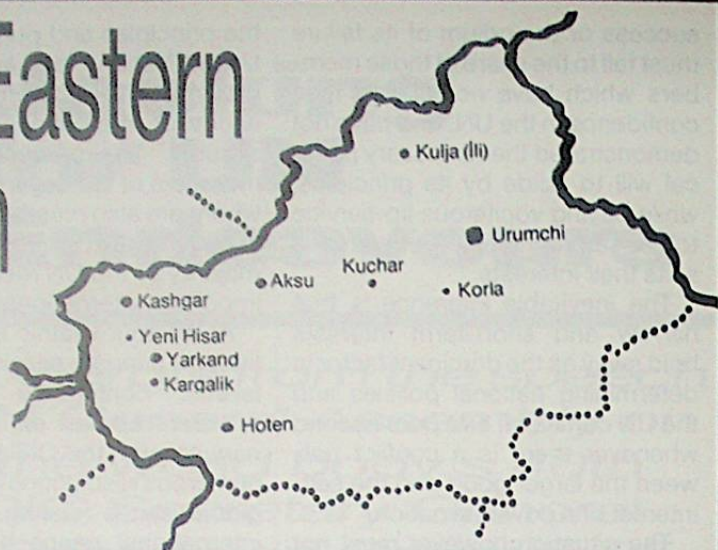


Eastern Turkistan Or Sinkiang?



Mehmet Allahverdi

(Our readers are warned that statements of figures originating from Chinese, or Soviet, official sources, which we cannot investigate or confirm, should be always regarded with caution, Voice of Eastern Turkistan.)

Central Asia is a region little known to most people. It conjures up the image of remote steppe-lands and mounted Tartars; dimly remembered tales of the hordes of the golden Khanate, of a land that lies somewhere east between the mighty river Volga and the great Chinese Wall. It is a land so far removed from the world. We know that its landscapes have become the stuff of poetry, and romance. Here are to be found, according to popular myth, all manner of Shangrillas, Shamans, and semi-human creatures, Yetis and the like. The truth is always far different. Though no less a land of poetry and mystery, Turkistan today is a political reality that occupies a vast region at least the size of Europe.

What is known as the Soviet Socialist Republics of Kazakhstan, Kirgizistan, Tajikistan/Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan together with the autonomous Uighur Region in China represent the far northern and north-eastern limits of the Muslim world in Asia. Turkistan, lying as it does astride the Sino-Soviet frontier, with smaller Turkic minorities in Iran, Afghanistan, and Kashmir, one might expect to find a decimated culture, but not so.. the Turkic people and the Turkic culture are still very much alive, and nowhere more so than in the heartland of Uighur autonomous Region, which is named by China "Sinkiang" or "Xinjiang".

The historical name of Sinkiang or Xinjiang is "Eastern Turkistan" and it is known as such among its natives and their kinsmen across the borders in Western Turkistan (Central Asia). The Chinese named it

"Sinkiang" in the last quarter of the 19th century; and in 1955, it was called: "Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region". The word "Sinkiang or Xinjiang" in Chinese means "New Land". Thus, it signifies that this area was not a part of China prior to its annexation in 1884.

Eastern Turkistan has been a scene of rivalry between the indigenous inhabitants and the Chinese long before the dawn of Islam in this area. The Chinese finally succeeded in establishing their rule in 1759 A.D. Since then, the Turkic Muslims, the inhabitants of this area, have rebelled 42 times against them, and declared "Eastern Turkistan" independent on three occasions as follows:

1. Emirate (1865-1877)
2. Muslim Republic of Eastern Turkistan (1933-34)
3. Eastern Turkistan Republic (1944-49).

The Muslim Republic (1933-34) was invaded by the Chinese with active support of the Russians whose forces carried out a large-scale massacre of the Muslims. The last Republic (1944-49) was about to gain international recognition, when again the Russians colluded with Nationalist Chinese and ultimately the Republic fell to the Communists in 1949. In fact, the Russians have never liked an independent Muslim State to exist in this area. They are seized with the apprehension that an independent Muslim State of Eastern Turkistan shall be a source of inspiration for the Muslims of Western Turkistan to demand independence or maximum autonomy.

