



## China's Current Policy in Tibet Life-and-death Struggle to Crush an Ancient Civilization

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"We must teach and guide Tibetan Buddhism to reform itself. All those religion laws and rituals must be reformed in order to fit in with the needs of development and stability in Tibet, and they should be reformed so that they become appropriate to a society under socialism."

China's Third Forum on Work in Tibet, Beijing, 1994

"Without educated people in all fields, able to express themselves in their own language, Tibetans are in danger of being assimilated. We have reached this point."

Dungkar Lobsang Trinley, Leading Tibetan intellectual in Tibet Lhasa 1992

"The struggle between ourselves and the Dalai clique is neither a matter of religious belief, nor a matter of the question of autonomy, it is a matter of securing the unity of our country and opposing splittism."

China's Third Forum on Work in Tibet Beijing, 1994

## Introduction

From July 20 to 23, 1994, Beijing staged the Third Forum on Work in Tibet which recommended the total destruction of an entire civilization flourishing on the Tibetan Plateau for thousands of years.

This cultural "empire" once encompassed far-flung areas like Buryatia, Tuva and Kalmykia in Russia; Mongolia; Ladakh, Lahaul-Spiti, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh in India; Mustang, Dolpo and Solo Khumbu in Nepal; Bhutan and parts of western China.

The policy formulated in 1994 in Beijing - and these days pursued with Cultural Revolutionary zeal in Tibet - will mean the annihilation of the spiritual homeland of this shared culture. Implementation of the Third Work Forum is thus having a crippling impact on the traditional culture of millions of non-Tibetans as the well-spring of their cultural inspiration is forcibly drained and there is nothing to replenish the continuous growth and development of this distinct and highly evolved civilization.

### Losing hearts and minds

The decisions made at the Third Forum rest on two fundamental conclusions which Beijing drew. It realized it was losing out in two vital fields - ideology and propaganda. For a state whose existence is justified by its ideological superiority and the power of its propaganda to shape the thinking of the masses, the implications of this for the future was at best uncertain, at worst dangerous.

Beijing concluded it was losing the ideological war because, despite the unrelenting assault on Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetans were as devoted to their traditional beliefs as ever. Beijing has succeeded in physically enslaving the country but it has not won over the hearts, minds and loyalty of the Tibetan populace. Communist ideology, enforced by the military might of China, had failed to dent the heart of Buddhism. Added to this was the communist authorities' total bafflement at the non-violent policy underpinning the Middle Way Approach advocated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to resolve the issue of Tibet's future status. For a regime which is based on Mao's dictum that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun, this supposedly eccentric philosophy which says victory lies in capturing the hearts and minds of people by the power of ideas rather than killing by the power of the gun comes as a bolt from the blue. Much of Beijing's knee-jerk reaction to, and its bafflement at, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's new policy of rapprochement lies at the heart of its new hardline policy.

Beijing considered it was losing the propaganda war because, for one reason or the other, the world's media and its pop culture considered - at least for the moment - Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism their very own cuddly pandas. Despite its financial might China found it extremely difficult to exterminate this image of Tibet and get its voice heard on the Tibetan issue in the court of the international media.

In order to address these weaknesses the Third Forum concentrated on two issues. One was to focus on Tibet's economic development in the hope that this would keep Tibetan demonstrations off the streets. This was tantamount to bribing the Tibetans with promises of riches to come if they toed the party line. The other concern was to win the coming and new generations of Tibetans over to the Chinese viewpoint. Beijing has given up on the present generation of Tibetans as a lost cause. If the coming generations of Tibetans were also lost to the 'Dalai Clique' this, the Chinese concluded, would have dangerous consequences for Chinese rule in Tibet. The 15-year-old Gyalwa Karmapa's dramatic escape from Tibet in January 2000 was a warning to the Beijing authorities of the erosion of loyalty to China. The Karmapa's flight, and the earlier escape of Agya Rinpoche, the abbot of Kumbum Monastery, came as a huge embarrassment for China, because retaining these high lamas gave China a degree of legitimacy for its rule in Tibet.

