

Islam's Survival under Communism

Roger Crabb

A row of 20 men kneel on rough grass mats before the ornate mosque door in Kashgar, Chinese Turkestan, chanting the Islamic prayer. *Allahu Akbar* — God is Great. The sight is commonplace in any Islamic country, but these men are wearing blue and green Mao jackets and are citizens of the officially atheistic People's Republic of China.

This ancient oasis city, once the most exotic of high Tartary, was long a staging post on the Silk Road from China's heartland to India and the Mid-east. Today, centuries after the last caravan passed through laden with silks, brocades and jade bound for the Mediterranean bazaars, Kashgar remains a thriving commercial centre at the very heart of Central Asia. With the Soviet border just 120 kms away, it is also a highly sensitive outpost in China's wild Xinjiang region.

Not surprisingly, the British and Russian consulates, which in the early years of the century served as havens for explorers as well as government listening posts, have long been shut down and left to decay. I was among the first group of foreign journalists to visit the city since the Communist takeover in 1949.

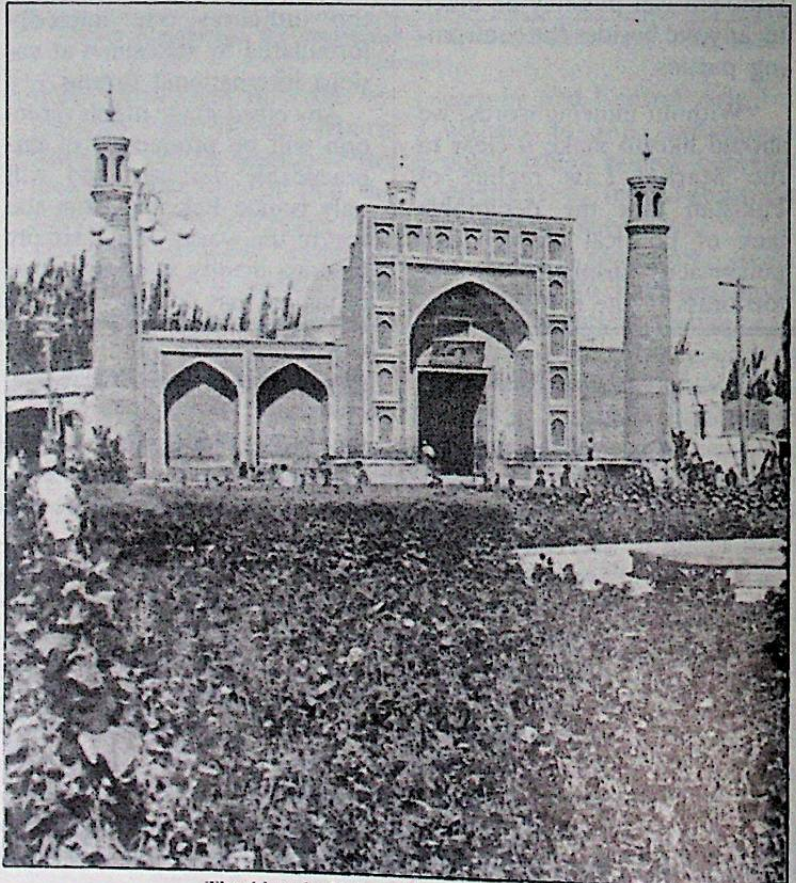
It was immediately apparent that, despite the Han Chinese officials shipped in to enforce Peking's political and military control of the region, Kashgar remains dominated by its in-

igenous Uighur population (120,000 out of 160,000), their Turkic culture and their Islamic faith. And with the loyalty of these frontier peoples so vital, the central government has allowed them a relatively high degree of religious autonomy.

The men taking part in the prayer service at the yellow-tiled Id Gah Mosque, which dominates Kashgar's main square, have the deeply tanned faces and striking features of the Turks whose cousins they are. In the courtyard, a knot of men listens to readings from the

Holy Qur'an. By the entrance, a young man proudly displays a green-covered copy of the Islamic Holy Book he has bought for 30 yuan (15 dollars) — two weeks' wages in a local factory.

Outside in the square is a sea of brown faces in which the few paler Han Chinese stand out. There is not an army uniform to be seen, although many thousands of Han soldiers are known to be stationed in the area. This is the beginning of the bazaar which spread out like the spokes of a wheel through kilometres of dusty



The historic Eidgah Mosque, Kashgar.

medieval alleys.

