all of Mongolia: the volume of trade between northern Mongolia and China, estimated at 50,000,000 rubles in 1905, was six times larger than that between Mongolia and Russia.<sup>1</sup>

Until 1911 Russian commerce and the number of Russian citizens in Northern Mongolia was relatively small compared to the Chinese case. Trade was about eight to ten million rubles per year, and there were probably only around eight hundred Russians in the entire country. Yihe Khuree, which the Russians called Urga and the Soviets later renamed Ulaanbaatar, had become the largest population center in Mongolia and also the center for trade and commerce. Naturally, the key traders and merchants in Yihe Khuree were the Chinese and Russians. According to the Mongolian historian Idshinnorov, Khuree had some 4,500 Chinese craftsmen, along with about forty large Chinese firms, twenty-five Russian firms, and around a hundred small shops and stalls. During this time small Japanese and Korean communities appeared and their inhabitants engaged in small trading and medical services, and started barbershops.

The Russian civil war spilled over into Mongolia when the White Russians headed by Baron Ungern-Sternberg invaded from Siberia. His advance into Urga and his two attempts to drive the Chinese troops from the city in November 1920 and February 1921 created an entirely new situation, causing a mass exodus of foreign nationals from Mongolia. Ungern's invasion of Mongolia and the prolonged battle for Khuree caused more than fifteen thousand refugees to flee. The South Manchurian Railway carried 1,270 refugees to Mukden, from where they departed for Tianjin. Among the refugees were Americans, Europeans, Koreans, and Japanese. This was the first mass exodus of foreigners from Mongolia in the twentieth century.

The 1921 People's Revolution in Mongolia, supported by Soviet Russia, brought an entirely new dimension to foreign presence in the country. In the years 1925-1928, Mongolia experienced a short but effective wave of modernization. Trade delegations were sent to Western European countries in 1926, while several hundred Chinese and a dozen British and American firms continued to operate in Mongolia. Specialists from Western countries set up small factories and power stations; for example, German experts came to Mongolia to participate in the construction of a brick factory and a small power station. Some Scandinavians were able to set up a profitable and up-to-date trading post

and farm in Northern Mongolia, and for a short period the Swedish YMCA operated a school and hospital in Ulaanbaatar.<sup>2</sup>

The Foreign Minister's report, given to the second Congress of the State Khural (Mongolian Parliament) convened in 1925, states that there were a total of 51,207 foreigners living in Mongolia, including 23,919 Chinese, 318 Tibetans, and 161 Chahar Mongols. Another report listed about 2,700 people of German, British, American, Danish, French, Polish, Hungarian, and Italian origin residing in Mongolia by the mid 1920's. This tolerant policy toward foreigners ended by 1929. Unwelcome foreigners were required to leave the country; those who resisted were forcibly expelled. In 1929 alone, more than four thousand foreigners, including German, Swedish, and Danish experts, were driven out of Mongolia.<sup>3</sup> This was in line with the Soviet Union's desire to completely isolate Mongolia from the outside world so as to pursue its economic interest of establishing a monopoly in the Mongolian market.

The birth of new China was the most profound event of the 1950's, as it opened up broad opportunities for landlocked Mongolia. Until the mid 1960's, Mongolia benefited from growing cooperation between the USSR and China. Chinese laborers arrived to build a number of projects in Mongolia, including the first apartment buildings in Ulaanbaatar. Chinese laborers and their families numbered between 17,000 and 18,000 in the years 1955-1964. The Chinese even built their own school and hospital in Ulaanbaatar.<sup>4</sup> The first large-scale Chinese departure occurred in May 1962, although most left Mongolia for China during 1963-64.

Soviet assistance became a principal source of capital investment in 1960's and 70's, enabling the construction of several hundred industrial projects. The large industrial town of Darkhan, second only to Ulaanbaatar, was built in northern Mongolia by an international team including Mongolians, Russians, and East Europeans. The Soviet construction operation in Mongolia, begun in 1964, expanded and by the 1970's was building mostly apartment high-rises in Ulaanbaatar. The Soviets invested the most in the construction of a huge copper plant, called Erdenet, between 1973 and 1981. Most Russians left Mongolia in 1990 when bilateral relations were abruptly ceased.

### **The Current Status**

In 1990 Mongolia held its first free elections in its eighty years of modern history, and since then has taken important steps toward a multiparty, pluralistic and democratic society. Political liberalization in Mongolia has brought forth both unprecedented freedoms of religion and travel for its citizens. Additionally, Mongolia's openness has made it very attractive to foreigners, leading to a dramatic increase in the number of foreign residents, both legal and illegal.