The July 1982 census gives the population of Eastern Turkistan as slightly over 13 million (13,081,681); 7 millions being Muslims. *(Impartial observers are unanimous in declaring the official figures greatly inaccurate, but differ in what the real figure should be-V.E.T.)* The Muslim population consists of Turkic ethnic

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groups such as Uighur, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Uzbek, and Tatar. The number of Dungans (Chinese Muslims) is only nominal. The remaining 6 millions are Hans (Chinese by origin and not Muslims), Russians, Mongols, Sibos, Manchus, etc. Among the Non-Muslim population, the Hans are the largest group at present.

The composition of population in Eastern Turkistan has been radically changed by the Communist regime since 1949, by transporting Hans from China proper to Eastern Turkistan. The population of some of the important ethnic groups in 1949 and 1983 is given below to help understand the change: *(All these figures are official, and not reliable-V.E.T.)*

Ethnic group	Population in 1949	Population in 1983
Uighur	75%	46%
Kazakhs	10%	6%
Other Turkic groups.	5%	1%
Hans	5%	45%
Dungans	3%	1%
Others	2%	1%

From this table, it will be observed that the population of Turkic Muslims has been reduced from 90% in 1949 to 53% in 1983 while that of the Hans increased from 5% in 1949 to 45% in 1983. The position shall change further, because the Chinese Government continues to bring Hans from China to Eastern Turkistan, to increase the Han component to outnumber the Turkic Muslims.

The settlement of Hans in Eastern Turkestan is a deep-rooted conspiracy against the Turkic community. The ulterior aim of the Chinese Government is to reduce their majority to a minority, so that no scope is left for them to demand self-determination. By reducing the Turkic Muslims to a minority, the Muslim character of Eastern Turkistan would be ended.

There were some seasoned political leaders among Turkic Muslims who had worked for Eastern Turkistan Republic (1944-49). Instead of granting the right of self-determination, as promised in 1945, the Communist leader Mao Tse-tung started to eliminate them from the political scene. A number were executed, while several were victimized within a short period, to keep the political field confined to the Communist Party.

Party: In Communist countries, the real power lies with the Communist Party. Such is the case in Eastern Turkistan, which is ruled by a Party Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In the Party Committee of Eastern Turkistan, all important posts, viz: First Secretary, Second Secretary and Third Secretary are held by the Hans. Only two Turkic Muslims viz: Ismail Ahmad and Caodanoufa Zhayier are in the Party Committee; the former is Secretary, while the latter is Member of a Standing Committee.

Administration: The Administration of Eastern Turkistan is dominated by the Hans. Most of the political posts are occupied by them. In 1981, the ratio of the Han and the Turkic Muslims in the political hierarchy was as follows:

Ethnic Group	Total No. of posts	Post held by Hans	Posts held by Turkic Muslims.
First Political Commissar	1	1	—
2nd Political Commissar	1	1	—
Political Commissars	2	1	1
Deputy Political Commissars	5	4	1
Director Political Department	1	1	—
	10	8	2

It will be seen from the above that the Turkic Muslims have been given only 20% of the total posts whereas they are 53% in the population. The posts held by the Hans are far greater than their population (45%). Similarly, about 90% of the important administrative posts are also occupied by them. The remaining ten percent are held by the Turkic Muslims, but they are powerless. Wherever a Turkic Muslim is a head of the department, his deputy head is a Han. Because of the blessings of the higher echelons of Government and the Party, the Han deputy head is empowered to do what a Turkic Muslim Head cannot do. This position has made Muslims only figureheads.

Political power is a far cry for Turkic Muslims; they are not even allowed to talk of their rights. Those who raise a voice are termed subversionists, counter-revolutionaries, Pan-Islamists and the like. Since the last few years, fifteen thousand of them are undergoing hard labour in a camp at Paylu in the Taklamakan Desert.



