

Policy of Annihilation of Islamic Existence

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For some time, information agencies and international press have been carrying news of demonstrations by Turkistani Muslim students in Urumqi, capital of East Turkistan, in Beijing, capital of the People's Republic of China, and recently, in the city of Shanghai, the biggest seaport of China. These reports are distressing for they have come from the People's China which has, for decades, lived almost confined to itself. Not much was known about it till the recent introduction of a policy of "opening-up," with a view to accelerating the projects of development and modernisation in the post Mao-Tse Tung China that had been shrouded in secrecy and backwardness due to Communist rigidity, extremism and suppression. The present government, whose policy is mainly enunciated by Deng Xiaoping, has started claiming that it provides full fundamental rights to all its citizens without discrimination of religion or race.

The said events deserve to be taken notice of by Muslim circles as they reflect the facts of life of the Muslim in East Turkistan about whom the Government of the People's China claims that they enjoy their full political, religious, cultural and economic rights in their country, East Turkistan, which is officially named the province of

Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. According to these reports, which were given maximum coverage, among other Muslim papers, by the daily *Arab News*, Jeddah, students' demonstrations started in the town of Urumqi on December 15, 1985, when the Chinese Central government replaced members of the provincial "autonomous government" and removed Mr. Ismail Ahmad from the leadership of the provincial government. More than four thousand students marched to the headquarters of the Chinese Communist Party in the town and their representatives submitted the following demands to the Party's Secretary-General, Song Han Liang:

1. Discontinuance of atomic experiments in Eastern Turkistan.
2. Prohibition of the migration of Chinese from the interior of China to East Turkistan.
3. Enforcement of the proclaimed democratic autonomy law through free elections for the head of the administration and the chairmen of the People's Committees.
4. Annulment of the policy of birth control for the Muslims of East Turkistan.
5. Authorization to utilize part of East Turkistan's resources for the development and modernisation of the region.
6. According preference to Turkistani youth in employment in local establishments and enhancing the social and economic standards of East Turkistan.

When Turkistani Muslims received nothing from the new provincial government, the students thought of conveying their demands direct to the central author-

ity and the Communist Party high command at Beijing. More than four hundred Turkistani students took part in demonstrations on December 23, 1985, and walked in procession to the headquarters of the Party at Zhong nan Hai, bearing placards and shouting slogans demanding grant of actual powers to exercise autonomy and urging the discontinuation of atomic experiments which threatened the safety of Turkistani Muslims and their environment. The students handed over a memorandum containing their demands to an official of the Central Communist Party of China. At meetings held at the Central Institute of Nationalities in Beijing on December 25 and 26, the Chinese authorities turned down the demands of the Turkistani Muslims on plea that Beijing was munificent in its behaviour towards them and that atomic experiments were necessary for ensuring the security of the country. The students then organized yet another demonstration, this time in Shanghai, in support of the demands of their East Turkistani brethren.

Since its occupation by China in 1949, Beijing treats East Turkistan as an integral part of its political and administrative system and considers Muslims of East Turkistan to be an "ethnic minority" living on Chinese territory. It has taken numerous measures commencing with the adoption of a Chinese name "Xinjiang" (for Sinkiang), prohibiting the use of its ancient name "East Turkistan" on all occasions just like Zionist practice of using

"Israel" instead of "Palestine." The Chinese authorities regard Turkistani Muslims as a projection of Chinese Muslims, scattered over the vast expanse of China, and publicise the news relating to Turkistani Muslims as the news about Chinese Muslims, despite the fact that Turkistanis are different from them in race, history, culture and language.

