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**THE STATUS OF MUSLIM MINORITIES IN  
CHINA'S UGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION,  
TRADITIONALLY CALLED EASTERN TURKISTAN**

**Ghulamuddin Pahta**



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UGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION, TRADITIONALLY  
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### LOCATION

ASIAN REPUBLICS (KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, UZBEKISTAN) in the Northwest, AFGHANISTAN, TAJIKISTAN, and INDIA in the South, and CHINA'S TIBET, QINGHAI and GANSU PROVINCES in the East. The total area of this territory is 1.6 million square km. Western Turkistan is the largest province in China, occupies one sixth of the PRC's total area and is bigger than Britain, France, Italy and Germany combined.

### POPULATION

The population of Western Turkistan, consists mainly of Turkic/Muslim people, with Uighurs, Kazakhs, Kirgizes, Ozbeks, Tatars and Tajiks and other nationalities.

However, the estimate for 1978 gives the population of Eastern Turkistan as over 13 million. Of this, the



THE CHANGING STATUS OF MUSLIM MINOROTIES  
IN CHINA'S UIGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION  
(TRADITIONALLY CALLED "EASTERN TURKISTAN")

Ghulamuddin Pahta

For Eastern Turkistan this is a time of change, of certain opportunities for improvement in the position of Muslims in the People's Republic of China (PRC). And without the help of the Muslim world, this may become once again a period of peril for our Co-religionists in the PRC.

Eastern Turkistan, which traditionally goes by that name is also called "Turkistan" in Turkic and Arabic sources, "Turan" by European and Iranian sources, "Chinese Turkistan" in Indian and British sources. In China's old history it was known as "Hsi-ju" (West) and later on, since November 18, 1884, this country was organized as the 19th province of China and was given the name "Xinjiang" (Sinkiang) by a formal order of the Chinese Emperor.

The name "Xinjian" is of Chinese origin and in Chinese it means "New Frontier," although former Premier Zhou En Lai said the name means "New Land".

On October 1, 1955 China had renamed Eastern Turkistan to "XINJIAN WEIWUER ZIZHIQU" meaning :Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region".

### LOCATION

Eastern Turkistan is bordered by three Soviet Central Asian Republics (Kazakistan, Kirgizistan, Tajikistan) in the Northwest, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India in the South, and China's Tibet, Qinghai and Ganso provinces in the East. The total area of this territory is 1.6 million square km. Eastern Turkistan is the largest province in China, occupies one sixth of the PRC's total area and is bigger than Britain, France, Italy and Germany combined.

### POPULATION

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Uighurs are 5.4 million, Kazakhs 800 thousand<sup>5</sup> and all other Turkic Muslim minorities add up to 90 thousand.

However, an article in a Hong Kong-based journal "The Kung Pao" (Eastern Horizon) stated in the same year, 1978, that the population of Uighurs was 7 million.<sup>6</sup> Ten years earlier, the Soviet estimate of Eastern Turkistan's Uighurs was five million.

Since the Soviet Russians invaded neighboring Afghanistan, Beijing has taken a fresh look at the development and studied the situation in Eastern Turkistan closely. Apart from the obvious military preparation, China's main strategy for holding Eastern Turkistan has been to fill it with Han people.<sup>8</sup> In the past (since 1949) the Chinese central government brought to Eastern Turkistan more than 5 million Han settlers, to insure its control. In 1953, there were a total of 4,574,000 non-Han Ethnic inhabitants.

New official statistics for the Chinese population show 1,038,000,000 people living in China.<sup>9</sup> If this figure is correct, an estimate of more than 10 million Uighurs must be living now in Eastern Turkistan, and the population growth among the other Turkic Muslim minorities should be more rapid than that of the Chinese. In fact, the proportion of Uighurs, Qazaqs, and other Turkic and Iranian Muslims who made up more than 90 percent in the past (before 1949) of the Eastern Turkistan's population, now greatly changed. According to the data from the official Chinese census of mid 1953 (just 32 years ago) there are:

3,540,000	Uighurs	74.6%	of Eastern Turkistan's people
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745,000	Qazaqs	9.7%	
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259,000	others	5.5%	
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300,000	Han-Chinese	6.1%	<sup>10</sup>
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1967