Set along the mosque walls is a row of little stalls — dress-makers, hat and shirt merchants, a dentist with forceps and a foot-operated drill who stores extracted teeth in a jar and uses them later to make



A Chinese Muslim. Thirtyfour years of Communist rule could not change the faith of the Turkestani people.

dentures. Beside him is a barber, shaving noble Uighur faces and heads with deft strokes of his razor while leaving the flowing beards intact.

Further round the square are food stalls, with people sitting under rudimentary cotton awnings, eating mutton *kebabs* cooked on charcoal grills, sorbet ices made while you wait, and round loaves of unleavened bread. Many of the stalls are huge wooden bedframes. On them are shirts from Shanghai, pantyhose from Hong Kong, skullcaps, jewellery and the leather shoes and boots preferred by the Uighurs, Uzbeks and Kirghiz of Kashgar to the gaudy plastic shoes worn elsewhere in China. One stall holder waved

a cotton shirt at us crying in Russian *Horosho, Horosho* — great stuff.

Russian Influence

Russian influence in Kashgar used to be very strong but has virtually disappeared after more than 20 years of Sino-Soviet animosity. Until a few weeks ago when the first Japanese arrived, there were no tourists at all.

Push through the crowds a bit more and you come across spice merchants and herbalists, their aromatic wares spread out before them in sacks. Then there are the carpet merchants, sitting crosslegged in the shade but ready to leap to their feet at the scent of a good bargain. This is the land of Ali Baba, culturally a million miles from the austere Socialist air of Peking.

Nothing illustrates this better than the grim, ill-lit government department store on the corner of a teeming bazaar street. Inside are enamel spittoons, hot water flasks and plastic chrysanthemums identical to those you find in Shanghai or Harbin. The locals pass it by without a second glance.

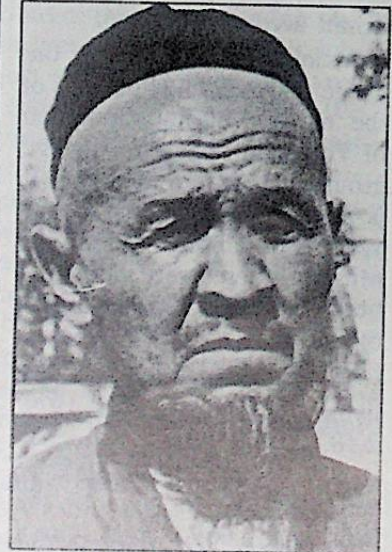
But even the bazaar is upstaged by the Sunday market. From before dawn, people from the surrounding countryside head towards the market site on the city's eastern outskirts. A seemingly endless stream of laden carts pulled by donkeys, horses, bullocks and camels kicks up a gigantic dust cloud. From a distance, the bleached, mud-brick buildings of Kashgar could be those of a Mid-eastern city. But the highest point on the horizon turns out to be a giant statue of Mao

Tse-tung.

Inside the market, where tens of thousands of people jostle, you can choose from hundreds of different bolts of cotton or silk, buy every conceivable part of a sheep, eat hot noodles, meat pastries or sheep's brains hot from the skull, or just enjoy the atmosphere.

Close to the stream is the livestock fair where you can test-drive a camel, or watch a Uighur countryman in black frock coat and high boots put a spirited horse through its paces. A local commune farmer buys a donkey for 180 yuan (90 dollars) after lengthy haggling ended by a complex series of handshakes.

During the Maoist cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s Red Guard zealots, sent nearly 4,000 kms from Peking, closed down Kashgar's market.



A Chinese Turkistani Muslim of Uighur descent.

It was reopened two years ago and, in the words of local officials, is as vigorous today — 1,200 years after the height of the silk trade — as it ever was.

accommodated in the city of Frunze. And only 32,000 Kirghiz, on the other hand, lived in this city in the year 1977. Should Western academics, however, express the opinion that colonization policies of this nature were not practised anywhere in either Asia or Africa by countries with colonies in these continents, then Soviet officials attempt to deny this state of affairs. The Soviets maintain that the migration of the Russian population was not forced colonization of the country, but, rather, "brotherly aid, which emanated from the Russian working population and the working population of other nationalities; and it was intended to help the native nationalities of Central Asia and to promote the economic and social development as well as the realization of industrialization, collectivization, the Cultural Revolution and the solution of other tasks involved in the building-up of socialism."