The market place in Kuqa, Xinjiang

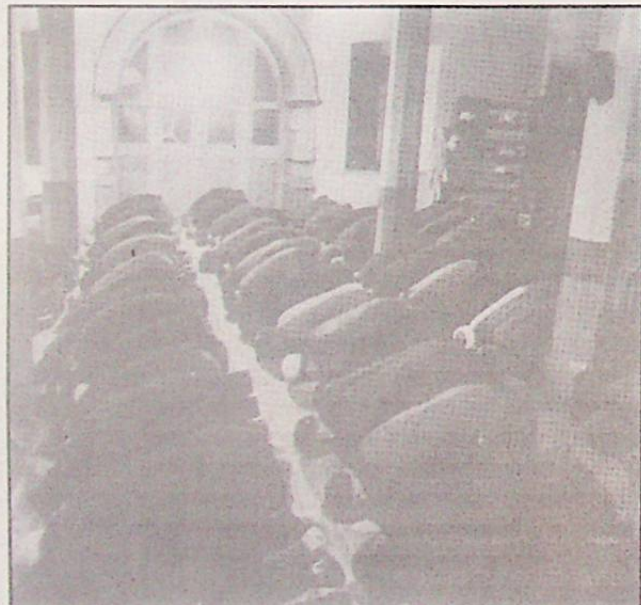
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By all definitions, they are political prisoners but the Chinese Government is treating them as criminals; because it considers political activity a crime, if done by any body other than the Communist Party. They can be released only if the Party recommends them, which is very unusual. Thus, they are doomed to remain in the camp for the whole of their life.

Economic Deprivation: The Turkic Muslims have faced untold hardships at the hands of the Communist Government. During the "Great Leap Forward" and "Commune Campaign", their lands were confiscated, livestock taken over by the Government and markets were closed. The Government cared nothing for their traditional life style. They were driven to communes to work under Han officials.

The task of agricultural development in Eastern Turkistan has been entrusted to the Production & Construction Corps (PCC). It has 2.2 million members and is a military-type organization with strict discipline. 90% of its officials are Hans who exploit the labour of the native people. In spite of hard work, PCC workers are not paid adequate remuneration. If they talk of a fair share, they are sent to hard labour camps. According to a recent report, their labour time has been increased from 8 to 10 hours a day; monthly rations reduced by about 16%; viz: from 30 catties to 25 catties per head.

The industrial sector, too, is under the control of Production and Construction Corps. All important posts of this organization such as Commander, Vice Commander, Political Commissar and Deputy Political Commissar have always been held by Hans. In the lower ranks, their number is being regularly increased. In 1955, they were 66% of the skilled labour force. This percentage rose to 65 in 1965; and in 1973, it rose further to 78. It is believed that 90% of the industrial manpower is now



Some of China's Muslims at prayer at mosque in Urumchi, capital of the Xinjiang-Uygur Autonomous Region.

composed of Hans.

The communication network which is a prerequisite for all types of development has been neglected by the Communist Government. Even big commercial centres like Kashgar in the Southern Region have not been linked by rail/road with the provincial capital. Thus, mineral wealth and their hard work has not helped the Turkic Muslims improve their lot. In fact, they have been reduced to the position of suppressed tenants in their own land with no right to express their plight.

Representation in Armed Forces. Since the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, the Chinese Government has given the Western frontier regions a strategic entity named the "Urumqi Military Region" (UMR). The UMR is composed mainly of Eastern Turkistan. It has been divided into three Military Districts; Northern, Southern and Eastern. The position of Hans and Turkic Muslims in the UMR's Army, Air Force and Militia was as below in 1981:

Posts	Total No. of posts.	Post held by Hans.	Post held by Turkic Muslims
Army			
Commander	1	1	—
First Deputy Commander	1	1	—
Deputy Commanders	8	7	1
Chief of Staff	1	1	—
Director Logistics Department	1	1	—
District Commanders	3	3	—
	15	14	1
Lower Ranks.	250,000	212,500 (85%)	37,500 (15%)
Air Force			
Commander	1	1	—
Base Commanders	3	3	—
Pilots	Not available	Dominating	Only a few taken in 1980

Militia. The UMR has two types of Militia. Ordinary Militia and Armed Militia. A good number of Turkic Muslims have been given training in the Ordinary Militia. But very few of them have been taken in to the Armed Militia. The Chinese Government is perhaps afraid of giving arms into the hands of the Turkic natives of Eastern Turkistan.