4,943,000	Uighurs(*)	61.8%	
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643,000	Qazaqs	8.0%	
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352,000	Others	4.4%	
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1,791,000	Han-Chinese	22.4%	<sup>11</sup>
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1978

5,400,000	Uighurs	41.5%
800,000	Qazaqs	6.1% <sup>12</sup>

N/A at this date Others -

N/A at this time Han-Chinese -

Note: 1978 data had not included the number of Han-Chinese, however, the 1981 population estimate listed 7.5 million minorities and gave the Han-Chinese number as 5,300,000 (47.6 percent).<sup>13</sup>

According to these statistics, it can be seen very clearly that the Han-Chinese number had risen very rapidly and was slowly but surely approaching a majority while Muslim Uighurs are falling into the minority position in the "Uighur Autonomous Region".

#### WHO ARE THE UIGHURS?

The Uighurs are an ancient people of Central Asia whose language belongs to the Turkic group. Their history goes back many thousands of years. "It is precisely because the Uighurs played so significant a role in the history of the T'ang empire that the Chinese historians, dealing with the period devote so much space to them."<sup>14</sup>

This nation was earlier known to the Europeans as part of the "Huns" and to<sup>15</sup> the Chinese they were known as "Hui-ho" or "Hui-hu" and some other Chinese sources have known them as "Hsiung-nu".<sup>16</sup> Presently the Chinese pronounce them as "Way-gurs".

Uighurs are sunni Muslims who speak the neo-Uighur dialect, which is part of the eastern family of Turkic languages. Eastern Turkistan constitutes the historical home territory of the Uighurs, and even today they form the majority of the population in what is now officially called the "Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China".

#### RELIGION

The religion of Islam came to Eastern Turkistan in 934 A.D. and was brought to the Uighurs by Satuk Bugra Khan, who embraced Islam before he came to the throne as the ruler of the Uighur Karakhanid State. After becoming ruler, he took the Muslim name "Abdulkerim-Satuk Bugra Khan" and converted most of Turkic Central Asia to Islam.



The eastern Turkistan people are proud of the historical fact that Abdulkerim Satuk Bugra Khan created the first "Muslim Turkic Empire" in the history of the World, 940 A.D.

During and after this "Karakhanid Dynasty" (840-1212 A.D.), Eastern Turkistan became a main center of Islam in Asia, and Eastern Turkistan has been a pivot of Islamic activity and a center of scholarship in Central Asia.

The Mausoleum of Abdulkerim-Satuk Bugra Khan is preserved in Artush, near Kashgar, Eastern Turkistan.

Today the local ethnic minorities are enjoying some new religious freedom along with a relaxed new economy.

They get the permission to go to Makkah if they receive invitations from Saudi Arabia. However, there are clear limits for religious education, especially for the younger generation. Also they face unlimited freedom for atheistic education.

#### THE NATIONAL MINORITY POLICY

The fact that Eastern Turkistan has been an economic colony of China since its conquest is well known. It has been defined as such by all Soviet researchers, not only in recent years but also at the time when the sun of Sino-Soviet friendship was at its zenith. Characteristically, Eastern Turkistan was always governed in true colonial fashion, with Chinese or Manchus in positions of highest authority and representatives of the local nobility in the lower echelons of power.

To develop the areas economically and assimilate minorities into Chinese culture is the main issue. Beginning in 1956 (after renaming Xinjiang the Uighur Autonomous Region in 1955) the Chinese Communist Party firmly introduced changes in the traditional costumes and scripts of Muslim minorities and attempted to diminish the power of Islam. In August, 1956, a conference was held in Urumchi (Urumqi) which decided upon the adoption of a slightly modified Cyrillic alphabet as the written script for the Uighurs, Qazaqs, Ozbeks, Tatars, Tajiks, and Qirghiz. This script reform was undertaken may be with Soviet advice. This new Cyrillic alphabet was a major step that would have eroded the old Muslim religious Islamic teachings written in the Arabic alphabet, which has also been used as the local ethnic Turkic scripts since E.T. became a Muslim state. During the "Hundred Flowers Movement"



and the subsequent anti-local nationalists rectification campaign, the special condition of Eastern Turkistan's Islamic minority customs and habits was reversed. Up to late in 1960, the party's nationality policy became increasingly radical. According to RMRB (Renmin ribao) Peking-People's Daily (Dec. 1, 1957), the authorities charged many minority intellectuals with being "nationality chauvinists" who had agitated the masses and slandered the party's nationality policy. On December 9, 1957 that same RMRB reported that persons within the Xinjiang' (Eastern Turkistan) Islamic association were criticized for placing their individual religious interest above those of the state.