This is the reason why Beijing is enforcing with greater strictness its 1993 instruction of recalling young Tibetans studying in schools and monasteries run by Dharmasala in India. This is also the rationale for Beijing closing down schools in Tibet which are privately run by Tibetans.

For these reasons Tibet today is in the throes of a second Cultural Revolution as the Chinese authorities step up their long-term strategy to exterminate Tibet's distinct cultural and ethnic identity.

The authorities are pursuing a four-pronged strategy to achieve their final objective. They have stepped up repression while employing their huge propaganda machine to paint a rosy picture of Tibet. They have quickened the pace of economic development to dampen Tibetan nationalism and are simultaneously moving more Chinese settlers onto the Tibetan Plateau to change Tibet's demographic composition and to ease social unrest because of mounting unemployment back in China.

The Third Work Forum on Tibet was convened by the top Chinese leadership and was presided over by President Jiang Zemin. The authorities have now enshrined this Work Forum as the most "important strategic policy to rejuvenate Tibet" and have hailed its directives as the new manifesto for party work on the plateau. The significance of the Third Work Forum lies in the fact that it overturned the more liberal policies laid out for Tibet's "development" by the First and Second Work Forums held in 1980 and 1984. The first two work forums were initiated by the late Hu Yaobang, then Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party. This liberal and somewhat maverick leader is credited with masterminding a series of measures to improve the social, economic and political conditions in Tibet. The brief spell of liberalization markedly improved the living conditions of the majority of Tibetans and contributed to a more relaxed intellectual and social climate.

The Third Work Forum reversed these policies and reinstated hardline measures under which Tibet is still reeling today. The Tibetans in Tibet perceive the current repressive policies as a second Cultural Revolution. The question is **why** did China choose to jettison its earlier more liberal policies and adopt a manifesto which is leading to the systematic destruction of Tibet's distinct culture.

The answer lies in domestic and international events which forced China to formulate a series of hardline policies on Tibet which eventually crystallized into the Third Work Forum for Tibet. The world which confronted China in the late 1980s and early 1990s was a frightening one.

Starting from 1987, Tibet was rocked by a string of protest demonstrations, which called for Tibetan independence. One of the largest demonstrations which erupted on March 5, 1989 in Lhasa, forced the authorities to impose martial law on the city. These demonstrations are now seen to have been an inspiration behind the outburst of Chinese students' pro-democracy uprisings. The authorities saw the series of Tiananmen Square demonstrations as a sign of their Central Government losing control, and in an attempt to regain supremacy, the authorities slaughtered - perhaps hundreds if not thousands of students on June 4, 1989. These demonstrations were a chilling replay to the authorities of the May 4, 1919 student demonstrations in Beijing which signalled a political and cultural awakening across the erstwhile Middle Kingdom.

Beijing's fears of losing control were exacerbated by external events which saw the unraveling of the communist world. The Solidarity Movement in Poland, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the implosion of the Soviet Union fed Beijing's paranoia over threats to the Chinese Communist Party hold on power.

Official China's fears were further inflamed by the rapidly changing attitude of the broad masses as they turned back from communism to traditional beliefs like Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and indigenous folk cults. In the eyes of ordinary citizens communism was becoming totally discredited and this, more than anything else, was the biggest nightmare for China's leadership. The leadership's justification for staying in power was being disavowed by the masses. For a one-party dictatorship this historically indicates the first step along the slippery road to dissolution and removal of power.

For these reasons the Chinese leadership then reverted to its earlier view that traditional beliefs were its real enemy. In competing with Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, Christianity and other isms, communism was losing

out in terms of its ability to retain the loyalty and allegiance of the masses. The leadership revived the old aphorisms once served up to the Tibetan people to justify their policies to destroy Tibetan Buddhism during the Cultural Revolution. Bewildered Tibetans were then told that just as there cannot be two suns in the sky, so there cannot be both Buddhism and socialism in Tibet. Inevitably Buddhism then had to give way to socialism. And again, today, religion is being blatantly sublimated to Chinese state power.