During the socialist period (before 1990), Mongolian citizens had very limited access to passports allowing them to travel abroad. At the same time, foreign nationals - except those from the former USSR and East European countries - had to contend with visa issuance policies that made their travel to Mongolia almost impossible. A foreign citizen's travel and residence in Mongolia were regulated by two legal acts, namely, "Regulation on Entry to the Mongolian People's Republic and Exit from the MPR" and the "Law on Rights and Obligations of Foreign Citizens in the MPR."<sup>5</sup> During the Sino-Soviet confrontation, Moscow was the only entry/exit point to Mongolia for both foreigners and Mongolians.

After 1990, every citizen of Mongolia was provided with an equal opportunity to obtain a passport and to travel abroad. Businesses - private and public - were provided the same right to engage in international trade and commercial activity. The change in immigration procedures brought about a dramatic increase in inbound and outbound foreign travel. By some estimates, about 30,000 Mongolian citizens traveled abroad in 1990, a dramatic reversal of the pre-1990 trend. This situation prompted authorities to draft two important acts of legislation, which were passed by the Parliament in 1993.

The first act of legislation, the “Law on Travel and Immigration of Mongolian Citizens for Private Business”, was passed by the Parliament on the 24th of December 1993. This law gave every citizen of Mongolia the right to travel abroad and, moreover, the right to emigrate, i.e. to reside permanently in a foreign country for private purposes. This law regulates procedures concerning the approval and issuance of national passports for foreign travel and the rights and obligations of citizens traveling abroad. In accordance with this law, the Civil Registration State Center was set up in Ulaanbaatar, and is responsible for the issuance of ordinary passports for Mongolian citizens traveling abroad and for the registration of foreigners residing in the country longer than thirty days. The Center keeps records of Mongolian passport-holders as well as those of foreign residents.

The second act of legislation, the “Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens” was also passed by the Parliament on the 24th of December 1993. The purpose of this law was to define and regulate the rights and obligations of foreign citizens relating to Mongolian citizenship, entry, exit, transit, and residence. This law was written in five chapters: introduction, the legal status of foreigners, visa issues (entry, exit, and transit through Mongolia), travel and residence in Mongolia, and other issues. Foreigners entering Mongolia were divided into six categories as follows: travelers, transit travelers, temporary residents, long-term residents for both official and private purposes, permanent residents, and immigrants. A traveler has the right to stay in the country up to 30 days, a temporary resident up to 90 days, a permanent resident up to 5 years, and an immigrant over five years.<sup>6</sup>

The most debated issue in the Parliament was whether or not to limit the number of permanent residents and immigrants residing in Mongolia. The decision that finally prevailed called for a numerical limit or “ceiling” to the number of foreigners who plan to stay permanently in the country. The law states that the number of permanent foreign residents and immigrants should not exceed one percent of the Mongolian population (Mongolian citizens) at any given time and that those from one individual country should not exceed 0.33 percent of the total number of permanent foreign residents and immigrants already in-country. This case clearly reflects a well-rooted concern for national security.

The registration of foreign citizens, other than visitors in the country for less than 30 days, was obligatory unless they were invited by Mongolian central and local governments. In the years 1993-2000 the registration of foreign nationals was overseen by the Civil Registration State Center. The law on the legal status of foreign citizens was amended by the Parliament in December 2000. The new amendment required all foreigners except those invited by the government to register within seven days of their arrival in Mongolia. This strict regulation met bitter resistance and harsh criticism from foreign Embassies and from foreign citizens residing in Mongolia. Some foreigners even

complained that such a requirement was tantamount to a secret police surveillance network. These circumstances forced the Mongolian government to request that the Parliament modify the regulation. The Parliament agreed to exclude travelers (those planning to remain in-country for up to 30 days) from the duty of registration.

The most important amendment to the 1993 Law was the creation of a new government service responsible for dealing with matters relating to foreign citizens and immigrants. The government's purpose was to set up a unified professional immigration service to handle all issues relating to residence, citizenship, and immigration of foreign citizens to Mongolia. The new Immigration Service, inaugurated in May 2001 under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs<sup>7</sup>, subsequently took over the corresponding functions of the Civil Registration State Center.

