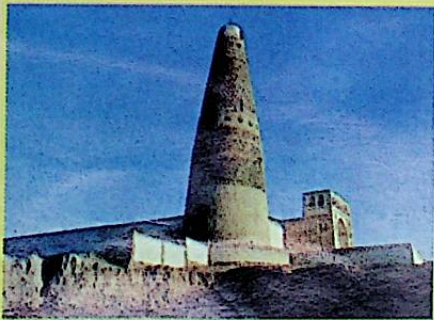
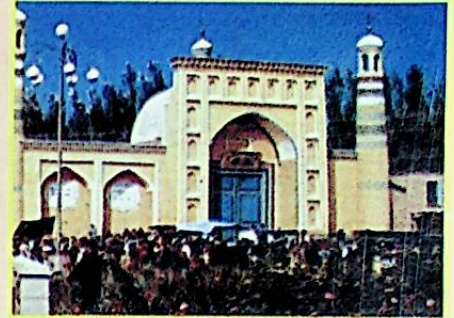


THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE JOURNAL

Vol. 24

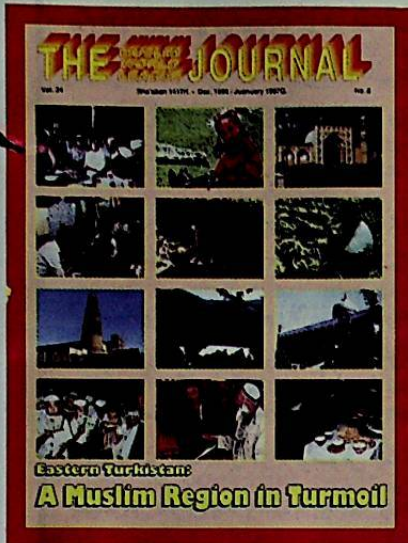
Sha'aban 1417H. - Dec. 1996 / January 1997G.

No. 8



Eastern Turkistan:

A Muslim Region in Turmoil



Secretary-General

Dr. Abdullah Saleh al-Obeld

Supervisor-General, Media & Culture
Hassan al-Ahdal

Director of Press & Publications
& Chief Editor
Hamid Hassan al-Raddadi

Editor

Muhammad Nasir

Administrative Asstt.

Muhammad Khalil Mirza

Annual Subscription Rate

Saudi Arabia (Individual subscribers):
S.R. 36; (Companies): S.R. 100; Other
Countries: (Individual subscribers): \$ 20
and (Companies): \$ 26; Cheques and
cash payable to: Muslim World League,
P.O. Box: 537, Makkah al-Mukarramah,
Saudi Arabia.

All requests for the magazine and any
change of address should be forwarded to
our Marketing & Distribution Deptt.

Sole Distributors for
the Kingdom & the Gulf:
The Saudi Distribution Company
Tel. 6530909, Jeddah,
Saudi Arabia

Published by:
The Press and Publications Deptt.
Muslim World League,
P.O. Box: 537,
Makkah al-Mukarramah

(All articles and correspondence may
please be addressed to **The Chief Editor,**
Muslim World League Journal. While
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5 Sayings of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), highlighting the importance and rewards for acts of charity.

Current Affairs

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10 Xinjiang: A Tale of Repression, Discontent
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12 Exactly 49 years ago, India landed its troops in Kashmir, and occupied the predominantly Muslim Valley. On 27 October, Kashmiris all around the world observe the Black Day to commemorate that sordid chapter in their contemporary history. **Mushtaq Jeelani**, Executive Director of the Kashmiri-Canadian Council, chronicles this sordid saga in his article on the historic occasion.