The purpose of this policy is to make the world believe that there are scattered Muslim communities of various nationalities in China and that there is no Muslim state with a personality of its own called East Turkistan. It has succeeded to some extent in this as one rarely finds a Muslim newspaper or journal mentioning Xinjiang by the name of East Turkistan. Such is the background of the Turkistanis' insistence on retaining the historic name of their territory, i.e. asserting their distinct entity within China, lest they are forgotten by the Muslim world that there existed an Islamic country in Central Asia known as East Turkistan

It is in the context of a hard struggle for preserving their national identity that the recent demonstrations by Muslim Turkistanis assumed serious proportions in different places. They wanted to convey to the Chinese, Muslim and world public opinions that they belonged to East Turkistan and were its real indigenous people, whatever new names may be given to it by the Chinese. They demand their legal rights of exercising the prerogative of actual national sovereignty represented in the "autonomy rule" approved by the general constitution of China, so that they can have the right to uphold their Turkistani customs and traditions in their sacred homeland. This is the principal issue in their demands. But the Chinese media has been trying to divert the opinion by asserting that the demands were almost confined to the question of discountinuing nuclear experiments which caused

destruction of life and property in East Turkistan.

Atomic Experiments

Quantities of uranium existing in East Turkistan are estimated by French experts to be around 12 trillion tons. The People's China started excavating it with Soviet assistance in 1950 under an agreement signed by the two sides on April 19, 1950. At present, it is excavated from more than eight mines, four of which are stated to be very rich. In 1960, China set up a factory for processing the radioactive element at a place between the cities of Urumqi and Qumol, and another one on the bank of the river Tarim to develop and refine plutonium extracted from uranium. They also established a factory to produce raw uranium in Urumqi. According to a Sino-Russian accord of September 1957, some nuclear reactors were built up with Soviet assistance enabling China to produce atomic bombs despite the withdrawal of Russian advisers and experts in the wake of the rupture between the two Communist powers. The programme was also given a boost by the British atomic scientist, Borono Bontokorvo.

On October 16, 1964, the People's China exploded its first atomic bomb in Lup Nor district of East Turkistan. It was of 20 kilo intensity and made a terribly violent TNT blast. On September 29, 1969, the People's China detonated its first Hydrogen bomb of 3 Megaton intensity, after having conducted its tenth atomic explosion of 250 kilo-ton intensity of TNT stuff on September 22 in the district of Lup Nor. China keeps on exploding its atomic and thermonuclear bombs which have exceeded thirty such experiments in East Turkistan alone. Undoubtedly, the selection of East Turkistan to be the site for research in nuclear warfare has not been without purpose. It was part of a plan to get rid of the Turkistani

people by spreading epidemics and ailments through nuclear radiation and elements which accompany the explosions, such as atoms and dusts, all lethal to human, animal and botanical species. The Chinese do not bother to think of human life and environment, particularly if the victims are Turkistani Muslims and the ground is East Turkistan.

In its issue of November 5, 1985, the *Arab News* published an article by one Mary-Louis O'Callaghan wherein Wu Shing, the Chairman of China's Committee for Technology and Science, was quoted to have said that China still lagged behind in matters of nuclear safety and that it would have to study foreign systems of safety before formulating its own system and devices. The nuclear energy establishments of China are as yet in their primary stages. As regards their efficiency and protection from any fall-out due to experiments therein, many questions raised locally and abroad remain unanswered. The article pointed out that Chinese official press apprehends the possibility of a nuclear accident and the after-effects and queries which might result from it. It also mentioned that last year it had published a detailed report about a nuclear accident in East Turkistan in 1969 when a pipe at the experimental base exploded and workers were exposed to nuclear radiation.

Another Muslim journal, *Arabia*, London, reported in its issue No. 3 of November 1981 that the Chinese speak of ever-increasing number of cases of liver, lung and skin cancers and the agriculture in Tarim Basin being marred by certain pests. Western diplomats who have visited Urumqi, capital of East Turkistan, mentioned repeated utterances of officials admitting that apricots, for instance, in Tarim Basin were like pieces of rubber and often rotten. Prior to 1960, no serious cases of cancer had occurred among the people of East Tur-