According to Immigration Service Director Ts. Buyanbadrakh, as of August 15, 2001 there were 3204 foreign permanent residents and immigrants registered in Mongolia. Among them were 1520 Chinese, 1493 Russians, 126 citizens of other countries, and 65 foreigners without citizenship. There were also 7,363 long and short-term registered residents from fifty different countries, including contract workers, students, and their families. Therefore, the number of officially registered foreign permanent residents did not exceed the range of 10,000 to 11,000.<sup>8</sup>

The majority of foreign nationals represented in each of the above two categories are of Chinese and Russian nationality. Mongolia's Law on Citizenship does not recognize dual citizenship. Therefore, all 1520 Chinese permanent residents of Mongolia are Chinese citizens. Most of them live in Ulaanbaatar and are concentrated in the Sukhebaatar and Chingeltei districts. Traditionally, the Chinese have engaged in small-scale shop keeping and vegetable growing. Since the 1990's, however, the right to travel freely has created opportunities for the Chinese in Mongolia to set up joint-venture companies together with partners within China proper, most commonly in the service, retail and wholesale trading sectors. Also, using their language skills and familiarity with the local market, Chinese permanent residents in Mongolia have begun to work as brokers for Chinese trading companies.

By the end of 2000, 88 wholly-owned and 365 jointly-owned foreign investment companies dependent on Chinese capital were registered in Mongolia. China occupies first place not only in terms of the number of joint ventures but also in terms of the amount of capital invested in Mongolia. Not surprisingly, Chinese companies are interested in either employing Chinese nationals already in Mongolia or in bringing Chinese nationals to the country. By the end of 2000, about 1860 Chinese nationals had received permission to work in Mongolia. About 40 percent of all foreigners working on official contract basis in the country are Chinese.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the Russian permanent residents in Mongolia have Russian citizenship. Although having Russian citizenship was beneficial during the socialist period, since 1990 Russian nationals have faced increasing difficulties. For example, Russians were excluded from privatization schemes and social security benefits. Gradually, however, the Mongolian government agreed to cover Russian nationals' social security insurance and to privatize their apartments, as was done vis-à-vis its own citizens. Although Russian nationals in Mongolia established the "Association of Russian Citizens" in order to protect their rights, those who are termed "local Russians" continue to face the problem of high unemployment.

Russians residing in Mongolia on a contract basis work mainly in the major Mongol-Russian joint venture companies that were set up during socialist period. These include the Erdenet copper plant, the Mongol-Russian Mining Company - “MonRosTsvetmet” - engaged in gold and fluorspar extraction, and the Ulaanbaatar railway company. Currently, 160 Russian and Mongolian-Russian joint companies are registered in Mongolia, and they are engaged in such diverse industries as gold mining, transportation, construction, and services. The border and proximate regions of Mongolia and the Russian Federation are beginning to develop direct ties. For example, frank discussions on border cooperation and the signing of a number of agreements marked recent visits to Mongolia by the governors of Irkutsk, the Republic of Buryatia, Kemerovo, Yakutia, and other regions of the Russian Federation.<sup>10</sup>

### Issues and Problems

As indicated earlier, the number of foreigners visiting Mongolia has increased dramatically since 1990. Most of them are short-term visitors or tourists, who usually come to enjoy Mongolia’s virgin land during the summer. The number of foreigners working with international organizations such as the UNDP has also increased significantly. Contract workers – mostly from China – employed by foreign-invested companies comprise in large part the foreign presence in Mongolia today. There are also a considerable number of missionaries, especially from Korea, who are trying to establish Christian churches and are actively recruiting young believers.

As suggested by the Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 2000, the number of foreigners arriving in and departing from Mongolia reached its peak in 1998, and has since remained within the range of 150,000 to 160,000 persons per year.

Table 1. Number of Arrivals and Departures by Country

Country/Region	Inbound			Outbound		
	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000
USA	4,622	5,381	6,451	4,371	5,430	6,511
Australia	1,310	1,066	1,008	1,170	1,065	1,134
UK	2,250	2,220	2,800	2,123	2,249	3,032
South Korea	3,073	5,171	8,039	2,876	5,438	8,239
Germany	3,388	3,506	4,206	3,245	3,475	4,068
Denmark	762	773	602	621	694	639
Italy	845	818	743	688	772	801
Kazakhstan	644	1,154	1,677	524	1,396	1,510
Canada	689	725	611	627	693	663
Russia	63,532	55,782	49,456	65,025	59,922	48,712
Singapore	370	968	383	333	647	361
Taiwan	407	504	578	332	457	668
China	92,789	58,346	57,546	85,790	58,614	48,024
France	1,819	1,983	1,841	1,800	1,959	1,918
Switzerland	517	508	637	435	385	326
Japan	11,846	11,775	11,392	10,585	12,533	13,987
Other	8,561	9,065	10,235	7,902	8,134	9,170
Total	197,424	159,745	158,205	188,447	163,863	149,763

Source: *Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 2000*. Ulaanbaatar: National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2001, p. 195.