Radical Change

The demographic structure of Turkistan was radically changed by means of the political and economic measures of the Government of the Soviet Union. This structural change was apparent, in particular, when it came to making the Nomads settle down by means of compulsion and the incorporation of women into the working process. There were over 6,64,000 Nomad families in Turkistan before 1930, of which about 5,40,000 were to be found in the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan and about 1,24,000 in other regions of Turkistan. Compulsion was used to make these nomads

settle down and, through the incorporation of the nomads into animal husbandry collectives, to employ them as animal breeders. The existence of free nomadic life thus came to an end in Turkistan. The other important change which restructured society took place when women were mobilized in doing jobs in industry and agriculture. The policy of incorporating Muslim women in the agricultural work began on a large-scale in 1930, after the collectivization of the farmers had been in full swing. Women were first called upon to carry out work in the cotton plantations. The policy of incorporating women into other branches of production, particularly in industry, followed after that. Only 21.2 percent of all industrial women workers in the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan, for example, were Uzbek Muslims, 10 years ago (about 1970). In the year 1980, the percentage of these Muslim women in the total female industrial labour force had risen to 33 percent.

Women represent 44.5 percent of the working force in all branches of industrial life in Uzbekistan. When it comes to the expansion of the employment of women in the working force, an important Communist Party leader issued the following statement: "We shall continue to do everything that we can to enable Soviet women to have a greater chance of actively taking part in the growth of Communism". Muslim women have a lot to put up with, physically, employed as they are on a large-scale in the working process, including hard physical work such as the building of houses; irrigation

schemes; roadbuilding; the extraction of industrial raw materials and in agriculture (e.g. earth work). They are forced to perform their domestic tasks (cooking, housework and the raising of children) on top of their daily labours. Soviet legislation does not recognize the continuation of the payment of wages during pregnancy or after childbirth. One could refer to this state of affairs as exploitation, Communist-style, because, in the so-called capitalist countries, the law makes provision for women getting paid leave in the last months of a pregnancy and after giving birth. The Soviet authorities are only just getting round to considering the payment of about 50 or 70 percent of the basic wage, in such cases: this has, however, not been put into practice.)

Living Conditions

The study of the living conditions of the population is a task of great importance. This subject should be gone into very closely and scientifically. We can only give some hints at this stage. The population of Turkistan does not have dwellings which can adequately meet the requirements of the individual families. For example, in 1978, the entire housing in Turkistan consisted of 24,34,53,000 sq. m., of which 18,65,10,000 sq. m. were owned by the State and 5,69,00,000 sq. m. were privately owned). This means that there were only 6.9 sq. m. at the disposal of each individual. If one allocates the entire housing space to families, however, it can be seen that each family (of a total of 7,757 families in 1979) has only got 31.4 sq. m. of housing space irrespective of the size of the family.

The Muslims of Turkistan — II

Demographic and Economic Situation

Baymirza Hayit

It can thus be seen, from the preceding table that the birth-rate increased very slowly, in the course of the nine years in question, i.e. by 0.62 per 1,000 persons, whereas the death rate increased by 1.36 per 1,000 persons.

The composition of the population of Turkistan, broken down into groups according to age, has not yet been made public following the Census of 1979. The only official information about the years of birth of the native, Muslim population of Turkistan (an information which is provisional) is based on the results of the Census of 1970. The foregoing Table shows the break-down of the Muslim population of Turkistan according to age.

It can thus be seen from the Table that 21,29,184 persons of the native Muslim population of Turkistan belong to the age group of 60 years and higher. It is also remarkable that in the year 1970 among 1,62,27,000 Muslims there were about 59 percent, i.e., 95,42,684 children of the age group 0-15 years.

Of the 4,01,64,000 persons living in Turkistan in 1979, 2,18,22,000 persons lived in rural areas and 1,82,82,000 in towns. It is predominantly the Muslim population of Turkistan which lives in the rural areas. The entire rural population is arranged in 3,404 Sowkhozs (State farms) and 1,922 Kolkhozs (collective farms), in other words, Farmers' Cooperatives, in which the agricultu-

ral workers are not paid a weekly wage but live, instead, on the proceeds of the sale of their products; and 526 mixed agricultural enterprises. This rural population cultivates (the position in 1978) 4,27,00,000 hectares of arable land, including 28,98,000 hectares of cotton plantations. In the Northern agricultural regions of Turkistan, particularly in the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan, however, the Russians constitute the absolute majority of the rural population, because these areas were settled expressly by the Russians under the slogan "Opening up of the country." In 1979 there were 23,36,000 persons working in mixed agricultural enterprises