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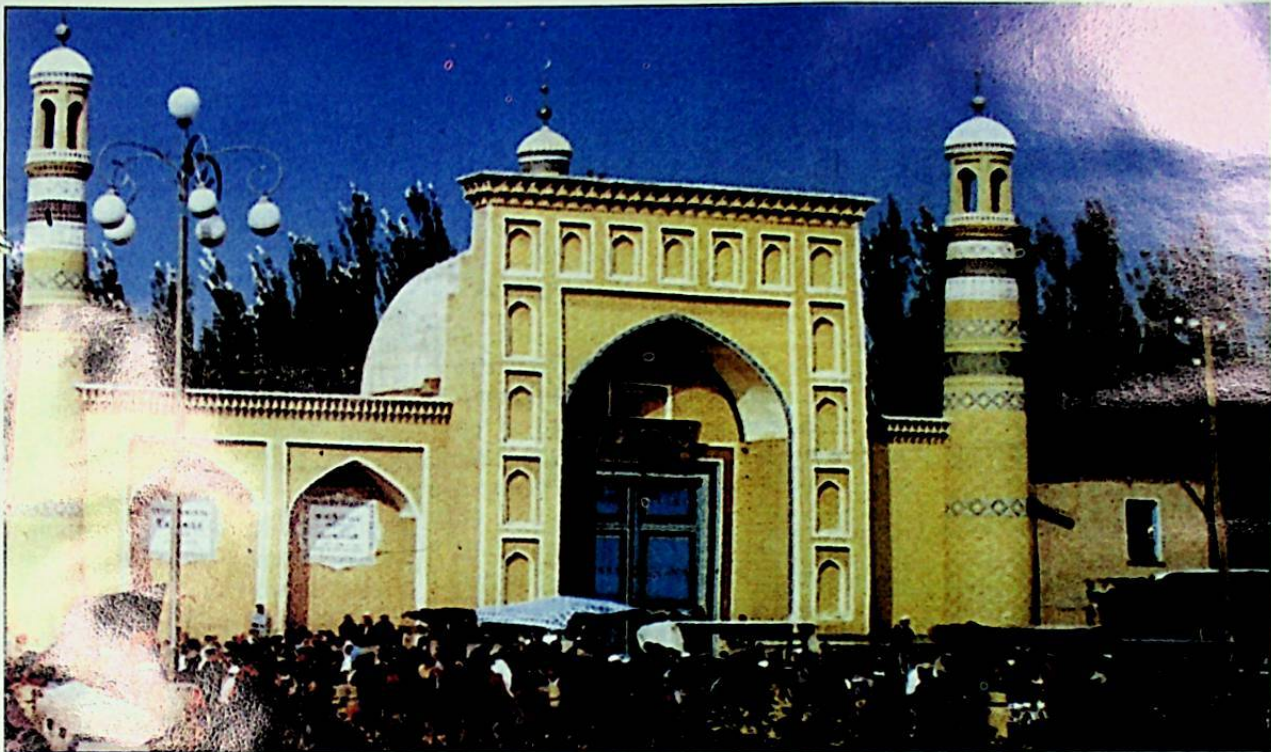
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Eid Gah Mosque, one of the principal mosques in Kashgar, Eastern Turkistan.

At the same time Sinkiang has become a favourite destination for official visits by senior military and civilian officials from Beijing. During the past few weeks almost anybody who is somebody in Beijing has been to Urumchi and Kashghar, the region's two principal cities. Among the visitors were President Jiang Zemin, Prime Minister Li Peng and chief of the armed forces general staff, Marshal Fu Kwan-yu.

At the same time, official Chinese media routinely make strange references to the "need to preserve security and stability in Sinkiang." The Beijing press had run several stories obliquely referring to "banditry and insecurity" in the far-away province.

Earlier this year, China signed a strange pact with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kirghistan and Tajikistan ostensibly to counter "armed fundamentalist bandits and terror-

ists." This led to an unprecedented deployment of Chinese security forces all along Sinkiang's lengthy borders to the north and east. During the summer the secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party for Sinkiang, Wang Lekouan, launched a massive campaign against what he termed "the breeding grounds of terrorism." Over 600 Qur'anic schools were closed down within three weeks along with an estimated 200 "illegal mosques." Secretary Wang's secret police also confiscated tens of thousands of books and video and audio-cassettes supposedly containing "subversive literature."

The crackdown did not stop there. With Beijing's approval, more than 4,000 civil servants suspected of "dangerous tendencies" have been purged since spring. The number of people arrested on charges of "anti-state activities" is estimated at around 15,000 al-

though it is not known how many are still kept in jail. A recent visitor to Kashghar was amazed at the massive troop deployment by the Chinese around the Idgah mosque during Friday prayers. The modest edifice was surrounded by heavily armed special forces in armored cars while helicopter gunships hovered above.