In contrast, the 1956 decision to replace the Arabic alphabet which had been used so long among most Eastern Turkistanian Muslim people, especially Uighurs, Qazaqs, Ozbeks, Qirgizs, Tatars and Tajiks, to the Cyrillic alphabet and then reversing this decision in 1958 (changing the Cyrillic alphabet to Roman alphabet)<sup>19</sup> especially outlawing the old Arabic alphabet was a tragedy for the Turkic communities' Islamic culture, for its social life and for education of the younger generation. In March, 1960, "Xinjiang Daily" published a lengthy speech delivered by Seyfuddin Azizi, 1st Secretary General of the Communist Party in E. Turkistan. He urged, "Strive for a great victory in the socialist revolution on the linguistic front and strengthen the solidarity of the people of all nationalities in the country." Later on, Jiakeluofu, the Chairman of the "Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Language Reform Committee," explained, "We have found that what is most suitable for us is not the Slavic alphabet but the Latin (Roman) alphabet." The new program was based upon considerations of national unity and common interests within China, and the final objective in language reform was gradually to make the Han language the common language of social intercourse. An underlying motive of the script reform was the party's desire to break the hold of Islam on the local minority Muslim people, especially the youth, and thus to bring about Sinification. "The unity of the nation" was a major theme of party propaganda on religion during 1958. The theme of unity based on or consolidated around the Han Chinese took on increasing momentum, and had greater and greater consequences as the party geared up for the massive social and economic transformation known as "The Great Leap Forward" that had a tremendous effect, especially on Muslim lifestyles. Communes were introduced in August, 1958, with Muslims being included with Han (Chinese) in the same communal mess halls—where pork dishes were prepared. Special accommodations for Muslims, such as ritual bathing facilities and restaurants with acceptable food, were



also abolished. There was increased encouragement of intermarriage. Muslims were also said to be demanding that their exemption from the provisions of the marriage law of 1953 be ended, for they now wished monogamous marriage and legal sanction of divorce. They had also come to know the dangers of early marriage, and now wished to have the same minimum age qualifications applied to them.<sup>20</sup>

The Chinese Islamic Association was formally abolished in October 1958, at almost the same time as imams began "spontaneously" to work in the fields. There was large scale confiscation of lands owned by the mosques. The economic disasters and social disruptions wrought by the Great Leap Forward are too well known to bear repetition here.

Since the open break with China in 1963, the Soviet press has published a great number of reports about the "happy life" of the Soviet Uighurs, contrasting it to alleged national oppression and persecution of Uighurs in Eastern Turkistan, and speaking of concentration camps, armed suppression of minorities, and of Peking's intention of "Sinifying" Eastern Turkistan. Chinese leaders are being accused of pursuing a traditional great-power chauvinistic policy, of discriminating against the non-Chinese people and forcibly assimilating them.<sup>21</sup>

Evidently, in the treatment of their own Uighurs, the Soviet leaders try to be especially generous regarding these particular points in order to underline the contrast between their own "good" policy and the "bad" policy of the Chinese. As the various Soviet accounts of nationality oppression in Eastern Turkistan are analyzed, the following points emerge as those stressed most strongly:

1) The lack of a native political and administrative cadre, and the colonization of Uighur areas by Chinese immigrants. It is said that during the 1958 purges in the People's Republic of China, most representatives of the national minorities were dismissed from their posts, arrested and sent to labor camps.<sup>22</sup> Another report in 1967 stated that "almost all the administrative and party positions in the nationality areas are held by Han-Chinese. Clerical work is done only in the Chinese language."<sup>23</sup>

The destruction of the native (Islamic) culture and forced assimilation is strongly stressed both in general terms and through concrete examples.