The Northern Military District of the UMR covers the Ili area, from here the movement for Eastern Turkistan Republic had started in 1944. It is significant to note that this Command is entirely composed of Han soldiers. Similarly, the Army technicians posted on nuclear installations at Lop Nor and electronic intelligence-gathering equipment are all Hans.

From the above details it will be seen that representation of Turkic Muslim natives in higher ranks of the Armed Forces is almost zero.

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In the lower ranks also, they are far below the ratio of their population. More appalling aspect of the situation is that those few who have been taken are not being trusted for posting at important points; instead they are closely watched by Han supervisors. This state of affairs does not augur well in defending the area against enemy attack.

Suppression of Religion. Communists consider religion as the main obstacle against Communism. On coming to power in 1949, they looked at the Turkic Muslims in this frame of mind and launched vigorous campaigns, specially during the Cultural Revolution 1966-76, to eliminate the Islamic faith. This offensive includes the following measures:

- [i] Village mosques in Eastern Turkistan were closed.
- [ii] Big mosques and religious institutions in urban areas were closed and used as Party offices, barracks, slaughter houses, etc. The properties attached to these were confiscated.
- [iii] Qazi Courts established in 1933-34 during "Muslim republic of Eastern Turkistan" were abolished. In their place, "People's Courts" were established.
- [iv] All copies of the holy Qur'an, Hadith and other religious works were destroyed.
- [v] Teaching of religious education in schools was stopped.
- [vi] Imams of mosques were arrested, tortured and employed for cleaning of streets/drains. Some were made to breed pigs and forced to eat pork.

These steps were bound to cause opposition from Turkic Muslims who had made many sacrifices in the past for their faith. The opposition to these Communist measures was termed as "unpatriotism" and violence was let loose by the Red Guards, with the result that 360,000 Turkic Muslims were executed, more than 100,000 fled to Western Turkistan and 504,000 were driven to 10 hard labour concentration camps. They were released only after undergoing various lengths of sentence and "political re-education".

These oppressive measures continued till Mao's death in 1976, but failed to eliminate the Islamic faith. Instead China incurred a bad name both at home and abroad for its anti-religion policies. Taknig note of this, the present leadership of the Communist China has relaxed this policy. A few mosques have been opened. An Islamic Institute has been set up at the provincial capital for training of "Ulema" appointed by the Government. A limited number of copies of the holy Qur'an have been printed. A 20-member official delegation has started visiting Makka Mukarramah for Hajj.

The relaxation in restrictions on religion was necessitated by China's foreign policy considerations. It seeks to gain influence in the Muslim world. Nevertheless, the present leadership is also strongly committed to

Communist ideology and it would like to restrict religious activities, as is clear from the following:

- Propagation of religious belief to children under the age of 18 is prohibited.
- Nobody is allowed to use religion to oppose the Party's leadership or the Communist system.
- The mosques and Imams are under official control.
- As a special case, Party members in Eastern Turkistan are allowed to participate in religious functions, just to keep contact with the masses. Ideologically they are required to be loyal to Communism or to leave the party.
- The Chinese Government refuses permission for Hajj to the Muslims on the pretext that it has no foreign currency. In actual fact it is reported to have US\$ 14.07 billions foreign exchange reserves. By this obstruction, the Government attempts to suppress the people's religious spirit.

The latest Constitution of China enforced, dated 1982, mentions the "freedom of religious belief." But the Party apparatus has instructions from the top leadership to remain watchful about religious activities. The Turkic Muslims are closely watched even in religious places by Party workers. Thus the scope for them to pursue religious activities shall remain limited as long as the Communist Party and the Administration are dominated by Hans.

Lack of Educational Facilities. Eastern Turkistan is the largest province of China. It is composed of two distinct regions: Northern and the Southern. Topographical conditions of the area demand at least two universities, one in each region. But the Chinese Government has provided only one at the provincial capital which is quite distant from the Southern and Western parts of the province. Long distance and poor communications have handicapped many Turkic students in acquiring university education. On top of all this, the existing university is under the control of Han teachers brought from China proper, who encourage Han students to capture more and more seats.