Those accounting for the increase in the urban population have come mainly from the ranks of the Russians or the Ukrainians. Turkistan has currently got 220 towns. In the large towns, for example in the capital cities of the Soviet Republics of Turkistan, the majority of the population is Russian, and the Muslims, on the other hand, have remained in the minority in their own towns. The following Soviet statistics help to prove this: There were 5,64,584 Russians and 5,12,962 Uzbeks living in Tashkent in 1970; — now the Uzbeks are in this city in majority; there were 5,12,900 Russians and only 88,237 Kazakhs living in Alma-Ata; there were 2,84,676 Russians and 53,059 Kirghiz living in Frunze (formerly Pishpek);

there were 1,57,083 Russians and 98,114 Tadjiks living in Dushanbe; and, finally, there were 1,08,144 Russians and 96,752 Turkmens living in Ashkabad. The Russians either occupy positions of authority or act as specialists, using Turkistanian towns as their bases. The towns of Turkistan can, thus, be considered as centres of power of the Soviet government of Russia.

Russian industrial workers are in the majority, too, compared with their native Turkistanian worker colleagues. In 1959, only 27.68 per cent of the workers in Turkistan were Turkistanians. The situation has not changed drastically up to the present day. The government of the Soviet Union sent industrial workers to Turkistan on an intensive scale. The Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan has been particularly affected by this settlement policy. The number of urban dwellers in this region of Turkistan, for example, increased in the year 1946-1956 at the expense of the Russian Federative Soviet Republic (54.2 per cent); others came from the Soviet Republic of the Ukraine (16.1 per cent). This state of affairs is regarded by Soviet sociologists as the "mechanical growth" of the urban population. Soviet academics admitted openly that the Russianization of the towns had come about as a result of the influx of Russians and Ukrainians. In the period 1926-1970, for example, over 1,60,000 Russians and Ukrainians were

Another sorry state of affairs, socially speaking, is to be found when one considers the medical care facilities for the population. In 1978 there were 1,10,300 medical doctors in Turkistan and 4,03,000 other persons with medical training (but not doctors). Twenty-seven doctors, therefore, had 10,000 persons to care for. This implies that each doctor had about 370 patients in his care. Another way of looking at this piece of information is to deduce that the number of illnesses affecting the population is considerable.

Finally, to conclude this short introduction to the study of the demography of Turkistan, it should also be mentioned that scientific research into all the problems in this sector has not upto now been carried out either in depth or on a regular basis. Western and Islamic, Oriental research have both devoted very little attention to the demography of Turkistan. In the Soviet Union, too, this research field is not treated properly, although demographers and ethnologists have access to extensive source material. A "Council for the Coordination of the Scientific Research into the Demography and Sources of Employment in Central Asia and Kazakhstan" (Turkistan) was founded as recently as January 1980. This Council forms part of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Republic of Kirghizia and is under the leadership of Professor K. Karakayev. The rapid increase in the number of Muslims in Turkistan has become a political problem for the present Soviet leadership. The Minister President of the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan, Khudayber-

diev, for example, announced at the beginning of February, 1981, that the population of Uzbekistan would number about 22-23 million by the year 1990. He was of the opinion that employment would have to be found for these people in Uzbekistan.

Brezhnev, on the other hand, demanded at the end of February, 1981, that the surplus labour force from Central Asia and a few of the regions of the Caucasus be employed in Siberia and the Northern regions of the Soviet Union. Brezhnev's demand implied that the Soviet leadership in Moscow did not want the Muslims to increase in numbers in their own homeland. Nor it was wished that the Muslims remained in their own country. Measures for the deportation of Muslims from Turkistan to Siberia have already been introduced for this very reason. In Siberia the Muslims will be given no opportunity of preserving their own cultural heritage and religious life and a gradual assimilation of Muslims with the Russian people will take place. Moscow is then going to be able to send numerous Russians or members of other ethnic groups from the European parts of the Soviet Union to Turkistan.