These were the fears of the Chinese leaders when they met in Beijing in 1994 to hammer out their new Tibet initiatives. For the Chinese authorities Tibet is an especially sensitive issue because of their conviction that hostile Western forces are using the issue of Tibet to 'westernize' China and to lead to its territorial fragmentation. The third generation Chinese leaders came to the conclusion that stability in Tibet was vital to the stability of China as a whole.

Earlier, Tibet was merely of peripheral concern to the vital interests of China's sprawling communist empire. Now, with the Third Work Forum, the authorities were saying, "We must clearly understand that we must do our work in Tibet not only for the sake of our own region's stability and development, not only for the interests of our people, but also for the sake of the whole nation's stability and development."(1)

In Tibet, China faced peculiar problems because of the inherent strength of Tibetan Buddhism and the depth of devotion of the populace to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The sustained burst of religious revival that followed in the wake of the brief spell of liberalization in Tibet confirmed the leadership's worst fears that decades of concerted assault on Tibetan culture and religion had not extinguished the people's traditional beliefs and values. From merely nuisance value, the Chinese leadership now viewed Tibetan Buddhism as a very real and imminent threat to the stability of Chinese rule in Tibet.

At the same time the Chinese leadership's attitude towards His Holiness the Dalai Lama changed. From being an uncertain ally in the peace process in Tibet, the current Chinese leadership now saw him as a full-blown "enemy". A top-level conclave held in Beijing on March 10, 1993 concluded that, "There are different factions within the Dalai Clique; they are, however, unanimous in their political nature and position. They differ from each other in ideological viewpoints and ways of expressing them. Different strategies must be adopted to use their differences, to deal with them differently in order to divide and destroy them."(2)

Repeated statements by high-level officials describe the struggle against "splittism", the official term for Tibetan independence, as a "life-and-death struggle". At the 1994 annual meeting of the "TAR" Communist Party Committee to brief members on the policy thrust of the Third Work Forum on Tibet, Raidi, deputy Secretary of the Committee said, "Up to now, his (the Dalai Lama's) standpoint on Tibet's independence has never changed, and we must reveal his double-faced true colour. The focal point in our region in the struggle against splittism is to oppose the Dalai Clique. As the saying goes, to kill a serpent, one must first cut off its head."(3)

In short, the Third Work Forum decided that Beijing was in a position to solve the Tibet issue without the Dalai Lama's involvement. It abandoned the earlier liberal policy of including His Holiness the Dalai Lama in any future settlement of Tibet's status. His Holiness the Dalai Lama was clearly singled out as the cause of China's "Tibet problem".

The Third Work Forum also abandoned the policy of granting concessions to Tibet because of the plateau's "special characteristics". This policy had been the cornerstone of recommendations made by the First and Second Tibet Work Forums.

To carry out its new hardline policies in Tibet, Beijing appointed Chen Kuiyuan as the "TAR" Party Secretary in 1992. Chen Kuiyuan's appointment is significant because he had a track record for being a tough and ruthless administrator. He had already served as the First Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in Inner Mongolia and is credited with repressing the rebellious Mongols, many of whom refer to him as "the butcher". Chen Kuiyuan was especially recommended to the post by Hu Jintao, the current Vice-President of China, who was then the First Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet.

## Tackling Tibetan nationalism

The Third Work Forum policies chalked out for Tibet contained four key elements. China stepped up the scale of repression in Tibet. External propaganda work was escalated. The pace of economic development in Tibet - and its corollary of encouraging more Chinese settlers and businessmen to take advantage of the economic boom on the "roof of the world" - was also increased.