So, what is happening in the "Chinese Far West"? This is the question that will be at the center of a seminar this week in Istanbul with experts from a dozen or so countries trying to put the pieces of the jigsaw together.

Sinkiang, once a distant land of few promises, is now emerging as the Chinese version of California. The "gold rush" in Sinkiang has taken the shape of a growing oil and gas industry. The region is believed to have some of the world's richest on-land resources of fossil energy. It also contains Asia's sin-

Development in Eastern Turkestan

Rumblings in the 'Chinese California'

Amir Taheri

EARLY British empire builders called it "Secret Asia." The Chinese for long branded it "The Far West." The Russians labelled it "The Back of Beyond." In Persian, Turkish and Arabic literature it is known as "Turkistan."

We are, of course, referring to Sinkiang, a vast area the size of Western Europe, sandwiched between Mongolia and Central Asia. The long forgotten land, where almost a third of the Muslims under Chinese rule live, has been forbidden territory to foreigners for

the past five decades. In recent weeks, however, further restrictions have been imposed on travel to Sinkiang even by foreign technicians and business executives working with Chinese state enterprises.



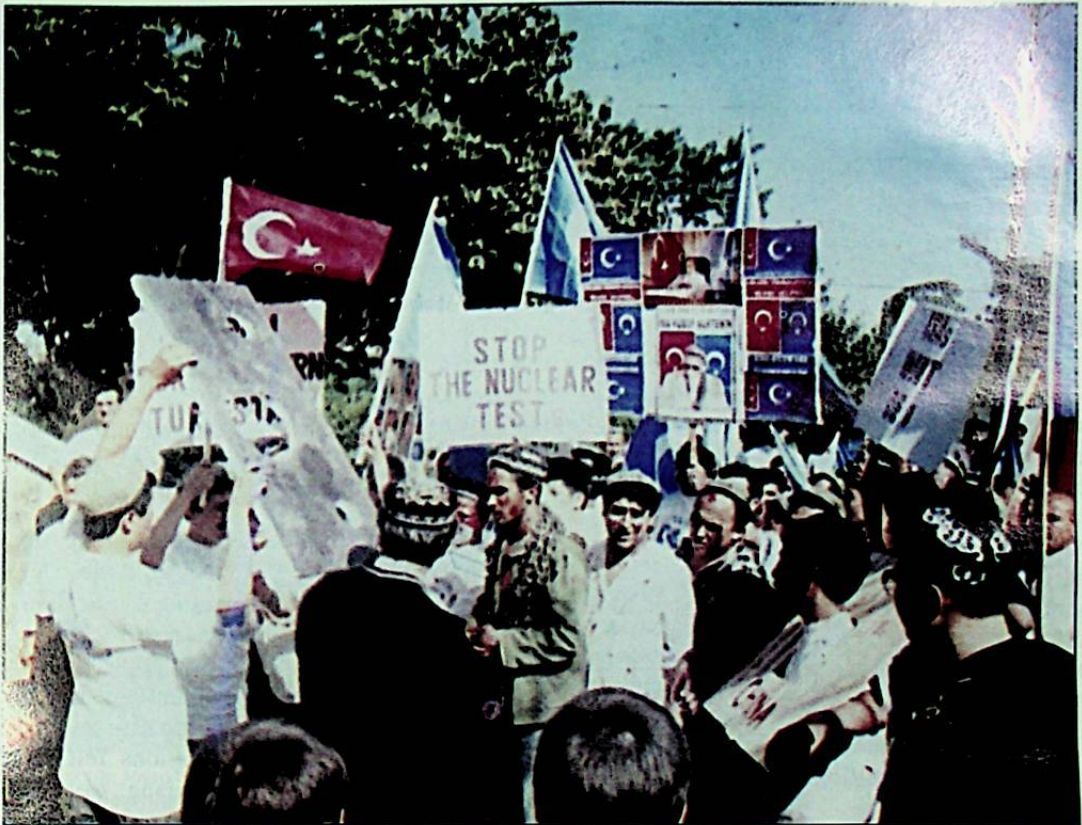
Islamic preachers and Dawah activists at a group discussion somewhere in Turkistan. The country has been always a Muslim region throughout history.

dismember China? Or are we witnessing a strong secessionist movement based more on race and nationalism than on religion? The honest answer to all these questions: We don't know the fact, but it does.