It is said that in the schools the native language of the Turkic Muslims was used only in the early years of



education. One account in 1969 (during the Cultural Revolution period) claims that no native language schools existed at all. There are complaints over the falsification of history of the non-Chinese people. Religious outrages against the Eastern Turkistan Muslims are cited, such as the deliberate desecration of Muslim holy places and the ill-treatment of ulema-mullah. It is said that Uighur Muslim girls are forced under the threat of death to marry Chinese and that "the unbridled Mao Tse-Tung hoodlums have begun to compel Uighurs, Qazaqs, and other Muslims to eat pork, to cremate their dead, and forbid the traditional Islamic forms of burial."<sup>24</sup>

During the period of mass upheaval known as the Chinese "Cultural Revolution," a leadership struggle, the clash of differing theories on methods of economic development, and many other pressures were present in addition to the revolution in culture. All of these had ramifications for minorities policy. In 1966, Chinese students were organized into so-called Red Guard groups and told by Mao to "bombard the headquarters" (of established conservative authority) and "destroy the four olds" (old ideas, culture, customs and habits). Wall newspapers, often crudely painted or hand-lettered on large placards, expressed the Guards' attitudes and frequently echoed the views of radical leaders. One which was seen in Beijing during the autumn of 1966 dealt with religion, demanding that the authorities: 1) Close all mosques; 2) Abolish religious associations; 3) Abolish study of the Qur'an and so on. A second poster outlined a ten-point program for the eradication of Islam including: 1) Immediate abolition of all Islamic associations in China; 2) Requiring Muslim clergy to work in labor camps; 3) Replacing Muslim burial practices with cremation; 4) Abolition of observance of all Muslim festivals and holidays.<sup>25</sup> Unintended vandalism aside, the mood of those who guided the Cultural Revolution was definitely anti-religious.

During the ten years of chaos inspired by the "Gang of Four" (leading radical Chinese politicians), the campaign against the Islamic religion was particularly severe. All copies of the holy book Qur'an, the traditions (Hadith), and all other books were destroyed. All mosques were closed. The clergy was arrested, tortured, and forced to clean sewers, and forced to care for pigs.<sup>26</sup>

On "The question of the minority nationalities," Mao Tse-tung said: "It is imperative to foster good relations between the Han people and the minority nationalities. At the same time, effort should also be made



to overcome local nationalism, wherever it exists among the minority nationalities. Both Han chauvinism and local nationalism are harmful to the unity of the nationalities... . They represent a specific contradiction among the people which should be overcome."<sup>27</sup> On August 4, 1957, at a forum held in Qingdao, China's Shandong province, on "some questions on policy toward nationalities," Zhou Enlai said: "We oppose two types of chauvinism, namely big-nationality chauvinism, (in China chiefly Han chauvinism) and local-nationality chauvinism, with particular attention to combating Han chauvinism. Both types of chauvinism are manifestations of bourgeois nationalism. We cannot rely only on the Han people."<sup>28</sup> Zhou Enlai was right, that the Chinese people were not reliable, on questions regarding national minorities' rights. The newspaper "Xinjiang Ribao" (Sinkiang Daily) wrote on 14 December 1960, three years after Zhou Enlai's speech) that: "In the People's Republic of China, the Chinese (Han Nation) share of the population is 94 percent. We are for the fusion of the peoples in China. This nation is the Chinese nation. We have to increase the number of the marriages between Chinese and minorities. Nobody should try to prevent this. In any case, nobody will be able to prevent this process." Those words were answers to Chairman Mao Tsetung and Premier Zhou Enlai's demands on nationality problems in Eastern Turkistan. In contrast, there is a big discrepancy between policy and reality which the people face.

The assimilation effort reached its peak during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 through the non-Muslim, Han-Chinese settlers or immigrants, when the Arabic alphabet was outlawed in favor of the Roman alphabet. Muslim classics and the holy Qur'an were burned, mosques were closed, Han-Chinese officials delivered speeches in Chinese without providing interpreters.

Fully developed, Xinjiang (Eastern Turkistan) should be able to support 10 times the present population of 13 million, reported one of the leading American newspaper correspondents recently from Urumqi, the capital city of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.<sup>29</sup> He added that once the mountains heavy snowfall is harnessed to irrigation and hydropower, and the transportation bottleneck solved, it's inevitable that Han immigration will be stepped up again. The prospect of one hundred million Chinese living right next door to the Soviet Central Asian Union Republics must be a nightmare for Moscow and perhaps one reason for its deploying an estimated one-fourth of the Soviet Union's armed forces along the border.