In short, Beijing had decided to tackle Tibetan nationalism head-on and observers are still assessing the consequences on both Chinese rule in Tibet and on the populace.

Beijing remains convinced that these key components of its current policy will stabilize Chinese rule over Tibet and solve once and for all, the vexed problem of its negative image over the way Tibet has been handled. One main target of the current policy of repression is Tibetan Buddhism. Chinese leaders are increasingly alarmed by the proliferation of monasteries and temples which the period of liberalization spawned throughout Tibet: they are seen as the bastions of Tibetan nationalism. The authorities have set up "Democratic Management Committees" to control monasteries and nunneries and created "Work Inspection Teams" to supervise the "education" of monks and nuns.

A major thrust is underway to break the bond of loyalty between the clergy in Tibet and His Holiness the Dalai Lama in India. Campaigns like "Strike Hard" and "Patriotic Re-education", unleashed in 1996, are aimed at crippling the rise of Tibetan Buddhism which the authorities suspect is weaning the loyalty of the Tibetan people away from the communist party and towards His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

One salient feature of the "Strike Hard" campaign is how differently it is interpreted in China and Tibet. China's "Strike Hard" campaign was started to weed out corruption. Tibet's version is used as a political tool to eliminate those whom the authorities label "splittists". In Tibet, rather than striking at corruption, the authorities turn a blind eye to this social disease in the hope that it will erode the traditional morality of Tibetans and undermine Tibetan Buddhism.

In fact, at a secret meeting held in December 1999 in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, Chen Kuiyuan, the hardline Party Secretary of "TAR" recommended to the Central Chinese Government that an all-out effort must be made to eradicate Tibetan Buddhism and culture from the face of the earth so that no memory of them will be left in the minds of coming generations of Tibetans - except as museum pieces.

Chen Kuiyuan stated that the main cause of instability is the existence of the Dalai Lama and his Government-in-Exile in Dharamsala and these must be "uprooted". He recommended that Tibet, Tibetan people and Tibetan Buddhism - in other words the very name of Tibet - must be destroyed and the "Tibet Autonomous Region" be merged with provinces like Sichuan. (4)

While treating Tibetans to boot-heel subjugation at home, internationally China was on an overdrive propaganda blitz. At a brainstorming conclave held on March 10, 1993, Zeng Jian-hui, Vice-Minister of the Propaganda Ministry, told participants, "The propaganda work on the question of Tibet is one of the focal points of the entire external propaganda work...With regard to attacks by the West and the Dalai Clique and their frequent activities, our external propaganda should launch offensive. We should expand our spheres of influence; in particular, we should infiltrate our propaganda into the mainstream life of the West.

"Firstly we should continue to send Tibetan scholars and Tibetan singing and dancing troupes abroad to lecture and perform. Secondly, relevant embassies and consulates should aim at the public opinion and the activities of the Dalai Clique in the countries where they are stationed and utilize speeches, picture exhibitions, special articles and other forms to carry out propaganda work, so as to win over officials and people of those countries... We should reinforce the work of utilizing the power of foreign propaganda. A few years ago, in the light of the situation of that time, we made arrangements for foreign journalists to visit Tibet."(5)

The September 3, 2000 edition of *People's Daily* carried a story headlined "Tibet Welcomes Foreign Journalists for Objective Reporting". It stated that "A senior Tibetan official said Sunday that Tibet welcomes foreign journalists to come for objective and just reporting, but not those who take distorted views. Raidi, Deputy Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of the Communist Party of China and Chairman of the

Standing Committee of the Tibetan Autonomous Regional People's Congress, made the remarks at a meeting here with a press delegation of Thailand."

In this context, it is interesting to note that N. Ram, the editor of India's *Frontline* magazine, devoted 36 pages of the September 15, 2000 issue to promote the Chinese line and recommended that the Indian Government expel the Central Tibetan Administration from Indian soil for being the main stumbling block to normal relations between India and China. It is difficult to assess to what extent the views contained in his stupendous reporting marathon are his own.