The number of Secondary and Primary Schools in Eastern Turkistan, 800 and 14000 respectively, is also insufficient. In other provinces of China, the ratio between population and primary schools is 600:1. In Eastern Turkistan it is 934:1 This shows lukewarm attitude of the Communist regime towards the Turkic natives. The inadequacy of educational facilities impels one to say that the authorities want to keep turkic Muslims below the level of political consciousness.

Destruction of Culture. Chinese rulers have made every effort to smother the culture of Turkic Muslims, and to separate them from their Islamic heritage. The Uighurs and Kazakhs used Arabic script. It was replaced by the Government first by Cyrillic and

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then Latin alphabet. Communist terminology was intensively introduced to indoctrinate the new generation with Mao Tsetung's ideas. During the Cultural Revolution, 360,000 books written in Arabic script were destroyed by the Red Guards. Mixed marriages between Turkics and Chinese were encouraged, and children born as result of mixed marriages are being registered as Chinese. The Party and the authorities are continuing propaganda for mixed marriages. The Turkic Muslims had their own traditional tribe/family system. This has been shattered by forcing them to live in communes along with the Han population.

It is, however, reported that now the Government has agreed to the reinstatement of the Arabic script as the official means of writing the Uighur and Kazakh languages. But it is yet to be seen when this takes practical shape. Certainly the Turkic Muslims shall welcome it, as it shall help to link them with their cultural heritage.

Social Status. By economic deprivation and denying them their political rights, the Communist Government of China has placed the Turkic Muslim natives in a third-rate position. They are addressed by their nick-name "turbaned" people. Chinese writers have been describing them in books as "barbarians" and justifying every inhuman act against them. In day-to-day life, they are discriminated against Hans, who are given preferential treatment. The Han official treats native Turkics as menials and asks them to show undue respect as if they were his slaves. This social discrimination is likely to have a very bad effect on the ego of Turkic Muslims who have a history of glory. By adopting such methods, the Government is brain-washing them to accept the domination of the Chinese.

Demands of the Turkic Muslims. Turkic Muslims have been the overwhelming majority and still are the majority. Eastern Turkistan has been their homeland for centuries and it was an independent state on three occasions in the near past. On the basis of these historical facts, they ought to be given the right of self-determination. Pending that, the following should be done, at the very least:

- [a] The Han settlement in Eastern Turkistan should be stopped at once and their population reduced.
- [b] Muslims be given due share in political power; the domination of Hans should be ended.
- [c] Discrimination between the Han and non-Han population should end.
- [d] The province should be named "Eastern Turkistan."
- [e] Muslims be given just payment for their work.
- [f] Official pressure in favour of mixed marriages between the Han and non-Han population should be ended.
- [g] Turkic political prisoners should be released.
- [h] True autonomy should be given to the people of Eastern Turkistan.

Super Powers' Interest. The emergence of China as a big power in Asia has set both the USSR and USA in motion, to seek friendship with her to strengthen their respective power blocs. Each one of them is interested in the Turkic Muslims, to use them as leverage against China.

To this end, American-controlled "Radio Liberty" started broadcasts in the Uighur dialect for the Turkic Muslims some time ago. The programme was attuned to gain influence; it succeeded in winning credibility. However, this was stopped just a fortnight before the first official visit to America of the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in February 1979. Since then, the programme has not been resumed, perhaps due to continuing contacts between the American and the Chinese Governments for strategic partnership.

Soviets have been interested in Eastern Turkistan right from the time of the Russian Czar, Peter the Great, who considered control over this area essential to rule the Asian continent. Their renewed interest in the Turkic Muslims is manifest from the Western reports that it is giving army training to 60,000 Turkic expatriates who fled to Central Asian Republics from Eastern Turkistan during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. In the past it has always betrayed the Turkic Muslims. Now, too, it will not support them to establish an independent Eastern Turkistan.

Comments. The officially declared autonomous status of Eastern Turkistan is an illusion. The province is being ruled by the Chinese Central Government through the Communist Party which is dominated by Hans. All key figures in the Provincial Government are Hans brought from China proper. None of them is a Native of Eastern Turkistan. The Turkic Muslims who are the original inhabitants of the area, and form a majority, have not been given any rights, much less political power.