There is becoming the region. Muslims could not inform about a treaty. clear secrets. The information provided by various exile opposition groups,

including the Uighur National Liberation Front, which has its headquarters in Almaty, the Kazakh capital, is useful but must be treated with the customary caution. The East Turkestan Foundation, based in Istanbul, is a source of more academic information. But it, too, cannot pretend to be fully informed about a land that is politically walled-in by China. The Istanbul seminarists will, presumably, shed some light on what looks like a potentially dangerous situation in the heart of Asia.

Beijing's nervousness about agitations in Sinkiang is understandable. The Chinese leaders have witnessed how the Soviet empire, which they had held in awe for so long, crumbled like a pack of cards. Chinese official lit-



Simmering discontent against the Chinese rule over Eastern Turkistan is getting louder every day. Here demonstrators are carrying placards, demanding freedom from the Beijing's yoke.

erature still harps on the theme that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the result of an elaborate "international plot," presumably orchestrated by the United States under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

So at a time that Beijing prepares to recover Hong Kong and Macao from two European colonial powers, it cannot afford to contemplate the secession of much larger territories. Tibet has been tense for the past 40 years of so while Inner Mongolia and Manchuria, though massively colonized by Han elements, may have retained their dreams of independence. If Sinkiang goes, so will go Tibet, then Inner Mongolia and Manchuria. That prospect horrifies Beijing which hopes that, far from losing the Chinese empire,

they might expand it by annexing Taiwan.

Ironically, however, Beijing may be encouraging further trouble in Sinkiang by treating the legitimate grievances of the people there as a result of "foreign plotting."

Here is a quotation for Mao Tsetung: "The relationship between the external factors and the internal ones is like that of heat applied to an egg. If the external heat is applied to a real egg a chicken will come out. If it is applied to a piece of stone, nothing will come out!"

Come to think of it, Mao may have pinched this from Confucius. But, then, so what? It is the message that matters.

gle biggest reserves of uranium. As any reader of Persian literature would know, Sinkiang also boasts numerous reserves of gold and precious stones. Furthermore, modern farming techniques could allow the region's vast plains to become a veritable granary for China and Central Asia. It is also in Sinkiang that the bulk of China's military nuclear industry is located.

In other words, the value of Sinkiang as a piece of real estate has increased dramatically in terms of global power.

The trouble, as far as Beijing is concerned, is that a majority of Sinkiang's population consists of Muslim peoples who speak varieties of Turkic languages, notably Uighur, and regard China as a colonial power occupying their

