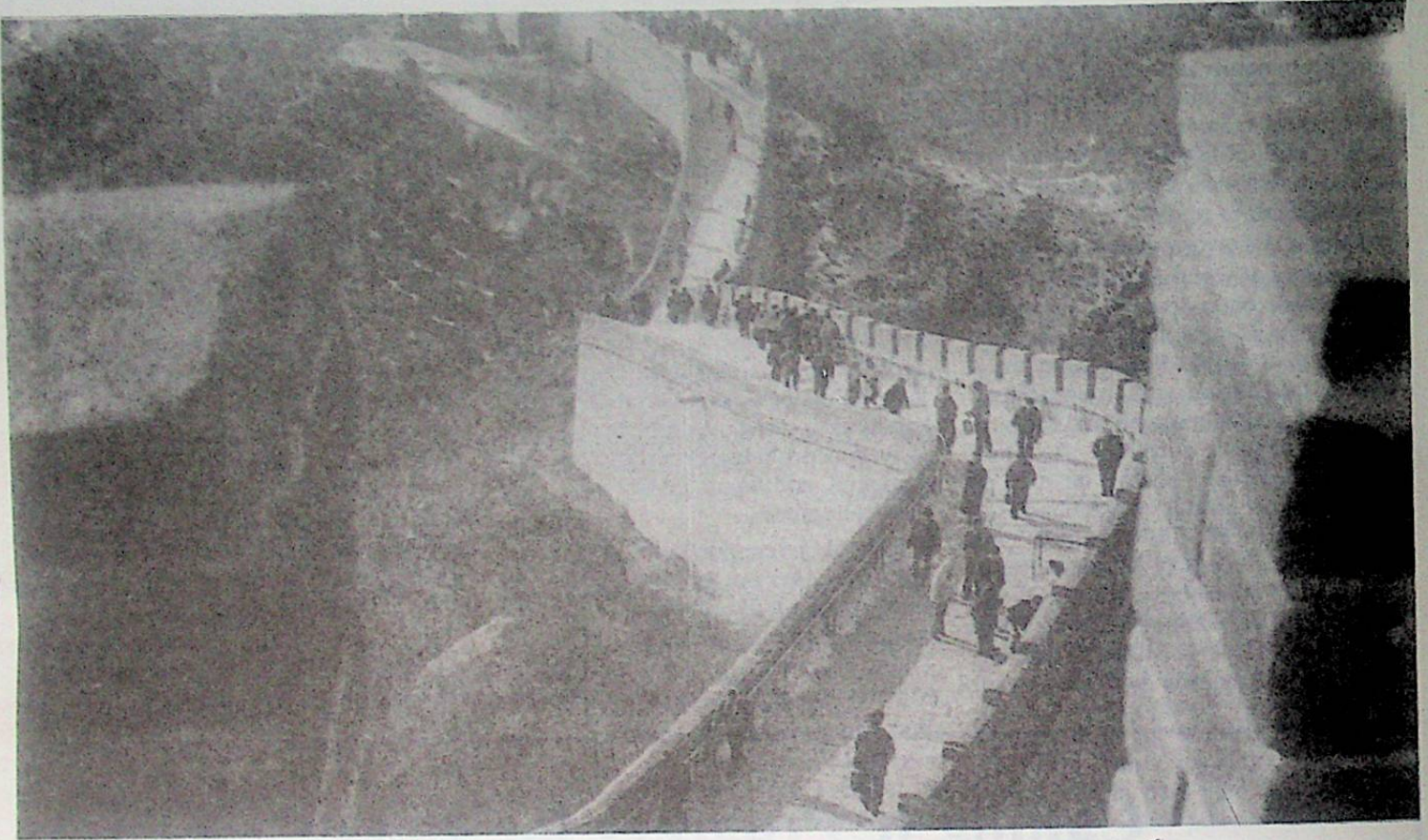


# The Peking Islamic Conference

*Sayyid Hasan Mutahar*



The Muslim World League Secretary-General, Dr. Abdullah Omar Nasseef, inaugurated a five-day Islamic Conference in Peking on December 4, 1987. It was the first international Muslim assembly held in recent times in China. Describing it to be the biggest ever held moot of its kind, Dr. Nasseef emphasized the fact that the "divine religion" of Islam provided us with some basic principles to help formulate the laws and rules necessary to govern human life and society. He urged the Muslims to follow the teachings of Islam, "which is the only way to restore their past glory."

According to SPA and Reuters, eminent Muslim scholars from dif-

ferent parts of the world, including Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, China, Sudan and Ghana, attended the Conference, which particularly discussed "ways and means" of promoting the Islamic awareness among the 35 million Chinese Muslims, many more of whose brethren dwell in the border regions of Yunnan, Kashghar and Xinjiang. Over 100 Islamic scholars from all parts of the People's Republic, together with thousands of Muslim students, workers, professionals and prominent citizens, applauded the inaugural address of Dr. Nasseef, who also happened to be the principal speaker on other occasions.