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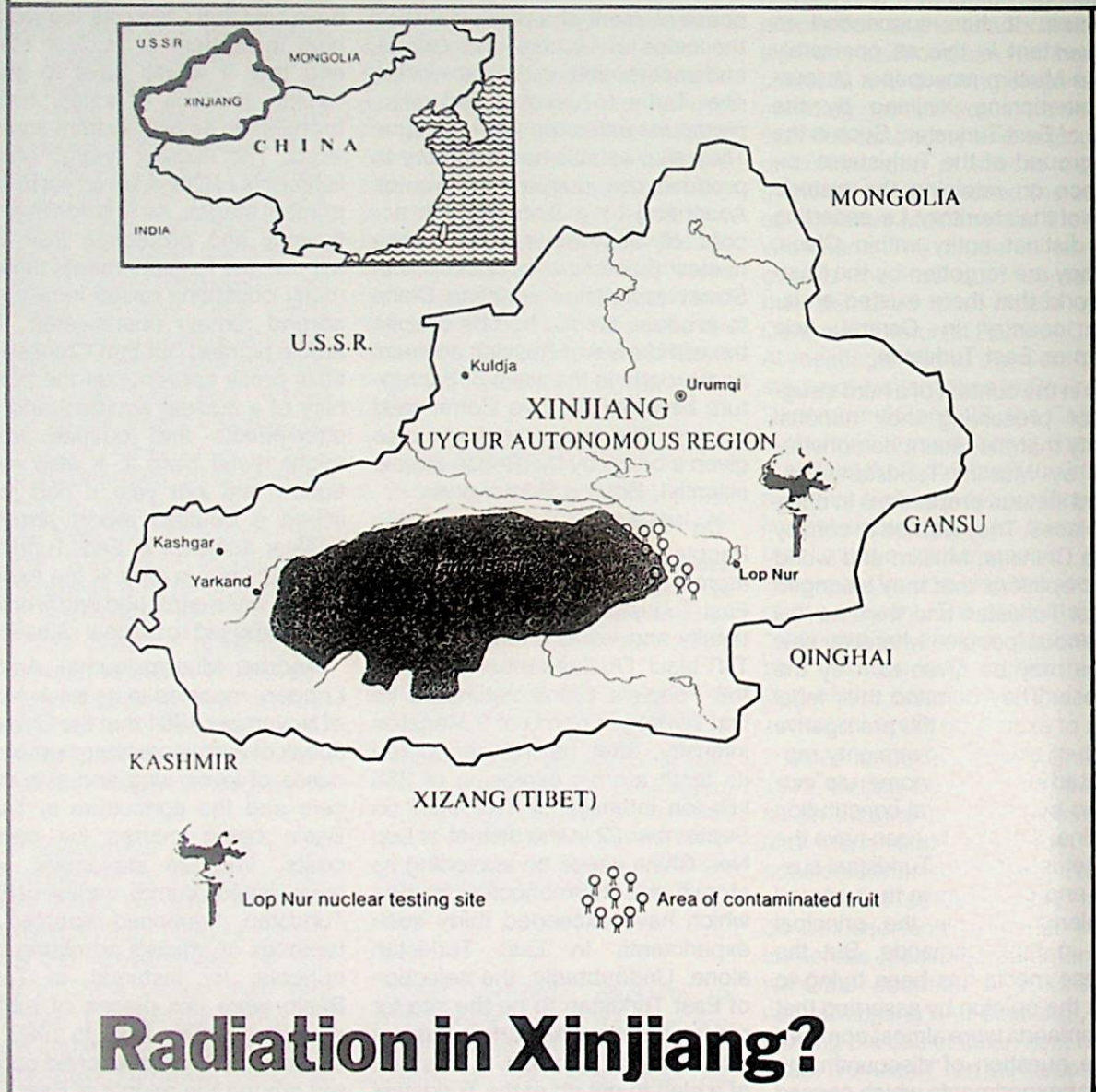
kistan. But, thereafter, cancer became the biggest cause of rise in the death rate in the area. The coincidence of these maladies with the commencement of nuclear establishments in these regions affirms a close relationship between them.

Although the Chinese Government claims that it always takes necessary precautions at the time of atomic explosions and that the measures it adopts are not different from those taken in other countries, the above-mentioned affirmation is derived from an official enquiry into the issue of cancer as many cancer

patients remain under treatment at hospitals in Beijing, Naging and Shanghai, not to speak of other places. Thus we find that some reports of the dangers of atomic experiments being undertaken in East Turkistan and which Muslims are exposed to leak out, despite the special care of the Marxist regime in China, like the rest of Communist world, to prevent such information as would harm its policy fall into alien hands confirming the fact of a nuclear threat to the Muslim people, particularly in East Turkistan.