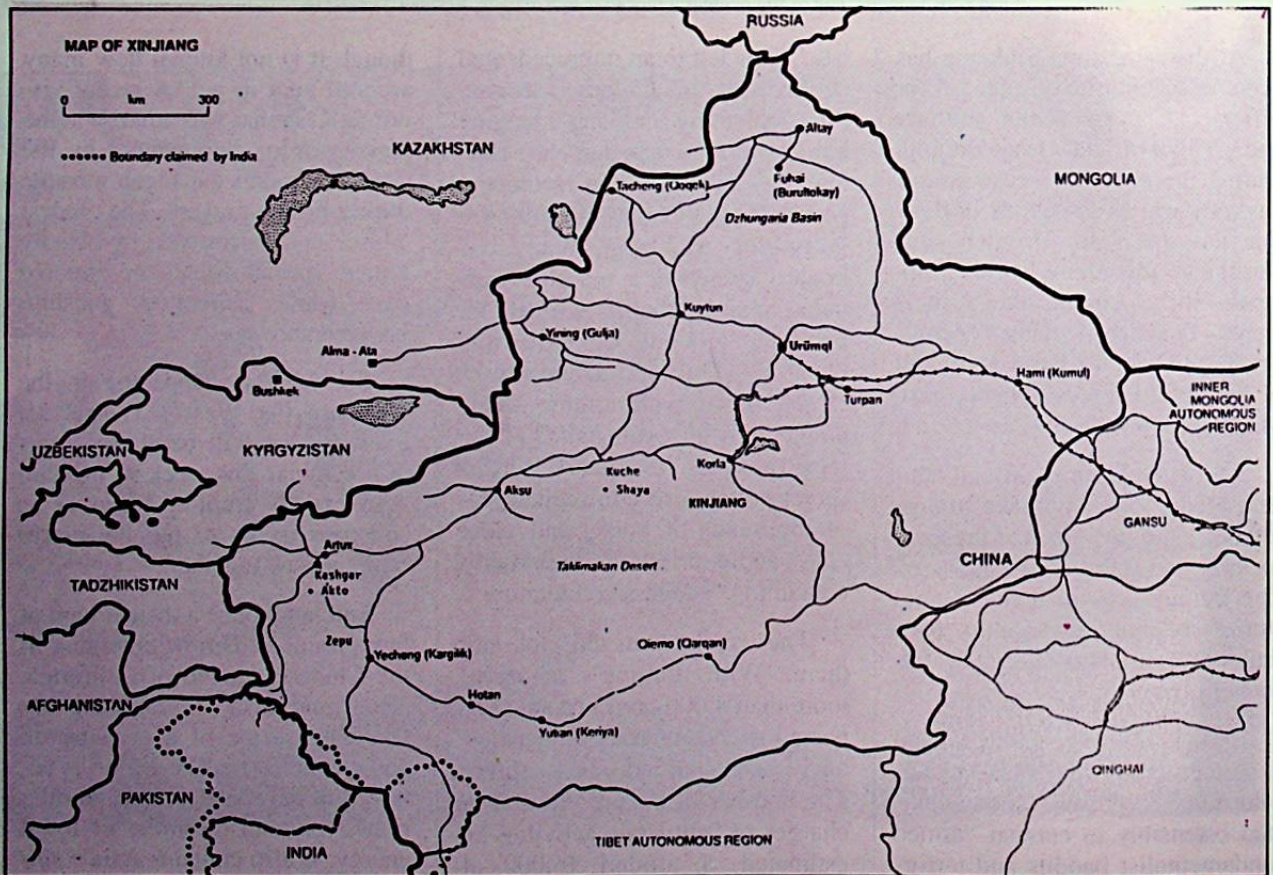
homeland. Until the early 1960s, Muslim Turkic peoples accounted for more than 95 percent of the region's population. Since then, however, China has pursued a determined policy of colonization by encouraging, and at times forcing, ethnic Han elements to settle in the distant land. Today the Hans may well account for 45 percent of the population.