Economic Possibilities

We have hitherto attempted to give a summary of the trends as regards the demographic development of the Muslims in Turkistan would be able, for the time-being, not only to safeguard their majority position in their own country, but also to inhibit the unrestrained and progressive colonization of Turkistan by the Russians and other non-Muslim ethnic groups. However, the Soviet

leadership intends to alter this state of affairs in Turkistan. It would appear necessary, at this point, to outline Turkistan's economic possibilities and the living conditions of the Muslims. It is no secret that Turkistan is the richest region of the Soviet Union as regards raw materials. What part do these raw materials of Turkistan play within the scope of the Soviet Union's economic potential? The following facts ought to provide an answer: more than 45 percent of the coal reserves of the Soviet Union are to be found in Turkistan. Soviet experts reckon that the Karaganda-Coalfields, alone, will be in a position to meet the Soviet Union's coal needs for the next 120 years. The coalfields of Tchura-Nura are equally important. More than 60 percent of the petroleum reserves of the Soviet Union are to be found in Turkistan. The oil-fields of Tcheleken, Embe, Mangishlak, Neft-Dagh, Kum-Dagh and Andijan, etc., are all well-known throughout the Soviet Union. Soviet experts believe that the Neft-Dagh oilfields are among the largest in the world.

The entire petroleum requirements of the Soviet Union can be met by petrol found in Turkistan. More than 50 percent of the gas reserves of the Soviet Union are to be found in Turkistan. Gas from Gasli near Bukhara has already been taken by pipeline as far as West Germany. There are 89 iron-ore beds and 7 manganese ore beds in Turkistan: the beds in the Turqay region, alone, which cover an area of 6,000 sq. km., represent 18 percent of the entire reserves of the Soviet Union. Over 70 percent of the ore reserves of the Soviet Union

are to be found in these ore-fields. According to Soviet sources, 76 percent of the copper, about 90 percent of mercury and 86 percent of zinc and lead reserves of the Soviet Union are to be found in Turkistan. The Kampirsay Chrome beds contain 62 percent of the Soviet Union's chromium stocks. Prior to the discovery of the uranium field in Siberia, Turkistan was the uranium centre of the Soviet Union. The gold reserves of Turkistan are inestimably high. The gold content of the ore in the ore-fields of the Altay region amounts to about 54 percent. The Muruntau gold-field near Samarkand is the most important one as regards the extraction of gold in the Soviet Union. The Soviet economy can also draw on a wealth of important non-metallic minerals (e.g. phosphor, sulphur, potassium and antimony) in Turkistan which meet more than 70 percent of the Soviet Union's requirements.

It is also commonly known that Turkistani agricultural products have a special part to play in the agricultural economy of the Soviet Union. Hundred percent of the Soviet Union's cotton, for example, is produced in the Muslim regions. In 1980, 99,00,000 tons of cotton were produced in the Soviet Union; 90,17,000 tons of which came from Turkistan and 8,83,000 tons from Azerbaijan. In 1979, 34,91,000 tons of raw silk were produced in the Soviet Union: 23,05,000 tons of this (about 75 percent came from Turkistan). Rubber and jute are found only in Turkistan. Turkistan is regarded as the third most important corn-growing centre of the Soviet Union. It plays a special role,

too, in the stock-farming sector. In 1980, 6,14,84,000 sheep were bred in Turkistan. As regards sheep-breeding, camel-breeding and horse-breeding, too, this country is of supreme importance to the Soviet Union.

Now that we have summarised the situation regarding the economic possibilities prevailing in Turkistan, the following question might reasonably be asked: what chances do the Muslims have of making use of this economic wealth? Are the Muslims able to use their industrial raw materials and agricultural products according to their own personal needs and national interests? What social position do the Muslims occupy within the context of economic life? We must, above all, remind people that in accordance with Soviet economic policy, nobody is permitted to own any industrial raw material or agricultural product. All raw materials, including the extraction and manufacture thereof, are under strict state control. The Muslims are employed primarily in the agricultural sector and in animal husbandry, as well as wage-earners in industry. They all earn their daily bread: so they do not die of hunger. But neither do they possess resources to fall back upon in case of need.

Colonial Exploitation

Raw materials for industrial purposes are extracted in Turkistan according to the Soviet leadership's needs and are taken to the Russian regions of the Soviet Union, to be processed there. Only once, in the year 1955, was the leadership of the Soviet Union honest enough to admit that the Eastern regions of the Soviet Un-

ion, including Turkistan, had remained backward as regards industrialization. It was evident, from the Prime Minister Bulganin's statement, that industrial production in Turkistan had not even reached the 8 percent limit of the entire industrial production of the Soviet Union, whereas the industrial raw materials of Turkistan, as mentioned previously, occupy a position of importance in the Soviet Union. To use up raw materials, transport them to Russian regions and then re-import the finished products to Turkistan amounts to nothing less than the Russians' pursuit of Imperialist economic politics vis-a-vis the Muslims of Turkistan.