Demands & Protests

The spark that made the anger of Turkistani Muslims explode and drove them to massive demonstrations demanding political rights and greater powers for the autonomous government of the province of Xinjiang Uighur (East Turkistan) was the incident of dismissal of Mr. Ismail Ahmad from the post of the chief executive of the province on his return from an official visit to Saudi Arabia, and the arbitrary appointment, in his place, of Mr. Tomur Dawamat as the head



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of the provincial government and Mr. Hamaduddin Niaz as chairman of the permanent committee of the People's Congress of the province. Although these two men are Turkistanis, they are censured for their total submission to the Chinese leadership as was apparent during their official assignments. They are merely tools in the hands of the Chinese authorities for implementing their policies which are, to say the least, brazenly prejudicial to the interests of Muslims in East Turkistan.

The Turkistani people, while expressing their denunciation of the government action, wished to elect the person of their choice as the head of the provincial government, so that they could have the leadership of a man who would materialise their ambitions and look after their interests, rather than serve as a hireling whom Beijing would appoint and depose at its will. As a matter of fact, the struggle for autonomy, being multifarious and arduous, dates back to Turkistan's armed revolution in 1944, which ended with the signing of a peace treaty on January 2, 1946, between the then Government of China, represented by General Chang Chih Chung, and the representatives of the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of East Turkistan.

These representatives were Mr. Rahim Jan Sabir Haji, Shaikh Abul Khair Tura and Mr. Ahmad Jan Qasimi. Their treaty comprised of eleven articles stipulating the main conditions for restoring autonomy in East Turkistan. The two parties also agreed on its complete realisation. The headship of the first autonomous government was assumed by Dr. Maswood Sabri on May 31, 1967, followed by Al-Haj Burhan Shaheedi, (now in Beijing) one of the presidents of the political advisory committee of the General People's Congress of China, who had continued as the head of the autonomous government even

after Communist takeover in September 1949. The reins of the autonomous government remained in the hands of Turkistanis in accordance with a previous treaty, but the Chinese regime evolved a special regulation for the autonomy rule which it put into force on October 1, 1955, killing the very spirit and characteristics of the 1946 treaty that the Turkistanis had concluded with their blood.

The new regulation, which robbed Turkistanis of their freedom, comprise nominal privileges and judicial titles. Even a layman can see the great difference between the content of this regulation promulgated officially and its actual application and official proceedings carried out by the Chinese Government in "autonomous" provinces, particularly East Turkistan. This article is, in any case, not enough to dilute and cover it. But the conditions which the Turkistanis are suffering from confirm the bogey of the autonomy rule pronounced at the top of its voice by the Government of the People's Republic of China.

According to China's official claim, East Turkistan is an autonomous province and is called Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. But the territory is divided in five districts, each enjoying "autonomy" and called, in Chinese, Zhou, and six local units, each enjoying autonomy and called, in Chinese, Xian. These units, in Chinese parlance, work on "tribal disintegration," notwithstanding the fact that the tribes of Uighur, Qazaq, Kirghiz, Ozbek, Tatar and Tajik, one and all, belong to Turk race, are Muslims, speak Turkish and, in every respect, one people with one history. It is only the policy of "divide and rule" and giving rise to communal slogans which is behind this ruffianism.

In early days of Communist rule, that is in 1953, the number of Buddhist Chinese in East Turkistan was 3,24,000 which was 6.3 per

cent, and the number of Turkistani Muslims 42,18,000 which was 86.54 per cent of the total (official) population of 48,74,000. This is as per the census conducted by government agencies. In 1983, the number of Buddhist Chinese in East Turkistan was said to have gone up to 52,87,000, that is 40.27 per cent, and the number of Turkistani Muslims to 70,59,000, which is only 53.64 per cent of the total population of 1,31,59,000. This is again as per the official census figures. The Turkistanis, however, state that the number of Chinese people migrating to their land at present is more than three times the number announced by the authorities. In fact, the Chinese Government's plan is to transfer more than a hundred million Buddhist Chinese to Muslim territories in the next few years, which means that the local Muslims are subjected to an intensive policy of absorption, liquidation and annihilation through an unprecedented influx of the non-Muslim people. This is what drives them to resist the Chinese migration to their homeland.