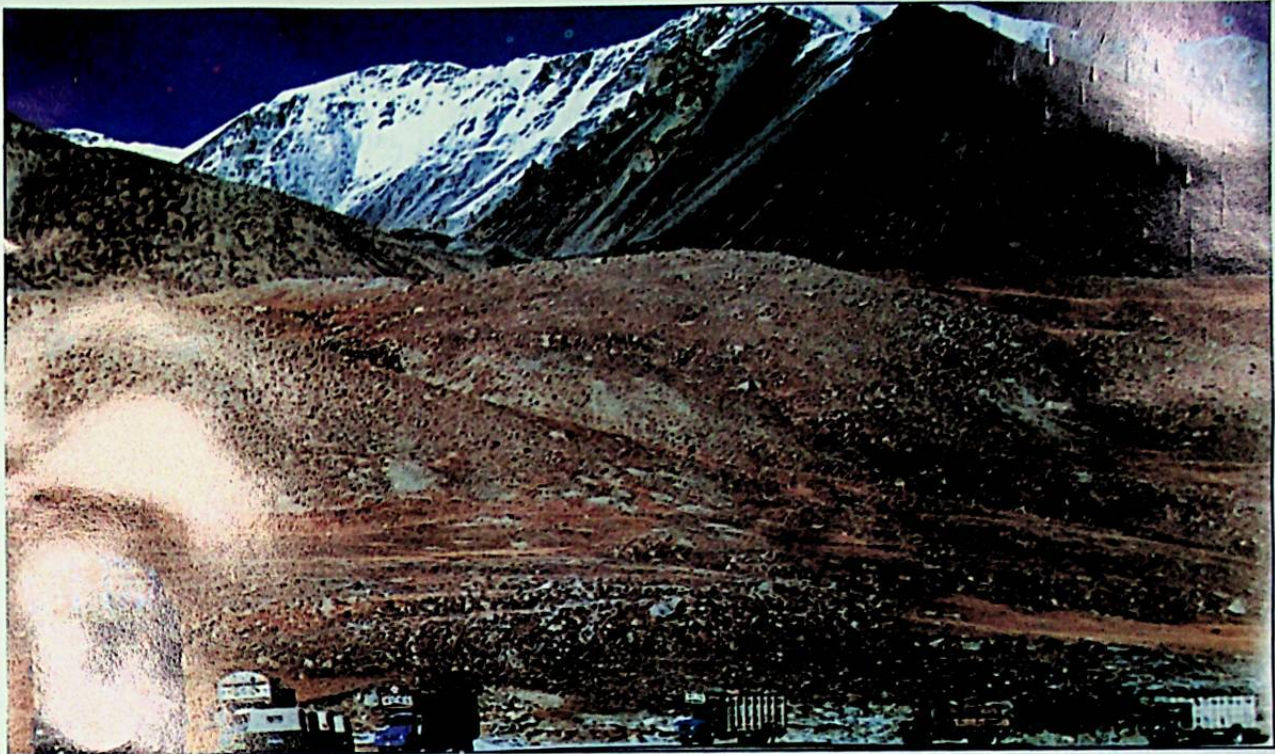
How many Muslims are there in Sinkiang? No one quite knows. Such statistics are regarded as top secret in Beijing. The total number of Muslims in China is estimated at between 15 and 50 million. Of these more than half are ethnic Hans who, converted to Islam and thus must be regarded as "fully Chinese" except for their religious faith. The Muslim Hans, naturally, feel perfectly at home in China, despite the fact that they have of-

ten been persecuted because of their faith.

The case of the Sinkiang Muslims is different. The people there have nothing in common with China and the Chinese. Their "historic gaze" has always been in the direction of the north and the west — away from China. Chinese official literature, of course tries to "prove" that Sinkiang was "always" part of China. If the term "always" has any meaning in history. But even supposing this is the case, the fact remains that there are numerous signs that at least a segment of the Sinkiang population is unhappy about the present state of affairs there.

Is this unhappiness the result of a sudden passion — "fujia-mentalism?" Or is the result of "a plot by certain Western powers?"





The famous 'Silk Road' linking Pakistan with the Eastern Turkistan: The region is strategically located and flourished as an important trade route through the Asian continent to Europe.

And these observations of Xinjiang suggest that a large percentage of the information and reports leaked during the Iron Curtain era contained a lot of truth. Nuclear explosions still continue, the last of which was conducted just a little over a few months ago taking the total to 44 since 1964.

Xinjiang, although considered a Chinese region, which consists of a fifth of China at 1,828,417 square kilometers, was for many years sort of the 'Milk Cow' for the rest of China, and it was left to starve.

The Muslim region, which supplies China with around 60 percent of its natural resources, was no doubt left behind with regard to infrastructure, when compared to other big Chinese cities, such as Beijing. Except for the capital Urumchi, Xinjiang showed signs of a struggle for equality and justice.

The Chinese government discourages interactions between Xinjiang Muslims and Muslim visitors to the region but does not disallow it. The main concern of the Chinese government in this regard would be that such interactions might revive dormant feelings of Muslim nationalism, that would translate into instability and violent reaction against injustice practised there.

The Chinese government in Xinjiang has recently taken some positive steps toward relaxing the situation in the region, allowing more flexibility and reform. In Urumchi, buildings and towers are currently under construction, international hotels, recreation facilities, shopping malls are being built to promote and attract businesses and tourism in order to initiate major projects.

Kashghar, the second most important city in Xinjiang as well as the region's Islamic Centre, is too

witnessing construction and infrastructure activities although behind the capital in appearance.

It was noticed that Muslims in the market-places were allowed to pray in large groups at prayer times which indicates that some of the things we heard about in the past were being discarded to allow more free practice of religion, and that is a good sign for the future of Xinjiang and the whole of China.