Islam's perfection, comprehensive-

ness and universalism were time and again brought into focus by almost all the distinguished delegates. Apart from several discourses on Islamic education, culture and values, lectures were delivered on Dawah in the light of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah of the Noble Prophet (peace be on him), lessons from the life of the Noble Prophet and his companions and Muslim contributions to arts, sciences and civilization as a whole, the tone and tenor of the deliberations having been largely set by Dr. Nasseef himself.

## **Thawing Attitude**

Organized by the Rabita, along with the Peking-based Central Islamic

Society of China, the Conference aimed at spreading the message of Islam across the Chinese mainland and help the indigenous Muslims understand the sublime teachings of their Ultimate Faith. As viewed by many participants, it happened to be the first such meeting at the climax of China's thawing attitude towards Islam, which together with its adherents was given a very bad treatment, specially during the infamous Cultural Revolution lasting from 1966 to 1976.

In an oblique reference to the changing situation, Dr. Nasseef gave a historical dress up to the issues facing the Muslims. He said, there was "some sensitivity" in China over the Conference, which had been projected by the Middle East press as a "focus" on missionary work. The Chinese representatives, however, further clarified the proposition by observing that "we (do) receive help from some countries, but we propagate Islam ourselves, and we are not allowed to have foreign missionaries (in our country)." It may be pointed out as an adjunct that the Chinese Islamic Association, along with some other religious bodies, binds its members to support all policies emanating from Peking.

The Conference initiators had thought that the assembly might pose a problem of communication among the delegates, with most of the Chinese participants able to read but not speak Arabic. There were, of course, a number of interpreters but not quite enough to cope with the variety of colloquialism in vogue. It was, therefore, felt that more efforts were required to be made in the field of languages through such institutions as the \$175,000 Islamic Centre and Mosque, opened in November last year in the port city of Qinhuangdao, with the financial support of the Muslims of Kuwait.

### Practical Contact

The Muslim World League, on its part, is planning to supplement cultural and educational activities at various levels through any guidance and assistance that can be extended within the framework of the Chinese system. China's bold overtures towards the Muslim community,



mainly its decision to allow the re-opening of several thousand mosques, have been warmly hailed by the Muslims throughout the world. An increasing number of Chinese Hajjis and an open-door policy in the spheres of commerce and tourism adopted by Peking are also regarded as healthy signs for the future of the hitherto neglected Sino-Islamic relations.

On his return to Makkah al-Mukarramah, Dr. Nasseef summed up the Rabita's latest endeavour as "the beginning of an actual practical contact between the MWL and the

Chinese Muslims who have so far been isolated from their other Muslim brothers." In a press statement, he observed that the Peking assembly

was "a good opportunity for exchange of views and a close look at the situation of the Chinese Muslims."

He said that the Conference evoked a keen interest in the Chinese media, which should go a long way in creating a climate of mutual confidence and cooperation.

The Secretary-General also expressed his appreciation of the Chinese Muslims' adherence to the teachings of Islam, an impression he gathered at villages and community centres that he had a chance to visit. He took a bright view of the changes and developments in regard to the condition of Muslim minority in China and hinted that much would depend on the continuing tempo of peace and progress witnessed recently. One may, thus, justifiably expect that the League, morally fortified by its happy experience, follows up the Dawah programme in the People's Republic of China with the vigour, expertise and diplomatic finesse that this great cause deserves.

## Hijab Gets Legal Sanction in Egypt

Female students cannot be barred from wearing full veils at public universities, an Egyptian court ruled recently. The students were fighting a legal battle for the right to wear the *niqab*, which Islam prescribes for women to put on while appearing in public.

The decision by Egypt's administrative courts system would now allow university women wearing the "niqab," a full-length dress with slits only for the eyes — to attend class, despite objections from campus authorities.

Two women enrolled at Ain Shams University in suburban Cairo had appealed to the administrative courts to reverse the university's policy on veils, court officials said. The judicial body has jurisdiction over matters of state litigation.

The court backed the students' contention that "attire was inseparable from individual liberty and would require strong justification to alter," according to the officials.

# Islam and Muslims in China

*Amer Obeid & Muhammad Nasir*

To convene an Islamic gathering in Beijing, a stronghold of Communism, is by no means an ordinary event. As the year 1987 was fading out, the Muslim World League turned this dream into reality by holding its first-ever moot in the People's

Republic of China. The five-day symposium-cum-social event was organized in association with the Beijing-based

Central Islamic Society from 13 to 18 Rabi al-Thani 1408AH, corresponding to 4-8 December, 1987. It was attended by scholars, intellectuals and prominent

Dawah workers and Muslim figures from various Islamic countries and communities. Large numbers of Muslims from as remote areas of China as Canton and Shanghai took part in the various sessions in spite of the below-zero temperature in the Chinese Capital. A wide range of topics relevant to the Islamic Faith and Muslim life were dealt with during discussions, lectures and speeches.

Notable among these subjects were: The Friday sermon and the message of the Mosque along with their vital role in enlightenment and guidance of Muslim communities; the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah as sources of the Islamic Dawah; Islamic education and its positive impact on development of society; significance of work as viewed by Islam; Muslims' contributions to scientific discoveries and inventions and standing of the Holy Qur'an in relation to modern sciences. Other themes highlighted the virtues of Islam and Islamic Shariah and pointed out their vital role in building prosperous and disciplined societies. The agenda of the assembly also focussed on enlightenment of the Chinese Muslims on the teachings of Islam and providing guidance to them on matters of belief, worship and social dealings with a view to bolstering their resistance against atheism, secularism and other un-Islamic ideologies popularized by the mass media and educational institutions. The Chinese Muslims were also warned against threats posed by Qadianism, Free Masonry and other subversive doctrines and cults.