In its policy of having East Turkistan evacuated of its Muslim people, China did not stop at experiments of nuclear explosions, nor at emigration of the Buddhist Chinese to it, but went further by imposing birth control and restricting the number of children to one per family, which is in conflict with the Islamic Shariah, and suppresses the growth of their population as against legion of non-Muslims migrating to East Turkistan, in order to expedite its Chinisation.

Issue of Autonomy

The autonomy bill passed in 1952 and amended late in 1984 comprises definition of autonomy and its principles. The actual fact is, however, different from the cherished definition and the bill on paper. For, the practical application of the bill must take care of the interests and rights of the original



A street scene in Urumqi: Beijing has adopted various measures to expedite Chinization of the region.

people living in the country which is supposed to enjoy privileges granted by the bill within its legitimate bounds. The law is different from the practice as is the case in all Communist countries. Following is a brief account of the prevailing situation:

1. The Government of Xinjiang Uighur (East Turkistan) "Autonomous" Region is not formed by nomination and election of members of the Region's people by their choice. It is the government of the People's China which appoints and sacks heads of the People's Councils in the Region in accordance with policy and interests.
2. A majority of the members of the government, the People's Congress and the Permanent Committee of the Communist Party in the Region and other government bodies in East Turkistan belong to migrated Chinese. For instance:

- a. The Communist Party of China Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Regional Committee, which is the highest authority there and is, at present, headed by Song Han Liang, a geologist and an expatriate Chinese, has 15 members, only four of them Turkistanis.
- b. The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Regional People's Government is headed at present by Mr. Tomur Dawamat. It has 9 members, 5 of them are expatriate Chinese.
- c. The Standing Committee of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Regional People's Congress is led, at present, by Mr. Hamaduddin Niaz. It has 16 members, 9 of them are expatriate Chinese.
1. The Chinese have not only monopolised the high positions in the government and leadership of the province, but most of the posts and jobs in various walks of life in the province are also occupied by them. The proportion of Chinese employees in de-

partments and factories has reached 75 per cent. Similarly, the proportion of expatriate Chinese labour has reached 80 per cent of the labour force in the Region. As for instance, during my visit to Tian Xian woollen weaving factory at Urumqi in 1984, when I enquired the director of the factory as to the number of workers in the factory, he said "there are 450 workers out of whom 15 are Turkistani." This monopoly and hegemony in jobs has led to large-scale unemployment and poverty in the Turkistani people and a general decline in their economic and social conditions.

4. Following the Chinese Government's usurpation of the right of the Turkistani people of electing their government and its complete domination in jobs, all official and public levels and sectors have fallen into the hands of Chinese. Irrespective of his job and status, the Chinese holds the sway and wields authority, and no Turkis-

tani has any right to oppose and question him. This despotism and practice always keep leading to agitations and armed scuffles. Among them was one which occurred in Aqsu in 1980 when a Chinese lad killed a Turkistani youth who had refused to vacate his seat in a cinema hall in his favour and the one in Kashgar in 1981 when a Chinese hit a Turkistani farmer by his car because he had demanded wages for his work.

5. The Chinese Government is exploiting mineral and agricultural resources of Turkistan and sucking them up into China with a view to reprocess and export them. For instance, Petroleum of Kara Mai of East Turkistan is brought to Lanzhou, capital of Gansu province of China, where it is refined and then exported to South-East Asian countries. Jade stone is transported from Khotan to Peking and Nanking. Similarly, cotton is brought from Altay fields to Shanghai and their produce is exported direct to the Soviet Union by means of which the People's China is settling her debts with Soviet Union. All this goes on without there being any dividend coming to the province of East Turkistan for its development and reconstruction.
6. And if this is the attitude of the Chinese Government, the conduct of the Chinese expatriates is not much different. All the wealth and money that the Chinese acquire by means of legitimate or illegitimate practices is remitted to their regions of origin within China.