These editorial outbursts are in line with policy decisions outlined in the early nineties. During a two-day secret conclave in March 1993 in Chengdu, Vice-Minister Zeng Jian-hui, told participants, "All foreigners that we entertain and send to Tibet must have a relatively objective opinion of Tibet. We should use people from abroad to carry out the propaganda on Tibet for us, which is more powerful than if we do it."<sup>(6)</sup>

Along with its external public relations strategy, China is presently carrying out a potentially much more dangerous policy of speeding up the pace of Tibet's economic development and its related drive to bring more Chinese settlers onto the Tibetan Plateau. Beijing's Western China Development Programme, which incorporates Tibet in its ambit, is devised to shift the focus of China's economic activities from Coastal China to the interior - both to narrow the imbalance in the level of economic development between the two regions and to ease population pressure on the coastal areas which attract millions of migrant workers.

The focus of Beijing's Western China Economic Development Programme in Tibet is to exploit the plateau's still untapped minerals and other natural resources and to upgrade Tibet's infrastructure - like roads and telecommunications - to facilitate transportation of these resources to China. The other purpose of the heightened level of economic activity is to divert the Tibetans' attention from their political fate to focus on their livelihood - thus undermining Tibetan nationalism.

The Chinese authorities aim to manipulate the situation in Tibet still further by bringing in more Chinese settlers who would then demographically cement Chinese rule once and for all.

These current hardline policies and their implementation in Tibet are impacting the stalled Sino-Tibetan Dialogue and will vitally affect the ability of Tibetans to survive as a distinct people and culture.

#### Beijing's flawed perceptions

The basic flaws in China's new policy in its search to resolve the problem of Tibet is thinking the solution can exclude the involvement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The other is in attempting to solve the problem over the heads of Tibet's citizens.

These two fundamental mistakes will exacerbate China's Tibet problem, not solve it. The reason lies in the history of Tibet and in the sentiments of the people. The institution of the Dalai Lamas of Tibet is more than 600 years old, if we start from the birth of the first Dalai Lama in 1391. In the course of its growth and development, the very institution itself came to symbolize fundamental beliefs and the political destiny of the nation. The bond between the Dalai Lamas and the Tibetan people is fundamental and unbreakable; any attempt, however sustained, will never succeed in driving a wedge between the two.

Consequently, China's current policy of forcing Tibetans - especially monks and nuns - to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama and pledge loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party will prove counterproductive.

In view of this the Third Work Forum's basic assumption that in the case of Tibet time is on the side of China, and that Beijing can stall the problem of Tibet till the demise of the present Dalai Lama whereupon the issue of Tibet will solve itself, is fatally flawed - based as it is on a mistaken perception of the role played by the institution of the Dalai Lamas in the development of Tibetan history.

This assumption, if not reviewed, revised and abandoned, will prove catastrophic for the Chinese leadership and for those who chose to turn their whimsical personal analysis into state policy. The reason is simple. The Chinese Communist Party was founded in the 1920s and came to power in 1949. Within this short span of time the masses have lost faith in communist ideology, and members of the party these days pay mere lip service to the

ideological justifications of the party. Conversely, the institution of the Dalai Lamas as a political force is more than 300 years old. These days the Dalai Lama is recognized by Tibetans throughout the world as the heart of Tibetan nationalism. How can a party which has lost its soul outlast an institution which symbolizes the very soul of a people?

For these reasons it is imperative for China to review and re-assess its current hardline stance towards Tibet. China must re-start its stalled peace process over Tibet and consider His Holiness the Dalai Lama as a vital and active partner in the procedures. If China does this it will have won a powerful ally and companion along the road to peace, stability and continued prosperity.