The statistics above show that the majority of foreign visitors come from two neighboring countries: Russia and China. In 1998 alone, 90,000-100,000 and 60,000-70,000 people visited from China and Russia, respectively. Visitors from Japan, South Korea, The United States, and Germany follow in the list of rankings. A common problem among foreigners in Mongolia, especially among the Chinese, occurs when they stay in country past the expiration date on their visas. If a foreigner stays longer than 30 days, he/she must register with the Civil Registration State Center or its provincial offices. In 2000 alone, 567 foreign citizens from 31 countries were fined for illegal visa extensions or violations of registration policy.<sup>11</sup> The most likely explanation for this disregard of the registration policy is that the low fines imposed on offenders have not sufficiently encouraged compliance. Before 2000, the Law of Administrative Responsibilities imposed \$60 and \$150 fines on offending persons and businesses, respectively. In 2000, the respective fines were increased to \$100-\$300 and \$600-\$1000.<sup>12</sup>

On account of their proximity, Mongolia offers citizens of Russia and China ample opportunities for low-cost living and profitable trade, and also serves as a transit point to more advanced countries. During the 1990's, the privatization of small scale services and state-owned apartments generated much interest among citizens of states such as Russia and China, which have had traditional connections to Mongolia. The easy acquisition of many previously state-owned buildings and companies prompted many to ask who is behind the names of those wealthy Mongolians. Chinese restaurants, German beer houses, Korean fast food vendors, and Korean dry-cleaners now dominate the streets of Ulaanbaatar.

The cashmere industry in Mongolia is an interesting example of the expanding trade yet increasing uneasiness that characterizes Mongol-Chinese relations. Chinese buyers, who are able to pay the highest prices, are increasingly penetrating the domestic cashmere industry. The price of cashmere has come to be dictated by Chinese buyers, who in turn recruit local brokers to buy raw cashmere at exchange markets in Ulaanbaatar. The export of raw cashmere (by Chinese buyers in Mongolia) to China for processing and manufacture has eliminated a raw export product, which was previously a major source of domestic industry and employment. The goods comprising Sino-Mongolian trade pass through one permanent and nine seasonal border crossings, and Mongolians point to the rapidly growing prosperity of the Chinese side of these ports of entry as a sign of one-sided profit. Erlian is a typical example of such a phenomenon.

The proximity of Mongolia also makes it very attractive to citizens of its neighboring states as a transit point to more advanced countries. The Mongolian newspaper told the story of a Chinese citizen who was arrested at Buyant-Ukhaa airport for trying to illegally bring 104 Chinese passports into Mongolia. He allegedly claimed that these passports were brought to Mongolia in order to procure Mongolian visas for Chinese workers on contract with a certain Mongolian company. The police suspected that these passports were to be sold to Chinese citizens *already* residing illegally in Mongolia.<sup>13</sup> In other cases, Chinese citizens have illegally bought forged Mongolian passports and subsequently used them in attempts to enter a third country.

Other types of criminal activity, including narcotics trafficking, are of increasing concern to Mongolian law enforcement agencies. In 2000, Mongolian police detained about 50 foreign citizens, including 23 Chinese and 21 Russians. A controversy

surrounding medicine production in the province of Bayankhongor was reported widely in the Mongolian mass media: according to some experts a Chinese businessman had tried to obtain a contract from the governor of that province in order to gather a naturally-occurring ingredient of opium. The experts further claimed that the businessman intended to engage in the production of a certain type of narcotic. Finally, a number of Russians have been detained in Mongolia on charges of illegal narcotics distribution.