Poverty & Backwardness

The result is that Turkistan whose resources are looted every day is afflicted with such a poverty and backwardness that it is rarely to be found even under Communist-fleeced territories. The Turkistani immigrants visiting their lands after 40 years or so observe that their country has further deteriorated from what it had been half a century ago. The Turkistani Hajjis who came in recent years state that electricity has yet not reached many towns, let alone the villages, and more than 30 per cent of the residents of Urumqi, capital of the province, continue to be deprived of the use of electric power.

Perpetuation of illiteracy and imposition of ignorance among the Turkistanis is part of a planned policy aimed at driving them to menial jobs so that employing migrant Chinese for jobs in the state government becomes easy on plea of non-availability of competent and educated locals. It also aims at creating a cultural and ideological lacuna in Turkistani Muslims, which could be filled by Communist and Chinese propaganda tarnishing their faith and national history and bringing them to the point of accepting the Chinese culture without argument, thus expediting the process of Chinisation of Turkistani culture and thought.

Among the definite evidences of this policy is the fact that the alphabets of the Turkistani script have been changed four times during a span of thirty years. Prior to 1950, it were Arabic alphabets which were in vogue in East Turkistan right from the time of the introduction of Islam to that region. Thereafter, use of Cyrillic (Russian) alphabets was imposed on Turkistan. Following the deterioration of the Sino-Russian relations, Latin alphabets were adopted for the province. With the advent of the era of the policy of "relaxation," Muslims are now using distorted Arabic alphabets which by themselves constitute a new character. The cultural anarchy and the ideological damage effected by these changes in the field of knowledge and education is anybody's guess. So is the immense damage caused to Muslim heritage by insisting on the use of Chinese language in all spheres and treating it as the sole medium of education, sciences and official dealings. When I travelled through airports of Aqsu, Kashghar and Urumqi in 1984, I found all announcements at the airports in the Chinese language without being followed up by the Uighurian (Turkistani) language at all, although these are Turkistani cities and situated within Xinjiang Uighur

(East Turkistan) "Autonomous" Region.

In his article captioned "Some Points on Issue of Development of University Level Education in Socialist Xinjiang (East Turkistan)" which appeared in issue No. 10 of the *Xinjiang University Journal* in 1982, a Chinese writer, Shu Wei Golu, says: "Number of Turkistani students in Universities and institutions reached 5125 in 1979. This number, compared with the number of University students in any other Chinese province, is very low. Even if compared with the neighbouring Republics of Qazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the USSR, we find that education is much farther behind in East Turkistan. For instance, proportion of the educated in East Turkistan comes to 9.4 for every thousand, whereas proportion of the educated in Qazakhstan is 157 per thousand and in Uzbekistan 174 per thousand.

Religious freedom exercised by Muslims at present may be deemed as one of the characteristics of the new policy of relaxation pursued by the Government of the People's China, which has been able to mobilise public opinion in its favour and received wide publicity without being scrutinised as to the reality of the situation by individuals and organisations in the world. Indeed, no serious study has been conducted of the nature of religious freedom exercised by Muslims in East Turkistan, in particular, and other Chinese provinces, in general.

The new constitution of China declared in 1982 propounds the "impossibility" of religious education for those who are less than 18 years of age and prohibits religious training and guidance for the youth. Hence, the state suppresses religious education on the ground that it is in conflict with its socialist principles, and Islamic schools are forbidden to operate, except in cases where they were set up to produce



Glimpses of life in East Turkistan: Muslims celebrating the festival of Id-ul-Fitr.



cadres to fill government posts related to Muslims. There is only one Islamic institution in East Turkistan in which the number of students does not exceed even 70. It is situated in the capital, Urumqi.

Shariah Laws

As to the Shariah precepts in matters of personal and family life (Muslim Personal Law), the Government does not allow this to be implemented and does not honour

it. Instead, it has launched a war against it, and freely encourages marriage between Muslims and Chinese Buddhists and compels Muslims to adopt common laws based on Buddhist teachings and Communist creed pertaining to social conduct, such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, habits of food, dress, living, etc. The Muslims are continuously mad targets of harassment by the Chinese Buddhists in performance of their prayers. For instance, Mrs. Lena H. Sun,

correspondent of *The Washington Post* in Peking, wrote in its issue of January 13, 1985, that a group of Buddhist youth "stands flagrantly in front of Muslims while they pray" in order to arouse their anger, saying that bowing down of head and prostration were both acts done in honour of Chinese to express submission which is called kow-tow.