In the past, China had three sources of Han emigrants: Demobilized Soldiers, high school graduates for whom no jobs could be found in established cities, and lawbreakers or dissidents ("bad elements") exiled for "re-education through labor." No figures exist for the number sent to Xinjiang (Eastern Turkistan) as punishment, although an official of the Shihezi (a new model state farm complex city) west of Urumqi admitted that 3,000 "counter-revolutionaries" and "rightists" were included in the population of half a million. The population may be considerably greater in less-desirable reclamation colonies deeper in the desert.

### THE ECONOMY

Resource-rich Eastern Turkistan could become a major Asian industrial center if climate and distance could be mastered.

The natural assets of Eastern Turkistan are very great. There is oil, coal, uranium, iron ore, gold, sulphur, salt, copper, silver, platinum, lead, tin, mica, diamonds, emeralds, and rare minerals. They also include natural gas. Geologists say Eastern Turkistan's coal fields could supply the entire world for 60 years.<sup>31</sup> China's leaders hope to exploit these natural resources to fuel the country's planned modernization.

Geographically, because of its distance from the seashore and landlocked condition and historically, because of its distance from Beijing, and uneasy relations between the Chinese and indigenous ethnic minorities, Eastern Turkistan has lagged far behind its neighboring countries and inland provinces.

Since 1950 Beijing has moved large numbers of demobilized soldiers, "educated urban youth" and other Chinese into the area. This was done partly to provide technicians for economic development, but to a far greater extent to "stabilize" this region of unhappy Turkistanians, coveted by Russia.

Beijing's biggest success here is in the economic development. Now there are petrochemical plants, an iron and steel complex, fertilizer mills, textile factories and food processing plants. Cultivated land has tripled<sup>32</sup> and the land, almost 90 percent of it, is irrigated.

Now Eastern Turkistan prepares to undertake an ambitious modernization plan to transform China's well-



known "Wild West" into China's "California" by the end of the twenty-first century, much of its success will hinge on its leaders' ability to achieve ethnic unity and political stability.<sup>33</sup>

Modernization certainly needs many reliable supervisors to manage manpower and many qualified technicians in Eastern Turkistan. This is the major problem burdening the Chinese leaders, and is the first problem to be resolved. In addition, unemployment among Muslims is now extremely high and is worsening.

To overcome this problem, the Chinese leaders face two choices: to give first priority to educational systems or transfer more qualified outside workers from other Chinese, over-populated industrial areas like Shanghai to Eastern Turkistan's minority area. The second alternative will not be a welcome decision for the already unhappy minority Muslim groups. Lack of education, especially among ethnic Muslim minorities, is due to discriminatory educational policies in the past that still continue to some degree in higher educational institutions. For example: Beijing each year sends many thousands of Chinese students to overseas countries in Europe and North America to get their higher education or experience in various fields. But not one Muslim minority student or technical person can be seen within those groups. In 1983, Premier Zhao Ziyang and the Communist Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang toured the region and targeted it to become one of China's most important development areas in the next century.

"From now on, we must place the development of Xinjiang on the agenda of the construction of the entire country," Zhao Ziyang said.

In the key sphere of oil, where Eastern Turkistan's reserves are thought to be formidable, Wang particularly hopes to attract foreign investment. "Xinjiang will become China's California" said Wang Enmao, first party secretary and the region's top political and military leader. Wang Enmao, 71, toured California, Texas, and Arizona in October 1984. "Yes, in reality there are still disparities (between Han and the minorities) because they are not equal economically," said Secretary Wang in his recent interview in Urumqi, "and where there are disparities (in income), there will be friction."<sup>34</sup>

Last year, a Party Committee started to take action and impose "a new birthcontrol program" in East Turkistan from which were excluded Muslim minorities in the past. Now, mass propaganda, educational programs, and new



regulations against large families are going on full scale all over the country of Eastern Turkistan.<sup>35</sup>

### THE NEW NATIONALITY POLICY

On the question of the Minority Nationalities, Mao Tsetung said: "They constitute only 6 percent of the total population, they inhabit extensive regions which altogether comprise 50 to 60 percent of China's total area. It is imperative to foster good relations between the Han people and the minorities. The key to this question lies in overcoming Han chauvinism. At the same time, efforts should also be made to overcome local nationalism, wherever it exists among the minority nationalities. Both Han chauvinism and local nationalism are harmful to the unity of the nationalities."<sup>36</sup>