The practice of Christianity is a new phenomenon in Mongolia, brought about by missionary activity beginning in the 1990's. In Ulaanbaatar alone, about 128 churches of various Christian denominations operate freely. According to a recent poll of teenagers by the UN Children's Fund, 50.3 percent of the respondents believe in some kind of religion. Among these, 34 percent follow Buddhism and 11 percent are Christian. Christian churches and their associated charitable activities appeal mostly to socially vulnerable sections of the Mongolian population. Some journalists also blame "extreme" Christian sects for driving teenagers to suicide in the name of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

### **Mongolia's Policy on the Travel of Mongolian Citizens**

As stated above, the number of Mongolian citizens traveling abroad has increased dramatically since 1990; the right to travel abroad was one of main freedoms instituted by democratic reform in Mongolia. Passports were freely issued to all Mongolian citizens 18 years of age and older. Thirty thousand Mongolians traveled abroad in 1990; by 1997 and 1999 that number had increased 20 and 30 times, respectively. Because of their proximity, China and Russia naturally have been the main destinations. China offered the additional attractiveness of being a large market of cheap consumer goods. Other common destinations included East European countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Germany; many Mongolians received their college education in those countries during the socialist period and thus felt a certain affinity.

Initially, both China and Russia allowed Mongolian citizens to travel within their borders without a visa. During the early part of 1990's, many Mongolian private citizens benefited economically from these policies, especially in the so-called suitcase trade. Trade also flourished in the Mongol-Chinese and Mongol-Russian border regions. The exchange of consumer goods in these regions and the number of visitors increased rapidly during this time. In addition, Mongolia could have potentially become an important transit corridor between China and Russia.

However, Russia became concerned with the massive influx of Asians, especially Chinese. In the Irkutsk border region, for example, the "army of migrants" was viewed negatively by Russia because, as it saw things, these migrants were creating an unwanted permanent resident community. This community was increasing in size at an alarming rate through marriage, study, guest work, business registrations, and property purchases. In response, Russia ended its no-visa policy towards the Chinese and Mongolians in 1994 and 1995, respectively. In order to protect its domestic industry Russia also tightened its taxation policy towards "itinerant traders," i.e. peddlers and retailers. In these ways the Russian authorities tried to curb the wave of illegal settlers.

The somehow hesitant policy of the Jasrai Government in Mongolia was also a contributing factor in the termination, in April 1995, of the Mongol-Russian agreement on visa-free travel. From this point on, Mongolian citizens who held ordinary (category "E") passports were effectively denied a no-visa entry into Russia. Holders of official

“A” and diplomatic “D” category passports continued to enjoy no-visa entry into Russia. The Mongolian government viewed this new Russian policy with increasing concern, because it found itself stung by mounting criticism from the large part of its population that was denied free travel to Russia and further into Europe.

The Mongolian Government twice presented to Russia draft agreements governing the travel of the two countries’ nationals, once in February 1997 and again in December 1998. These draft agreements aimed to abolish the visa requirements imposed on nationals of the two countries. However, the Russian Government was reluctant to accept the Mongolian proposal. For instance, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed its Mongolian counterpart in March 1999 that it was not yet ready to reconsider its position vis-à-vis the 1995 visa policies. However, Russia did introduce a few conciliatory measures: for example, the visa fee for Mongolian students studying in Russia and Europe was waived, as was the visa fee previously required for senior and handicapped Mongolian citizens who wished to travel to Russia for medical reasons.<sup>15</sup>

Mongolia shares a 3485 km border with the Russian Federation and a 4677 km border with the People’s Republic of China. The agreement in place between the governments of Mongolia and Russia officially designates 29 ports of entry, including four international ports for passengers and goods, nine bilateral ports for passengers and goods, nine seasonal bilateral ports, and another seven transit ports. At present, a total of 19 ports are functioning, including 16 on a permanent basis, and another three on a seasonal basis. Among them, Sukhebaatar-Naushki plays a prominent role as an international port because it is open to citizens of third countries. Three other international ports operate only bilaterally, due to the lack of adequate facilities.

Between Mongolia and China there presently is one international port of entry operating on a permanent basis and nine bilateral ports of entry operating on a seasonal basis. Most prominent among these is the “Zamiin-Uud – Erliaan,” international port. Nine others, including “Bulgan” port in the province of Khobdo, “Gashuunsukhait” port in the province of South Gobi, and “Shiveekhuren,” also in South Gobi, are very crowded during the short season in which operate. Passengers and vehicles are issued temporary permits for seasonal entry, and are then allowed to cross the border at the ports. The following statistics show the number of Mongolian citizens who traveled through the various ports of entry to Russia and China in 2000.

Beginning in the latter half of the 1990’s, South Korea also became a popular destination for Mongolian citizens. At present, estimates show that 13,000 - 15,000 Mongolians are in Korea, where they are engaged mostly in low wage factory labor. Most of these migrants have traveled to Korea on a 30-day tourist visa, where they then stay illegally in order to make money. More and more Mongolians are reportedly being sent back from Korean ports of entry because of their lack of financial support. The Mongolian Government has repeatedly asked the Korean Government to protect the interests of Mongolians, most of whom are illegally employed and thus face the hardships of little or no pay and ineligibility for medical care and insurance programs.