Dr. Abdullah Omar Nasseef, Secretary-



General of the Muslim World League, commenting on the aftermath of the meeting, voiced satisfaction over the outcome in spite of some setbacks and difficulties. It proved a good step forward in making a rapprochement with the Chinese Muslims after a long period of isolation from the rest of the Muslim world. But these contacts would not have succeeded, Nasseef said, without the open-door policy followed presently by the government in Beijing.

"Muslims in China are now enjoying a remarkable degree of freedom of worship, have more opportunities for acquisition of Islamic education, building new mosques or restoration of the old ones, besides setting up Islamic schools and faculties. The meeting provided us a good opportunity to closely look at the conditions of the Muslims in China, he observed, adding that the event afforded the 35 million Chinese Muslims an opportunity to meet with their brothers from other Muslim communities and countries."

Representatives from Egypt, Pakistan, Ghana, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Sudan, besides those who came from inside the mainland, attended the discussions, lectures, talks and workshops. The mass media, including radio and televisions inside and outside China, gave wide coverage to the symposium's activities. The Chinese people could see for the first time a big Islamic gathering thus getting a first-hand knowledge about Islamic principles, history and the conditions of their brethren in other parts of the world.

Dr. Nasseef was very pleased with the strict adherence of the Chinese Muslims to their Islamic traditions and practices which he observed during a tour of the four main regions of the Muslim settlement in the People's Republic.

## Demographics

Islam was introduced to China nearly one thousand years ago, mostly by the Arab traders who had penetrated the Far East

as far as Canton on its eastern coast. There is as yet no precise census of the Chinese Muslims. Some sources put their number at between 50 and 60 million. They are scattered throughout China, but most of them are concentrated in Western regions of Yunnan, Guizhou, Shaanxi, Gansu, Sichuan, Qinghai, Ningxia and the Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan). The major Muslim nationalities are the Huis (ethnic Chinese), Kazakhs, Kirghizs, Uygurs and Uzbeks. All these nationalities, except the Huis, speak the Turkish language. The Huis, who speak Chinese, live mainly in Yunnan and Ningxia regions. Throughout

the different reigns of the Chinese dynasties, Muslims have been subjected to persecution or harassment of one kind or the other. But their condition sharply deteriorated after the Communist take-over in 1949 followed by a general crackdown on all religions.

The persecution of the Muslims reached its climax during the 1966-1976 "Cultural Revolution" which was dominated by the excesses of "the Gang of Four." A genocide had reportedly been launched against the Muslims and some sources estimate that as many as four million Muslims were liquidated during the early period of the Communist regime. This figure cannot be free from exaggeration as it serves the purpose of underestimating the number of the Muslims living in the

PRC. Most of the mosques had been entirely destroyed, closed down, or converted to non-religious purposes. The campaign of liquidation of the Islamic identity did not spare the Islamic institutions and religious schools. Illiteracy is, therefore, rampant among Muslims with its rate as high as 90 per cent. The number of the Ahongs (Imams who train Muslims youngsters) declined to about 20,000, mostly unqualified for the job, with 15,000 of them in the Turkish-speaking Xinjiang region.

### Phase of Openness

Since late 1970s, Peking has been following a more liberal economic policy under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. This resulted in keeping China's doors ajar to allow the outside world to take a look at the long-closed country. A new pragmatic policy has also been adopted towards all religions including Islam. Not less than 25,000 mosques have reportedly been restored or built by the Muslim community. Some reports put them at 30-50,000 mosques of which 14,000 have been restored in Xinjiang and in Ningxia. The new policy, dictated primarily by China's need for greater economic ties with the countries of the Middle East, has encouraged the Chinese Muslims to learn Arabic and acquire Islamic knowledge enabling them to deal with the Muslims of these areas.

This is outlined in the new policy document of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which says: "All young religious professional workers should continually raise their cultural level and religious knowledge and loyally uphold the party's religious policy." Any Muslim youth, who is 18 years of age, is eligible to study Islam under a local Imam for two years. Upon the study of the Qur'anic curriculum and Arabic language programme, the successful student becomes eligible to sit for an entrance examination to one of the five Islamic colleges in the People's Republic.

The document 19 also lays down rules facilitating contacts and cooperation with the religious groups and organizations abroad. There are six regulations which allow the Chinese Muslim groups to establish contacts with foreign organizations; conduct friendly visits to them; exchange academic and cultural knowledge with them and to accept donations from the foreign bodies. These regulations encouraged the MWL to arrange fact-finding visits to China which led to the visit of Mr. Ahmad Ismael, governor of the autonomous Xinjiang Province, to Makkah to perform Umrah in 1986. During his stay in the Holy City, he conferred with the MWL officials on ways and means to boost cooperation between the League and the Chinese Muslims. These initiatives and probes culminated in the convening of the Peking symposium.