When in 1956 and 1957 the Chinese Communist Party asked the masses to criticize it, in the so-called "Hundred Flowers Campaign", the pent-up grievances of Turkic Muslims and others poured forth. The long list of complaints included declarations that:

- All Muslims everywhere are one family (and not separate nationalities).
- The religious interest is the nationality interest.
- The Chinese Communist Party wishes to abolish both nationality and religion.
- Religion and the Chinese Community Party cannot stand together any more than fire and water can mix.
- The policy of nationality autonomy is meaningless.
- The Muslim should have a separate state without Han.
- The muslim women rolling up their trousers (to work in the field) is anti-religious.
- Participation in cooperatives is forbidden by religion.

Those Muslims who resisted their corrupt leaders were allegedly brutally beaten or killed.<sup>37</sup> Islamic practices and Muslim traditions could not be effectively crushed by the red guards in the past. According to the Eastern Turkistan Muslims, they paid a high cost in terms of loss of life and property to retain their



religious and national identity. Despite the present restrictive environment in which Chinese Islam now functions, the government of Deng Xiaoping is more tolerant toward Islam than any in two decades.

Recent policy changes are affecting the religion, language, society and economy of Eastern Turkistan's people. Especially there is an easing of the grip on Eastern Turkistan's Muslim minorities taking effect in a broad arc among the ethnic areas. From Urumqi to Aksu, Kucha, Turpan, Ili, Altai, Kashgar, Yarkent, and Khoten, these changes are, evidently, the work of Deng Xiaoping, the nominal party vice chairman who is the predominant force in the PRC leadership along with General Secretary Hu Yaobang and Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang. The Beijing government has moved to ease tensions between the Han Chinese and other ethnic groups by guaranteeing the rights of members of minority groups. Today the minorities have equal rights under the law and within the Communist Party. But despite these efforts, by August 1981, relations between the Chinese and the Muslim Uighurs in Eastern Turkistan had deteriorated so badly that China's most powerful leader, Deng Xiaoping, came to Eastern Turkistan from Beijing to help mediate the political infighting between Chinese and local Uighur members of the provincial ruling committee.<sup>38</sup> Now, it seems, some of the wounds of Han chauvinism are being healed. Increasing numbers of minority personnel are being trained to replace the Han who at present hold most of the senior official posts. Islam in Eastern Turkistan has been partially liberated from the pressures of dogmatic atheism. Now, the Muslim people can make the pilgrimage to Makkah, (if they get the invitation from their related Muslim brothers who live in Saudi Arabia). The mosques are open. The Islamic Association of the PRC has been re-established, along with its branches. Now the Muslim Uighurs and other Turkic and Iranian Muslim groups wear their native costume. Mao suits, usually worn in the rest of the country, are uncommon.

The Islamic creed, " 'There is no God but Allah, and Mohammad (S.A.) is his prophet,' is a religious and not a political statement," an official of the Islamic Association of the PRC said in Beijing recently, when asked whether it might be taken, as it was during the Cultural Revolution, as a threat to the Party, state and Communist ideology.

In Eastern Turkistan, the religion of Islam has provided an ethnic identity. To the devout Muslim, religion is an integral part of nationality. Recently one correspondent asked a young man who came up to practice his English on the street, "Are you an Uighur?" He



proudly replied: "Yes, I am a Muslim." Even young people who do not frequently go to the Mosque. The government-planned translations of the Holy book, Qur'an and Hadith from Arabic into local languages were recently published.

However, clear limits have been set on the scope and character of the Muslims' religious activities.

Unity is a major main theme all over the country. But there (Eastern Turkistan) despite all the talk about ethnic unity, there is no formal program for the Han Chinese to learn minority languages, although there are many programs to teach the Uighurs to speak Chinese.

Thus, it is highly unlikely that a change in regime would result in greater freedom of religion. The odds are that any new government would be less, rather than more, tolerant. Any sharp changes away from tolerance of Islam would be tempered by China's need to maintain friendly relations with the Middle East.<sup>40</sup>

A speech made earlier in 1980 by Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister, Huang Hua, hints that Islam can be turned into a workable political tool for the Communist regime to spread its influence in the Middle East and combat Soviet expansionism in the region,<sup>41</sup> especially in Afghanistan.