Table 2. Outbound Mongolian Passengers in 2000

Immigration Ports	Total	Official	Private	Tourism	Transit	Others
Buyant-Ukhaa (airport)	38,853	9,481	18,853	4,536	761	5,222
Sukhbaatar (to Russia)	40,801	3,583	28,393	2,679	2,428	3,718
Altanbulag	60,147	1,175	56,219	1,024	617	1,112
Tsagaan Nuur	11,813	739	10,009	325	142	598
Ulgii	987	51	866	3	-	67
Khankh	4,524	46	4,478	-	-	-
Arts suuri	1,555	90	1,465	-	-	-
Ulikhan	1,780	32	1,746	-	-	2
Ereentsav	1,493	98	1,394	-	-	1
Borshoo	5,898	171	5,660	24	-	43
Baga Ilenkh	189	-	189	-	-	-
Zamiin Uud (to China)	266,221	9,532	240,097	5,942	1,916	8,734
Gashuun-Sukhait	19,609	414	19,195	-	-	-
Bichigt	3,080	663	2,200	217	-	-
Bulgan	23,186	327	22,715	144	-	-
Dayan	1,948	41	1,907	-	-	-
Baitag	4,222	-	4,222	-	-	-
Burgastai	2,105	-	2,105	-	-	-
Shivee-Khuren	11,345	580	10,765	-	-	-
Khavirga	9,065	72	8,993	-	-	-
Total	508,821	27,095	441,471	14,894	5,864	19,497

Source: *Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 2000*. Ulaanbaatar: National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2001, p. 194.

## Conclusion

Currently, the Mongolian attitude towards foreigners can be explained both by historical prejudices formed during the twentieth century, especially during the socialist period, and by the abrupt social change that has occurred since 1990. The fear of Chinese assimilation by sheer force of numbers, ingrained in Mongolian culture, was exacerbated by the “hate Maoist China” mentality that was cultivated during the Sino-Soviet confrontation and Cultural Revolution in China. The Mongolian attitude towards the Russians was traditionally quite the opposite, although the desire of some Russians living in Mongolia to be segregated from the Mongolians, implying cultural superiority, dampened the Russians’ generally positive image. Before 1990, all other foreigners – especially from Western countries – were considered potential spies and thus were treated poorly.

Mongolia after the democratic reforms of 1990 has become one of most open countries in Asia on account of its liberal immigration policies towards foreigners. Mongolia’s initial euphoria regarding foreigners, reflected in its policies, has given rise to interesting stories of adventure seekers and self-claimed millionaires who travel to Mongolia from countries as far away as Australia and the Netherlands. Mongolia’s low cost of living and comparatively high degree of basic freedoms make it attractive to

foreigners, especially from neighboring Russia and China, as a place to settle permanently. Economic slowdown and uncertainty in East Asia in 1997-98 has led to the discovery of Mongolia as a safe place to invest small fortunes, bringing citizens from countries such as South Korea. Finally, land reform and the privatization of large-scale state enterprises in Mongolia will certainly generate more interest from foreigners in the coming years.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ts. Batbayar. *Modern Mongolia: A Concise History*. Ulaanbaatar: Mongolian Center for Scientific and Technological Information, 1996, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ts. Batbayar. p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> B. Baabar. *History of Mongolia*. Ulaanbaatar: Monsudar Publishing, 2001, pp. 299-300.

<sup>4</sup> L. Begzjav. *Mongol-Chinese Relations, 1949-1999*. (in Mongolian), Ulaanbaatar: Admon Publishing, 1999, pp. 42-43.

<sup>5</sup> *Collection of National Laws on Immigration*, (in Mongolian), Civil Registration State Center, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> “Zuunii Medee”, June 26, 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Mr. Ts. Buyanbadrakh, August 15, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> “Zuunii Medee”, July 4, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> *Foreign Policy Blue Book of Mongolia*. Ulaanbaatar: Admon Publishing, 2000, pp. 20-21.

<sup>11</sup> “Zuunii Medee”, May 15, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> “Zuunii Medee”, July 27, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> “Zuunii Medee”, May 25, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> “Zuunii Medee”, September 26, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Internal Reference Material, Mongolian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oct.26, 2000.