## Aid to Palestinians

The Islamic Development Bank is to give \$10 million for humanitarian aid to Palestinians affected by the uprising in Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza.

The 44-member institution agreed on the sum at a one-day annual meeting of its board of governors on 14 March, held in Timis, according to a text of resolutions made available to the press.

The money is for "Emergency Humanitarian Assistance" in the occupied territories, where Israeli soldiers have shot dead at least 87 Palestinians since the uprising began on December 9, last year.

The Council voiced its staunch support to the Palestinian uprising against the Zionist forces and urged all member states to extend support to the Palestinian brothers in the occupied territories.

Pakistan also will be sending a consignment of medicines worth 5 million rupees for the Palestinians suffering Israeli brutalities in the occupied West bank and Gaza.

Steps are being taken to despatch the medicines expeditiously, the Consulate General of Pakistan in Jeddah said in a statement.

Pakistan's decision comes in the wake of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's appeal to the Muslim community to provide relief assistance to the Palestinians in the occupied territories, who have staged a glorious uprising against repression and usurpation of their national rights.



Relatives grieve over a fallen fighter

Problems and Prospects

# Islamization and Education in Muslim China

Clyde Ahmad Winters

**T**here are many challenges to planning for *Da'wah* in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The most important challenge of *Da'wah* in the PRC is the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Yet even with these obstacles due to the pragmatism of Deng Xiaoping, there are many ways that *Da'wah* activities can be strengthened in the PRC through social planning.

It is obvious that although persecution of Muslims has been great in China under Communist rule, the basic belief of Muslims in Islam has not diminished (Winters 1985c; Vol. 1985). This indicates that *Da'wah* efforts in China can be quite profitable. Such countries as Kuwait (Winters 1986), and Saudi Arabia (Winters 1985b) through their considerable investments in western China are helping Muslims to develop economically. But more must be done to improve the Muslim education system in China.

The inability of *Ahongs* (Imam, literate Muslim) to train Muslim youth during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) has caused a severe shortage of religious personnel in Muslim China. There were 20,000 Islamic clerics recognized by the state in 1982. Although there are 15,000 Turkic-speaking clerics in Xinjiang, there are only around 5,000 in the Hui areas. This makes it impossible to staff adequately Qur'anic schools in Hui areas.

In the past every *Ahong* was an Islamic teacher and every mosque was a school. Today, many of the *Ahongs* supported by the government lack the education and skill to teach adequately Arabic and the Islamic sciences. This has caused Muslim parents to become concerned about the education of their children. They want their children to learn more about Arabic language and Islam, and not just the practical skills which prepare them for a job. This re-

sults from the fact that the ultimate objective of an Islamic-oriented education is belief in One God.

There are too few qualified Islamic specialists in China. This makes Islamic education policy in the PRC an important concern. Social planners must pay increased attention to the spiritual and private (social) demand for education when shaping future policies. Individual Muslims must begin to invest more money in the religious education of their children and not place so much priority on higher and vocational education.

The future cannot be foreseen or controlled. Yet social planning is an important objective of nations and local communities. For these plans to be successful they must be designed around the best information relating to the project.

The fact that each individual Muslim is accountable for his own actions, makes it possible for man to engage in social planning as long as the planner understands that it is Allah, who may or may not make these plans become a reality. Dr. Mannan (1984-83), noted that "...it is society or the state which exist for the individual is accountable for his actions before Allah. This notion of accountability gives him freedom to take part in the construction of society to which he belongs."

Dr. M.A. Khan (1985:144), has observed that "Emphasis in the Islamic economy is on the distribution of resources so that the basic needs of society are fulfilled. In the process of need fulfillment, existing resources may be re-allocated or fresh resources may be brought into use." He has listed three objectives for public policy in the Islamic economy:

- [a] preparation for fighting in the cause of Allah (Qur'an 8:60);
- [b] alleviation of poverty (Qur'an 9:60); and
- [c] improvement in the cultural quality

of life (Qur'an 22:41)

Some education planning can help prepare the Muslim in the PRC to complete these three-fold objectives. There are four levels of action in Islamic planning:

(1) *shura*; (2) societal goals; (3) the environment and related test of plan consequences, in terms of intergroup and interpersonal relations; and (4) social programming/planning activities.

Islam stresses the fact that unity and *shura* are the bedrock for the welfare of the community. One of the major objectives of any social plan for the Muslim community must be *al-amr bil maruf wa nahy an al-munkar* (enjoining right conduct and forbidding indecency).

Because unity within the targeted population is essential for successful execution of any policy and *shura* is a characteristic of the Believers according to the Qur'an, it makes this a key element of any plan. In addition, the basic societal goal, in relation to Islamic planning is full and consistent Islamic development.

We must examine the coevolution between the Marxist and the Islamic social systems before we can plan an education policy for Muslims in the PRC. This is critical to the success of any social policy for the PRC.

Communist ideology appears progressive on the surface but, in fact, it is a stagnant system. In the Communist worldview, Islam, as any religion, is to be eliminated and replaced by scientific materialism. Thus, although the CCP may use either the 'above' or 'below' policy in relation to Muslims, their objective remains constant: stop religious belief and practice in the PRC. (Winters 1979)

Islamic ideology also remains steady-state: Belief in One God. Recognition of these systems in a coevolutionary world can help a plan to be successful since it helps one to remain flexible.