Premier Zhou en-Lai, who did not support the Cultural Revolution and was later to become a target of the "Gang of Four," himself, warned that excesses against Muslims had serious implications for China's foreign policy. On his insistence, one mosque each was kept open in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou<sup>42</sup> (Canton) for Muslim diplomats, visitors and students.

Since the policy change, great importance has been given to educating more nationality minorities in Eastern Turkistan. Greater religious freedom has been granted, but teaching of Islam in schools is prohibited. There is limited permission to go to Makkah. There is a hospital and doctors, but the poor, ill people must pay in advance.

One of the most respected Muslim scholars, Emir Husayn Kady of Eastern Turkistan, recently asked the Chinese Prime Minister, Zhao Ziyang, these questions:<sup>43</sup>

Q- Would you allow more Muslims to go to Makkah?

A- No, we cannot send more Muslims because our country is a socialist country and we have no diplomatic connection with Saudi Arabia.



Q- Many hospitals do not take care of our poor and very ill people if they cannot pay in advance. Would you change this regulation?

A- This is a small thing.

Q- I would like to ask you if we can open our religious schools.

A- This is a political question, too. Children under 18 years old cannot go to religious schools, but children over 18 years old could go.

Since Eastern Turkistanians, mainly Turkic Muslim minority writers and scholars, have been relieved or released from farm work and hard labor camps, they received permission for the first time since 1948 to write their own history, novels, and poetry. They have achieved remarkable progress within a very short period in the classical and historical sphere. Many, many very valuable books, periodicals and magazines are published. They received the opportunity and permission to search out the facts and to make real progress on the national scholarly plane. Some publications, however, suddenly stopped or terminated and ceased publication. For example, Bulag (Source or Spring) was one of them. Probably it was going too deeply into past history. Bulag began appearing in 1980, but in 1984, it ceased publishing.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, in the past 5 years, cultural and religious life have experienced ups and downs, but in general, have improved somewhat among the Muslims of Eastern Turkistan between 1980 and 1985. In good part, this change may be attributed to the important development of new vitality among the Islamic states of the Middle East and elsewhere. Their influence is exerting a noticeable effect upon international affairs generally, and specifically in this case, upon the foreign and domestic policy of the Peoples' Republic of China.

Positive opportunities to continue the revival of Muslim cultural and religious life in Eastern Turkistan are many and varied. First, the Islamic countries should search out and find a common dialogue and mutual interests existing in cultural and economic areas with Beijing and should use them to favor Muslim minorities in Eastern Turkistan.

2. The children of Eastern Turkistan's minorities can be granted scholarships to study in various



countries of the world and be given permission to stay for a suitable period.

3. The Islamic countries should send their "Goodwill contribution" with research groups to Eastern Turkistan to rebuild or repair old or damaged mosques and religious schools.

4. The Muslim community of the world should use their "Zakat and Ushra" in humanitarian support of Eastern Turkistan's poor families and their poor jobless children. Especially help is needed for old and sick muslims who cannot pay hospital and medical bills.

5. The Muslim countries should invite and start exchanges of scholars, artists and students from Eastern Turkistan.

6. Muslim countries should give higher priority and special attention to muslim minority cases in their publications and public affairs to give more information to the free world, and support their cause.

8. New York, July 2, 1957, in *New York Times*, p. 11. *Editorial: China's New Policy*.

9. Weisskopf, Michael (*The Washington Post*), 1954, New York, February 11, 1955.

10. Data from the official Chinese census of 1953. *Stat. p. 11*. *People's Daily*, 1953. "The Uighurs in China and the U.S."

11. *Crunch* (*New York Times*, April 27, 1957, cited in the *Central Asian Review*, 4:2 (1958), 208. The Soviets also estimate the present number of Eastern Turkistan's Uighurs at five million. *Yonah's Asia Review*, 20 May 1954.

12. *Asiatic Review*, No. 9, March 3, 1950, p. 17 (*Officials' Data*).

13. See footnote No. 24 (*Asiatic Review*). *Official Data*.

14. Mackerras, Colin. *The Uighur People according to the T'ang Dynasty Records*. University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, S.C., 1954, p. 2.

15. Mackerras, Colin, See footnote No. 8 and p. 274.

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