The settlement of Hans in Eastern Turkistan is a conspiracy against the Turkic Muslim natives. By this, the Chinese Government may succeed to reduce their majority but ultimately it shall be confronted with a law and order situation. The two communities are altogether different from each other in faith, race, language, culture and outlook towards life. There have been clashes between them, and the situation is likely to flare up if this settlement is not stopped. Communal disturbances shall result in instability of the area and threat to its security, which will benefit only foreign hostile forces.

Anti-religious policy has been slightly relaxed by the present leadership of China due to the fact that religion in Eastern Turkistan has a mass character and it could not be suppressed, despite all forms of oppression. Hence the present Government is somewhat permissive towards religion. The basic attitude of the Chinese Government remains unaltered, because of its being

Communist after all. Thus there is the need to follow closely all developments which directly or indirectly have a bearing on the religious activities of the Turkic Muslims of Eastern Turkistan.

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Attain 'Strength to the Utmost of Power'

The Istanbul conference on science and technology could provide the answer to the recent annihilation of the Arab-Muslim world at the hands of Israeli warlord Shimon Peres, American President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. All the criticism of the Israeli air strike across 2,000 kms on the PLO headquarters in Tunis; the American hijacking of the civilian Egyptian airliner and the eleventh hour British pretext to cancel a prearranged meeting with the joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation, is a natural expression of pain and agony. Nothing better should be expected from Israeli military juntas. But the two latter moves came from two "friends" of the Arabs, and they are enough to shock and jolt a mass of more than one billion people called the Islamic Nation.

The "friendly" attitude of the U.S. — recently reasserted by Reagan's special emissary John Whitehead to Cairo and Tunis — poses a question about the Euro-American and Arab-Islamic

approaches to the latter issues. The question is more technical than political. Politicians always need silent but active support of scientists and technologists. A dispassionate analysis of the events of the past one month as well as incidents like the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, the invasion of Lebanon and a chain of other politico-military setbacks to Muslim countries puts a major part of the blame on Muslim scientists and technologists. True, they did not receive due recognition mainly because of the colonial hangover that everything indigenous—even if it is an assembled truck—is worthless, and everything from the West—even if it is an electric bulb holder—is the best. True, also that the Islamic world's almost total dependence on the West for everything from a paper pin to a combat plane did not create an encouraging atmosphere for our potential experts. But, then, these potential experts also did not show the promise as they remained inert and inactive, always looking for easy government jobs or, at least, funds for not very significant projects.

One thing that must be remembered is that both the East and the West have their own coloured views of the Islamic-Arab world. For their own ideological and theological reasons they will always desist from offering their best technology and the latest weapons. The arms they give Muslim countries are generally obsolete, to be used not against the real enemies, but against each other in wars and conflicts cleverly instigated by those arms supplying merchants of death; and if the arms are relatively modern they are not fully backed up by proper training. This is because these technologically advanced countries

know that the Arab-Muslim world is satisfied with its vociferous demand for the transfer of technology.

In this area again, we are sadly mistaken. How can the Arabs expect Britain — which hatched the Israel conspiracy for the West to get rid of the Jews when Hitler failed — and the U.S. which has abetted this conspiracy, would ever allow the Arabs to attain such perfection as to threaten Israel and cause a Westward exodus. It is for this reason that for U.S. firms joint ventures with certain Arab countries are actually unilateral profit machines rather than vehicles for the transfer of technology sought by their Arab partners. The doors of hi-tech factories are slammed on the Arabs and Muslims while their attempts to perfect a particular technology are either bombed or meet with hateful propagands.

In this situation, the Arab-Muslim scientists and technologists in co-operation with entrepreneurs, major business houses and foundations should launch a campaign to produce their own "super-technology" in their own countries—certainly not in the West—by pooling minds from one place, money from other place and raw material from yet another place, for the benefit of all the members of the Islamic Ummah. This call for "supertechnology" is not new: it was given 1400 years ago in the Qur'an (8:60):

"Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies of God and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom God doth know."

— Comment in Saudi Jazette, Jeddah