#### NOTES:

1. Raidi's extensive comments to the Sixth enlarged Plenary Session of the Standing Committee of the Fourth Congress of the 'TAR' branch of the Chinese Communist Party, published by Tibet Information Network in its Cutting Off the Serpent's Head - Tightening Control in Tibet, 1994-1995, and Human Rights Watch/Asia in 1996
2. Comments made by Zeng Jian-hui, Vice-Minister of the Propaganda Ministry of the CCP Central Committee as quoted in China's Public Relations Strategy on Tibet - Classified Documents from the Beijing Propaganda Conference, a 1993 report by the International Campaign for Tibet.
3. Cutting Off the Serpent's Head
4. Comments made by Chen Kuiyuan, "TAR" Party Secretary at a secret conclave in Chengdu at the end of 1999. Quoted in the statement of Kalon Sonam Topgyal, Chairman of the Kashag, at the 40th anniversary of Tibetan Democracy Day on September 2, 2000 in Dharamsala
5. China's Public Relations Strategy on Tibet
6. ibid



## Taming the threats of Culture

By the turn of the last decade, the Chinese authorities began to see the Tibetan people's devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism as the main cause of growing Tibetan nationalism, and by extension, serious threats to the communist party leadership and unity of China.

In 1994 China's Third Forum on Work in Tibet vowed to undermine the influence of the Dalai Lama and Buddhism in Tibet and promote allegiance to the Communist Party and socialism. To achieve this goal, the Forum decided to reform Tibetan Buddhism and culture to suit the socialist society and to tighten government control over monasteries and nunneries. The Forum's manifesto recommended the following course to reform Buddhism:

"We must teach and guide Tibetan Buddhism to reform itself. All those religious laws and rituals must be reformed in order to fit in with the needs of development and stability in Tibet, and they should be reformed so that they become appropriate to a society under socialism... First, we should put an end to the unbridled construction of monasteries/nunneries as well as to the unbridled recruitment of monks/nuns. Later, other matters must be tackled on a priority basis..."

"We must reveal the true political face of the Dalai hidden behind the religious mask, and prevent by all means and ways the monks and nuns in the monasteries of our region from being affected by the influence of the Dalai Clique. The Communist cadres and the vast masses of monks and nuns in the monasteries should demonstrate their determination to distance themselves from the Dalai Clique in the political field...We must enhance the understanding of the monks and nuns about patriotism and law.

"In recognizing the reincarnations of the tulkus [reincarnated lamas] of the Tibetan Buddhism, we must follow the relevant decisions of the State and implement them according to the real conditions in our region and make them more practical as soon as possible. We must do this work earnestly in order to gain the initiative.

"We must take precautions against the Dalai Clique-they are interfering in the recognition of tulkus in order to manipulate the monasteries, and this situation must be reversed."

These recommendations became the core of "Patriotic Education", "Strike Hard" and "Spiritual Civilization" campaigns that were imposed on Tibet in 1996. Whilst "Patriotic Education" and "Spiritual Civilization" are tailored to undermine Tibetan religion, culture and language, "Strike Hard" is targeted against Tibetan political activism; this ranges from speaking to foreigners to possessing publications produced by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and participating in peaceful protest demonstrations.

#### Uprooting the 'Dalai's influence'

The clarion call for the "Patriotic Education" campaign was sounded by a front page editorial in the April 5, 1996 edition of *Xizang Ribao (Tibet Daily)*, which called for a campaign to "eradicate the Dalai Splittist Forces' influence".

Then, on July 23, 1996, Chen Kuiyuan, Communist Party Secretary of the "Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)", addressed a mobilization rally in Lhasa to launch the "Spiritual Civilization" campaign and declare its main thrust in Tibet. Chen said, "One of the important tasks in facilitating Spiritual Civilization drive is to screen and eliminate Dalai's influence in the spiritual field. If we fail to accomplish this task, we cannot claim to have attained any great results in facilitating the Spiritual Civilization drive".(1)

Monasteries and nunneries became the first targets of the "Patriotic Education" campaign. The authorities argued that monks and nuns had "become the vanguard of disturbances" and that monasteries and nunneries had "become the breeding ground and hotbed for the Dalai Clique's splittist activities in Tibet".(2)

To counter this, the authorities decided to tighten government control over all religious institutions through the establishment of a "Democratic Management Committee" and "Patriotic Education Work Unit" in every monastery and nunnery. On July 20, 1997, a 10-point disciplinary code for monks and nuns was issued to all religious institutions.