(Norgaard and Dixon 1986)

In the PRC due to Communism a coevolutionary process between the Marxist and Islamic systems must take place, since *Da'wah* is presently in a period of transition in the PRC. Although there is significant interaction between Muslims and Marxists due to the basic antagonism of the components of these social systems there is only minimal overlap, as illustrated through the use of a Venn diagram. (see fig. 1)

The core of the effectuation of social policy when Muslims form a minority is recognized as the relationship between Muslim actors and non-Muslim actors. Each group of actors possess their own resources, meanings and intentional actions. In this model the relationship between the Muslim and non-Muslim actor have the position of international subjects. This results from the fact that successful implementation of social action in the PRC must be supported by governmental actors (the Chinese Communist Party) who are non-Muslims.

In figure 2, social policies are illustrated in their environment which includes Muslim and non-Muslim subjects and their resources, meanings, ideas and values they may possess.

### Islamic Meaning and Values

In the Muslim community Islam is central to the health of the community. This means that our model for community development should reflect that attitude. Islam seeks to establish mutual responsibility between the individual and the community so that a righteous social life can exist. In the Qur'an we read:

*"And the Believers, men and women,*



*are protecting friends one of another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong" (Al Qur'an 9:71)*

Dr. Faruqi (1979:29), notes that, "the foundation of Islamic culture is religion, and hence, naturally, it is the basis of Muslim education." This makes an education policy the number one requirement for social, moral and economic development.

Drewnowski (1970) believes that planning "aims at increasing people's welfare." He noted that "we ought to try to make the whole planned development social, that is to direct development in such a way that it would bring about an improvement in the conditions in which people live."

The Qur'an makes it clear that any plan must be arrived at through *shura* (mutual advice) from the representatives of the community. The executive of the government should not undertake social planning without *shura*. The will of the community must be the guiding light of any plan.

An examination of the GPCR and Deng's religious policy will help us understand the CCP meanings and intentional actions.

The GPCR (1966-1977), caused many problems for Islamization in the PRC.

The major constraint placed on schools is the lack of CCP support of Qur'anic education. The CCP pays lip service to *minban xuexiao* (people-run schools). Before the GPCR Muslims had many *minban xuexiao* which were mostly Qur'an schools. During the GPCR the Qur'anic schools were closed. The only active *minban xuexiao* today are controlled by the Party officials.

Most Muslim shops and restaurants remained open only in Xinjiang during the GPCR. At this time, Islamic behaviour was denounced as 'bourgeois' and 'reactionary.' The Party line held that religious belief was 'superstition.' In addition all Muslim schools were closed and their students forced to attend Chinese primary schools. (Winters 1979)

In many Muslim areas in the northwest Red Guardsmen had to be sent in, especially to Ningxia and Xinjiang, by rail due to a lack of Muslim cadres in the area to carry out GPCR activities. The location of non-Muslim Red Guardsmen in traditional Muslim areas promoted widespread unrest. This unrest resulted from the fact that radical conservative Red Guard knew practically nothing about Islam, and the strong feelings of community within many Muslim locales. This led to frequent confrontations between Hans and Muslims from 1966-1981 in the western provinces and Yunnan. Here Muslims resisted Beijing's attempts at ethnic assimilation.

In 1978, Deng began to reinstitute full religious freedom. By 1979, the United Front Department was reconstituted, and the Religious Affairs Bureau was reintroduced. In 1979, the RAB outlined the state's religious policy. In an article published in the 15 March 1979, *Peoples Daily*, it was maintained that 'all religions have their origin in erroneous illusions generated by impotence and fear in face of natural or social forces.'

This article made it clear that the CCP recognized that religion plays an important role within the Muslim communities. It made it clear that 'proper' religious activities are guaranteed, but the Believer 'must conform to the policies and laws of the government. They may not interfere with politics or education or revive the system of feudal



oppression and exploitation that was abolished after Liberation. Much less is it permitted to the class enemy to use religion to carry on counter-revolution or illegal activities. The government organs therefore must strengthen the administration of religious organizations.

Lei Zhenchang (1981), a worker in the Research Institute of World Religions of the Academy of Social Sciences, said Marxism was aimed at propagating "dialectical and historical materialism so that a scientific outlook will gradually be cultivated among the people. If this is done well and steady, the influence of religion can only diminish." This view was reinterpreted by Zhao Fushan, Vice President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1986.

Muslim cadres have usually refused to give up Islam. Kuo Zhu, writing in *The Peoples Daily*, 11 October 1979, said that "To protect feudal religious privileges on the excuse of resolving ethnic minority problems can not be permitted." He added that "People belonging to religious circles have to continue their studies for ideological reform."

In an article in the 19 May 1980, *Xin-ghai Daily*, it was noted that "among Party members of minority nationalities some do not fully understand the problem of religious faith. They still cling to their religious faith and attend religious activities."