As to ideological freedom, it continues to be banned despite the assurance given by the Chinese Constitution. There are more than 15 thousand political detenus in East Turkistan on charge of propagating reactionary, imperialistic, religious and chauvinistic ideologies. Articles and books derogatory to Islam and Muslims keep on appearing frequently. A book entitled "*History of Religion of Islam*" by a Communist author, Fang Xi, was published in 1981 in all languages used in the People's China. It contains a lot of calumnies and fabrications.

All writers, scholars and authors are compelled by the Chinese Government to make their writings and essays conform to the principles of the Communist Party of China, and to be the protagonists of its philosophy, policy and programme. The "new" history of East Turkistan has been propounded so as to appear a part of the general history of the proletarian revolution in China. The Turkistani (Uighurian) language has become semi-Chinese language owing to the introduction of a large number of Chinese expressions which have replaced Arabic phraseology on the plea that the Arabic language is a remnant of the past. So much so that tunes of Turkistani songs, which were based on famous Arabic tunes composed by the Turkistani Muslim philosopher, Abu-Nasr al-Farabi, and are known in East Turkistan as "*Al-Muqamat al-Ithna Ashriya*," have been distorted into Chinese tunes in such a way that their Arabic origins are hardly discernible.

It is on account of these reasons

that the Turkistani people unitedly demand an early and actual application of the autonomy regulation approved by Beijing. The journal "Sheng Ming" of Hong Kong in its issue of September 1981 says; "The iron-man of China, Deng Xiao Peng, discovered that Uigharians (Turkistani) are plotting a tumultuous revolt against the Chinese regime and that they are raising slogans like 'We want actual, real autonomy,' and 'We don't want to be made slaves.'" This observation confirms the bloody events that took place in East Turkistan from 1980 to 1982. It also reflects its people's desire to be liberated from the policy of annihilation and racial and cultural absorption pursued by the Government of the People's China against them, availing itself of the opportunity afforded by the indifference of the Muslim world which remains too busy with its own internal and external problems.

Muslim Obligation

However, the obligation of the Islamic fraternity, whose foundations are laid firmly by the Holy Qur'an, is both explicit and emphatic. Allah Almighty says: "The believers are but brothers." This fraternity is further emphasised upon and its rights advised to be protected and taken care of by our guide and master, Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) when he said: "Muslims, among themselves, are like an edifice each holding the other. If a limb gets sick, the whole body suffers for it by means of sleeplessness and fever." I am, therefore, prompted to appeal to Muslim societies and personalities to lend some of their concern to the issue of Islamic Turkistan so that our brethren there do not feel that the Muslim world has abandoned them and let them become the victims of the Chinese imperialism, and so that the Chinese

Government is also made conscious that the Islamic solicitude for things made sacrosanct by Allah is still well and alive and that the Muslims can never abandon their brethren and their heritage.

Our Islamic concern should commence with Muslim governments and organisations demanding from the Government of the People's China "to stop emigration of Chinese to, and repatriation of Chinese expats from, East Turkistan, and to discontinue the policy of genocide represented in nuclear experiments and birth control movement." We should work in unison to persuade the Chinese authorities to translate their "cordial sentiments" towards the Islamic world into practical implementation of the autonomy rule in East Turkistan and giving the Turkistani people an opportunity of conducting their affairs, developing their country and preserving their national and religious entity.

I also hope that the Islamic organizations will pay more attention to the issue of Eastern Turkistani Muslims by making scientific studies and research about their conditions. The people of Turkistan should take part in such a programme so that their support would lead them to a better understanding of the problem which would provide a base for giving the issue the support it deserves. It will also be an effective means for these organizations to have a proper knowledge of the issue which has long been neglected, so that Western and foreign sources do not remain the only and basic mediums of information for important Muslim affairs.

May Allah guide us all to the right path! Ameen.

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