Let us use another example to illustrate the rules of the colonial exploitation policy which Moscow follows. Ninety-two percent of the cotton fibres of the Soviet Union are produced in Turkistan, but 85.6 percent of all cotton textiles are manufactured in the Ivanova province of Russia. About 70 percent of all cotton fibres of the Soviet Union come from Uzbekistan, but only 3.7 percent of the cotton textile goods of the Soviet Union are produced here. A further example clearly illustrates the Russian imperialist exploitationist policy in Turkistan. The following article appeared in a Soviet newspaper: "In the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan about 120-130 million tons of iron ore, 100 million tons of mineral oil, 35 million tons of steel and 200 million kilowatt hours of energy are produced annually. But Kazakhstan's part in the production of industrial and agricultural products is small. The industrial production of

Kazakhstan represents 9.1 per cent of the Soviet production as regards ores; 7.2 per cent as regards coal; 3.6 per cent in the case of electrical energy; 2.3 per cent in the case of cast iron; 5.6 per cent in the case of cement; 2.8 per cent in the case of inorganic fertilisers; and 0.5 percent as regards steel.”

Soviet statistics keep silent about the social organization of the Muslims of Turkistan within the context of the Soviet economic system. Muslim workers constitute a minority among the industrial workers in Turkistan; there being more Russians. The Muslims are mainly employed in the agricultural sector and it is here that the Russians are in a minority. Russians monopolize almost all positions of management in industry, whereas Muslims play an unimportant role in industrial management.

Appalling Conditions

Every commodity has to be handed over to the state without fail. The state then sells the industrial products back to the populace again. The buying and selling prices can only be fixed by the state, too. Paragraph 183 of the Penal Law of the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan states that the private processing of cotton, cotton seeds as well as the sale of raw cotton and cotton products to private persons will be punished with upto two years' detention or one years' compulsory labour. The appalling condition of the Mus-

lims with regard to their own raw materials and work can thus be seen. There are no Soviet or other statistics available in the case of the earning potential for Muslims. It was merely noted, on one occasion, that the monthly per capita earnings in the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan in the year 1979 amounted to 159 roubles. This does not, however, mean that the workers and farmers earned the same amount each month. This only indicates a Soviet source. Those employed in the cotton plantations earned about 29 kopeks per hour in 1978; and in Uzbekistan, where 6 million tons of cotton are produced annually, 26 kopeks (1 rouble= 100 kopeks) per hour, in fact, were paid as wages). The provision of the populace with consumer goods is, as it always has been, one of the unsolved problems. People stand in queues for days on end in order to buy a particular article from one of the state-owned shops. One can buy everything on the black market, but the prices are very high. A kilo of mutton, for example, costs in Uzbekistan about 10 US Dollars and a chicken, in fact, 13 dollars.

Soviet economic politics, with its centralized planning, controls from Moscow every possible branch of economic life in Turkistan. The Muslims in Turkistan have no hand in regulating their own economic life. The fulfilment of targets

emanating from Moscow is mandatory for them. Therefore the Muslims in Turkistan will be forced to be dependent on Moscow as long as there is a planned central economy in the Soviet Union, even though they constitute a vital part of the production force. The imperialist-economic exploitationist policy of Soviet Russia does not enable the Muslims of Turkistan to control their own economic and social life. That is the fate of the large Muslim minority in the Soviet Russian Empire.

Islamic demographic studies covering Turkistan should also involve exact research into the terrible course of Russianization, because the Soviet leadership is carrying out a policy whose aim is to Russianize young people, especially as regards language. It is a well-known fact that the children have to learn Russian, instead of their mother tongues, in the nursery schools (before their formal schooling begins). It would be a great tragedy, not only for Turkistan, but also for the whole Islamic world, if, within the none-too-distant future, the Muslim youth of Turkistan, as well as the young Muslims of Soviet Union, were to lose their national identity, by losing the ability to communicate in their mother tongues; and thereby, being forced to relinquish the spirit of Islam.

(Concluded)

Fahd Reaffirms Support for MWL

King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz has reaffirmed his continued support and backing to the Muslim World League and reiterated his Government's support for every effort aimed at realizing the welfare of the Islamic Ummah and unifying the Muslim ranks. In a cable to Shaikh Muhammad Nasser al-Abboudi, the acting MWL Secretary-General, King Fahd expressed the hope that the League would succeed in doing its work for the benefit of Muslims all over the world. The cable was in reply to the one sent by Shaikh Abboudi to King Fahd on the occasion of taking over his new assignment in the League.