Should the Chinese government continue on the road of reform, should it allow the Muslims and other minorities their human rights and freedom of belief and practice, should it practise the equality it preaches, then foreign investors worldwide will feel safe to come to the region and China will have no problem of instability. It is only people, who are discontented and disadvantaged, who feel like revolting against the existing order.

Xinjiang :

A Tale of Repression, Discontent

Khalid Altowelli

AN observing look back at the history of Central Asian regions in general is likely to make one come to the conclusion that this part of the world is a geographical location between two conflicting civilizations and thus was for many years caught in the cross fire. Turkistan was no different. Independently it flourished for more than ten centuries as an important part of a famous trade route through the Asian continent and to Europe.

But being part of an important continental transportation line was

probably just one of the attractions or threats to neighbouring nations. The fact was that Turkistan was a Muslim Eastern front, a strategic stronghold at the edge of the Muslim territory and a rich, fertile land with many vital natural resources.

When the Muslim Empire became vulnerable, fragile and impotent almost a century ago, Turkistan, among many Muslim fronts, fell into the hands of different counterparts, who have staked out for long awaiting the right opportunity to strike.

Since that time Turkistan became two: Eastern Turkistan under Chinese rule now known as Xinjiang, which means the 'New Territory,' since it was made part of China in 1918 and Western Turkistan, which is now known as Kazakhstan, now an independent state after the fall of Soviet Union. Many horrifying stories have been told about Chinese aggression, cruelty and punishment against the Muslims of Xinjiang.

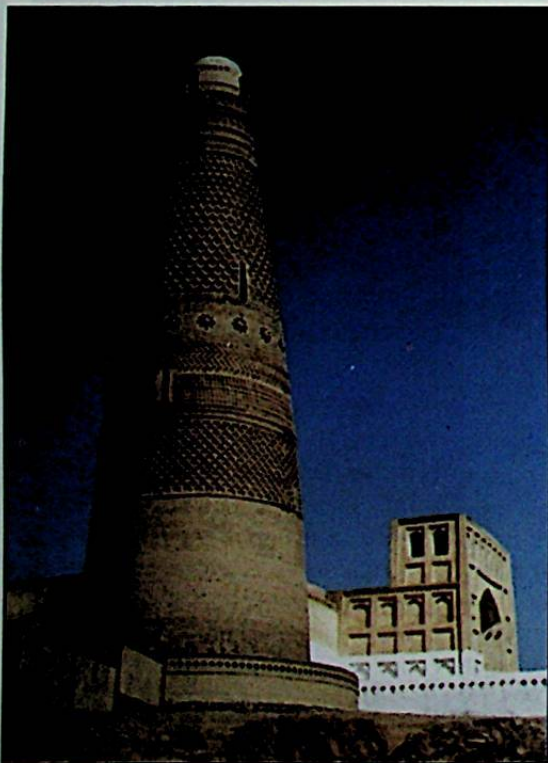
The world knew the human rights violations, which were practised in the north western Chinese region of Xinjiang, including population manipulation by increasing Chinese immigration to

the region turning its original population from an 85 percent majority in 1950 into a 48 percent minority in 1993, according to official and non-official figures. A task not too hard to accomplish in a country of 1.2 billion people.

The many nuclear explosions that take place in the region were another indication of Chinese carelessness about the well-being of the people and the land they occupied and treated as if they were a productive research laboratory. These oppressions felt by the Muslims in Xinjiang were the cause behind many uprisings and security threats, which were just demonstrations of discontent with the unjust order in the region. All anti-government demonstrations were crushed.

These were the stories we mostly heard from the media and reports from concerned agencies, but they were rarely confirmed or denied because of the situation in China, which locked itself behind an Iron Curtain and thus information flow was slow, inaccurate, and distorted in most cases.

The winds of change, however, are now blowing in China. It is starting to open up selectively to market forces, which should bring along all sorts of investment, that could reform the economy of this most populous nation on earth. People on vacation or business could now head to China to make some first-hand observations.



A mosque in Eastern Turkistan: Its characteristic features make it a distinguished specimen of architecture of that Muslim region.