In early 1980, an article in the *Qinghai Daily* noted that among the Muslims, "some Party members cling to their religious beliefs... and even participate in religious activities... Some production teams stipulate that workpoints be given to commune members for their participation in religious activities and fines be imposed on those who do not participate..." And Li Ju-hui, in the 15 December 1980, issue of *National Solidarity*, noted that in some ethnic regions of Gansu, "there is the incidence of primary school pupils being forced to attend religious function. Some schools double as temples so that students spend half a day in class and the other half reading the Scripture (i.e. the Qur'an). Some children are forced to become little monks or nuns. All these are not in conformity with the freedom of religious belief as stipulated in the state constitution."

In general, under Deng, religious freedom must be in line with the 'three self' principles: self governing, self supporting and self propagating (Winters 1985c). Thus the activities of religious personnel must follow the united front line at home and abroad. The religious policies of the CCP are outlined in Document no.19, published in 1982. Here the regulations governing the activities of religious personnel are outlined, as are the articles for external and internal religious activities.

There are six regulations regarding external activities of religion. They are:

- (1) religious groups can conduct relations with foreign religious organizations as long as there is no foreign domination;
- (2) friendly visits between Chinese religious organizations and sister institutions are allowed, but missionaries are barred from propagating their religious faith in China;
- (3) academic and cultural exchanges between religious bodies in various countries allowed, but strict control over the distribution of religious propaganda material of a political nature must be maintained;
- (4) foreign donations can be accepted by PRC religious bodies;
- (5) participation in international religious organizations is allowed; and
- (6) vigilance must be maintained to prevent the infiltration of imperialist reactionary agents into China under the guise of religion.

There are also eight articles on domestic religious activities. They are: (1) citizens 18 years old enjoy religious freedom; (2) juveniles under 18 shall not be allowed to believe in a religion; (3) all religious bodies must be in conformity with government laws and policies; (4) collective property can not be appropriated for use by religious institutions; (5) religious privileges already abrogated cannot be restored; (6) Party and youth corps members cannot accept religious faith; (7) train new religious professionals following the guidelines of 'solidarity, education and reform' to people in religious activities; (8) mobilize the masses to eliminate class enemies wearing a religious cloak.' (Winters 1985c)

The best guess-estimate of the Muslim population of China is 50-60 million. (Winters 1984:478) Muslims live throughout the PRC, but most of them live in the Western Region: Yunnan, Guizhou, Shaanxi, Gansu, Sichuan, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang. The av-

erage per capita income for the urban dweller in the West is 708 yuan.

The major Muslim nationalities are the Hui, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Uygurs and Uzbeks. The Kazakhs, Kirghiz and Uzbeks are for the most part nomads. They live in Xinjiang, along with the Uygurs. The Muslims of Xinjiang, except for the Hui, speak Turkish languages. The Hui speak Chinese. They are found throughout China. They are concentrated in Yunnan, and in Ningxia on the upper reaches of the Huanghe (Yellow River).

The Muslims have a high fertility rate. Their average annual increase is 23 per thousand. (Winters 1985a) In addition, the Muslim population is young, and marries earlier than the Han. Fifty per cent of Hui and the Uygur population is under 20 years. (Winters 1985a)

Over 14,000 mosques have been restored in Xinjiang, and 1200 in Ningxia. In this new spirit of religious freedom Muslims can participate in religious services at their local mosque and read Qur'an whenever they feel like it.

Each commune of 300-500 people have their own mosque. As a result their are an estimated 30-50,000 mosques. The old mosques being renovated are built in Chinese style. New mosque follow the Middle Eastern model.

### Present Efforts

The CCP is attempting to control the education process so that they can, hopefully, train *Ahong* and individual Muslims who will verify the truth of Marxism (Winters 1979:45). This policy is outlined in CCP Document No. 19: 'All young religious professional workers should continually raise their culture level and religious knowledge and loyally uphold the Party's religious policy.'

In many communities when a Muslim youth graduates from middle school and he is 18, he is eligible to study Islam under a local Imam for two years. Upon study of the Qur'anic curriculum and Arabic language programme, the successful student has the right to take an entrance examination to attend one of the five Islamic Colleges in the PRC. At the Islamic theological Colleges the *manla* (student) studies the Islamic sciences for an additional two years. Upon graduation from one of these institu-



tions the successful student becomes a 'government' -recognized Imam/*Ahong*.

Traditional Islamic education is tolerated by the CCP for four reasons (1) they need to have educated Muslims to help in the economic development of Muslim majority areas such as Xinjiang and Ningxia (2) they need educated Muslims to help develop their oil industry in Xinjiang; (3) Muslim parents were already providing their children with an Islamic education in their own homes; and (4) the CCP needs Muslim workers knowledgeable in the Islamic sciences so they can work in the Middle East.

For example, in Lanzhou, Gansu province, the government established a part time Arabic training school in 1982. Over the past five years the 48 graduates of this programme have pursued different courses. Six graduates act as interpreters on China Construction Corp. projects in Iraq, Kuwait and Libya. Others have been assigned to the Ningxia Moslem Development Company or admitted to the Institute of Islamic Theology in Ningxia or to Beijing University for further study.

To resolve the *Ahong* shortage each old *Ahong* can train between two-three youth over 18 years old. In Beijing, the Institute of Islamic Theology was reopened in 1982. Around 130 students study annually at the Institute. Training centres for *Ahong* have been established in Ningxia and Xinjiang which have evolved into colleges. The Ningxia Islamic Association formed the Islamic Theological Academy in 1982. (Winters

1987) An Islamic college has been founded in Xinjiang. Other Xinjiang Muslims were studying in Beijing and Egypt. (Winters 1984:477)

### Education Policy

The education policy/plan advocated in this paper will address the critical shortage of *Ahongs* in the PRC and ensure the stability of Islam in China during the 21st century and beyond. There are four major education problems in China:

- (1) the lack of qualified Imams to teach Islamic studies;
- (2) students cannot study Islam until they become 18;
- (3) shortage of Islamic publications; and
- (4) a decline in the number of mosque Qur'anic schools.

The CCP cannot be expected to support any plan to increase substantially the number of *Ahongs* in the PRC. This results from the fact that only a few *manlas* can be accommodated at the five Islamic Colleges in the PRC. This suggests that the best education policy for the PRC is the establishment of more educational institutions at the community mosque level and the homes of *Ahongs*.

To implement this plan mosques, which have been converted to other purposes, must be returned to their rightful owners, or Chinese Muslims must build new mosques and associated schools financed by local Muslims. We cannot seriously expect foreign governments to

build all the needed mosques for Chinese Muslims. The creation of new mosques would provide the centres where the Islamic sciences could be taught.

Islamic educational planning (IEP) and Western educational planning (WEP) are different. The WEP neo-classical economic theory focuses on the efficiency of the competitive marketplace and rejects the completely planned economy. The rate of return (ROR) of WEP studies are often estimated by the use of national census data that summarize wage differences between groups having diverse levels of educational attainment. Hence the WEP theory is seen as an investment good aimed at meeting manpower needs. (Psacharopoulos; Klees 1986).

IEP analysis on the other hand is value oriented, due to the purposes of Islamic education. The purpose of Islamic education is to make the Muslim a part of the *Ummah* through the Islamic doctrine of *Tawhid* (unity of God), *Risalah* (Prophethood), and *Akhira* (knowledge of the hereafter). The ROR to IEP studies is belief in One Supreme God and Obedience to that God alone. According to Dr. Mannan (1984), the investment good of IEP is a private good, an ethical and moral good.

The education policy in the PRC has long-term and short-term goals. These goals must be implemented on the basis of existing realities in the Turkic-speaking and Hui communities. There are two major social realities which must be considered for successful implementation of IEP. First, the Communists are hostile to religious belief, even though they may hope to use Chinese Muslims to improve the PRC image in the Muslim world. Secondly, the levels of autonomy and ability to execute any educational policy is defined by both the particular Muslim's ethnic origin and the particular Muslim's place of residence.

Chinese Communists are tolerant of Islam for many strategic and economic reasons. Since the Muslim areas are rich in minerals, oil and agricultural land, the Chinese do not want to alienate the Muslims and thus provoke a Muslim 'fundamentalist' rebellion similar to the one that occurred in Iran. This need by the CCP to develop the Western region



makes the Party amenable to ideas which can improve the education situation in this region. Thus, internal Chinese politics and international affairs have encouraged the CCP to allow the Chinese Muslims religious freedom. These same forces can be used to help Chinese Muslims effect positive educational changes which can enhance the Islamic sciences in the PRC.

The number of Muslim primary schools in China is decreasing. In Xinjiang, for example, there were 10,051 primary schools in 1973. This fell to 1,640 schools in 1977 due to the closure of Islamic-oriented schools in the region. In 1980, 948 per cent of school-age children were enrolled in 9,100 primary schools. (Winters 1987). The ratio between population and primary schools in Xinjiang, for example, is 934:1, in the rest of China the ratio is 600:1. (Allahverdi 1985:42) This lack of schools helps keep the rate of illiteracy high in Muslim areas.

The illiteracy rate among Muslims is high. In the PRC, anyone reading less than 500 words is considered illiterate. The CCP demands that every worker be able to read 2000 characters. Using this criteria, the proportion of illiterate people aged over 12 in the Western region is 40 per cent according to the *Beijing Review* in February 1987. This high illiteracy rate is a direct result of the Red Guard closure of Qur'anic schools during the GPCR. To develop the Western region more people must be educated. It must be remembered that while minorities in the PRC represent less than 7 per cent of China's population, they occupy 60 per cent of the territory.

The CCP treats the diverse Muslim nationalities differently. Stated simply, Muslims in Turkic-speaking areas have more freedom than Huis living in predominately Han areas. The Turkic-speaking Muslims have limited autonomy and power over their own affairs. They are allowed many privileges not provided to the Huis.

Because the Huis speak Chinese, the CCP has tried to force this group to adopt Han ways. Whereas in Xinjiang after 1969, much of the excess of the Red Guard was not allowed, and *Ahongs* were put only under house arrest, Turkic Muslims had the freedom

to operate their own school; in Hui areas on the other hand, all the mosques and schools were closed except the Beijing mosque which was used mainly by foreign Muslims living in the capital. As a result, there are fewer qualified *ulama* in Hui areas than in the Northwest to operate mosque-schools.

Due to internal security concerns, the CCP fears Muslim rebellions in Xinjiang which could encourage the Soviets to enter the Province. As a result, they give Muslims in Xinjiang more freedoms. The Chinese Constitution, and the Muslim autonomy in Xinjiang has encouraged the growth of Islamic education. In the Chinese Constitution of 1982, the article on religion states that, 'No State organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe, or not to believe, in any religion, nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in any religions.' The Chinese Constitution emphasizes: 'The State will help the areas inhabited by minority nationalities accelerate their economic and cultural development in accordance with the peculiarities and needs of the different minority nationalities.' This section of the Constitution has been used by Muslims to press the government for the freedom to redevelop openly Islamic educational centres.

Regional autonomy gives the Muslims the ability to partially 'control' their educational policy. The new regional autonomy law of 1984 indicates that the national minorities have the right to develop their own education policy. Under article 7, of domestic religious activities it is stated that you can train new religious professionals following the guidelines of 'solidarity, education and reform' to people in religious activities.

The PRC trade with the Peninsular Arabs also offer opportunities to advance Islamic and Arabic education. Due to this trade the CCP is seeking more interpreters. The Huis speak Chinese, so many Arabic language training programmes, such as the one mentioned earlier in Gansu, have been established. As more Huis attend these training programmes the level of Arabic literacy among the Huis must surely increase.

Consequently, interested *Da'wah* or-

ganizations can help Muslims in the PRC without fear. Although six regulations regarding external religious activities bar missionaries from propagating their religion in the PRC, they do allow educational and cultural visits and exchanges between religious bodies and the acceptance of foreign donations by PRC religious bodies.

Granted, foreign religious bodies cannot distribute religious literature in the PRC, but, if *Da'wah* organizations, such as the Muslim World League, donated a printing press to each provincial Islamic Association in the PRC, Chinese Muslims could publish their own literature to supplement those materials already being published by the government presses in their own native language. In addition, the Saudis could organize a radio programme in the Turkish and Chinese languages which would teach the Muslims Arabic, since they already beam programme to the PRC.

### Short-Term Goals

The short-term goal for our education policy in China is to increase the number of *Ahongs* through the use of the *ulama* system and government-supported Muslim centres of higher education. Already each *Ahong* in China is allowed at least two *manla* whom they can teach the Islamic sciences. This is a good start but the five Muslim theological institutes in China cannot absorb all eligible students interested in the higher Islamic sciences.

Presently, a few Chinese students are studying in Egypt. More Chinese students must be brought to Muslim countries to learn the Islamic sciences. Many Chinese Muslims from various regional Islamic Associations have good relations with the Saudis. This is good because the PRC wants better relations with Saudi Arabia.

The Muslim World League (MWL) could help speed up the training of qualified *Ahongs* by establishing an Islamic science and Arabic course in Makkah for the Chinese and bringing in 25-50 Hui students from all over China to study the course each year. This training programme would provide a cadre of knowledgeable *Ahong*, who could establish their own schools when they return home.

If the cost were prohibitive, Arabic experts working with Chinese and Turkic-speaking interpreters could establish each year an intensive Arabic language programme in Beijing, Lanzhou, Yinchuan and Urumqi. This programme could train as many as 15-25 students in each province each year.

This programme could help introduce more Chinese to the Arabic language and provide more interpreters for Arab businessmen working in the PRC. Since it can help Arab businessmen working in the PRC, the MWL might attempt to get them to sponsor such an annual course.

Once more *Ahongs* are trained, we can then reach our long-term goal. Our long-term goal is the creation of a Qur'anic school at each mosque which combined the Islamic science and secular subjects and enough trained *Ahongs* that can teach Islamic studies in their homes. Creation of an *ulama* system in Communist countries is most necessary. Then if the CCP ever closes the mosque-schools again, there will be a large number of literate Muslims to accommodate the demand for underground centres of Islamic studies.

Granted the Chinese leadership is uneasy with the local/popular manage-



ment of social institutions, and as a result, control over educational institutions by Party Officials has become the norm. (Robinson 1986) Although this is the case Chinese want to develop the Western region and need Arab capital to do it. They also need interpreters to work with the Arabs. Since the Hui already speak Chinese they have ample opportunity to press the government for more support to Arabic language programmes. Therefore, the government will look favourably at any educational programme which will increase literacy in the Muslim areas. Therefore, educational institutions under the guise of Middle East studies could teach Islamic doctrine.

Creation of these schools in Hui areas is urgent. Elementary schools teaching religious knowledge (i.e., Middle East studies) and secular skills would make it possible for *Ahongs* to reach Muslim

youth under 18, without fear of prosecution.

### Conclusion

The proposed education policy outlined in this paper calls for a concert of services on the international, governmental and community level (s). The objective of this plan is to develop a coordinated service system which can combine the efforts of the public and voluntary sectors of the Muslim communities of China.

The principal actors in this plan are the local Muslims, and CCP. To implement this plan Muslims must take more control over the education of their children and found alternative private institutions to ensure *Da'wah*. To implement this plan Muslims must make sure that local and state governments respect the constitutional right of Muslims to practise their religion in the PRC.

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