The disciplinary code, amongst others, forbids the possession and propagation of "splittist" publications and calls for protection of the "stability and unity of the Motherland". The code also forbids spiritual teachings outside the confines of monastic institutions. Identity cards are issued to "government-approved" monks and nuns to facilitate control over their activities. Those without identity cards are ousted from monasteries/nunneries. Throughout Tibet "Patriotic Education Work Units" force monks and nuns to denounce the Dalai Lama and pledge allegiance to the Communist Party. Monks and nuns are expressly forbidden to possess or display photos of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in their rooms as well as in the monastery or nunnery. Resistance to these diktats leads to arrest and expulsion from monasteries and nunneries. In some cases, the monasteries and nunneries are closed down altogether.

The Dharamsala-based Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) documented a total of 165 arrests (including nine custodial deaths) and more than 2,800 cases of expulsion from monasteries and nunneries in 1996 and 1997.(3) In 1998, the total number of known cases of arrest and expulsion, as documented by the TCHRD, were 327 and 7,156 respectively. Cases of arrest and expulsion for 1999, as known to the TCHRD, were 49 and 1,432 respectively.(4)

In March 1998, the "TAR" Deputy Party Secretary Raidi said that "35,000 monks and nuns in more than 700 religious institutions have been rectified by patriotic education."

Simultaneously, a number of "unpatriotic" monasteries and nunneries were closed down and some even demolished. Samdrupling Monastery in Tsethang County, Lhoka, Sungrabling Monastery in Lhoka and Drigung Sherta Dialectic School in Meldro Gonggar were forced to close in 1997.(5) In the same year, the authorities closed down Shigatse's Jonang Kumbum Monastery, persecuted its head, the Venerable Kunga Yeshe, and sold the monastery's religious objects in the antique market of Lhasa.

Shongchen Nunnery in Shigatse, Drag Yerpa hermitage in Taktse County on the outskirts of Lhasa City, and the 12th century Rakhor Nunnery in Toelung Dechen County were all pulled down in 1997. The authorities claim that most of these dismantled monasteries, nunneries and hermitages had been constructed without proper permission.

Ironically, just as these Tibetan religious institutions were being closed down or destroyed, China's official news agency *Xinhua*, August 8, 1997 reported a "golden age" for Tibetan religion and claimed that there are now more monasteries than before the "liberation" of Tibet.

#### Lamas - a communist dilemma

In 1998 the Chinese authorities started to force senior Tibetan lamas (spiritual teachers) to retire from their sacred religious duty of preaching. In one such case 49 out of 52 senior lamas from Youning Monastery in Gonglung County, "Haidong Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture", Qinghai province (Amdo) were ordered to permanently retire from their religious duties.

Such a practice is unknown in the history of Tibetan Buddhist tradition and has serious implications for the survival of Buddhist knowledge. Senior monks are crucial to the transmission of religious teachings. The London-based Tibet Information Network commented that the move represents a serious threat to the Buddhist tradition in Tibet and "is a new dimension to the patriotic education campaign".(6)

One of the political dichotomies of 1999 was the attitude of the authorities towards senior religious figures; they were at once viewed as a potential threat to stability and unity and as a potential tool of political control. The authorities set out to impose increasing restriction on the activities of renowned scholars and religious teachers, perceiving them as a threat to the leadership of the Party. For instance, in mid-1999 the authorities mounted restrictions on the internationally-renowned Serthar Buddhist Institute in "Kanze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture", Sichuan Province.

This institute, approved and certified by China as an "academy", was established in the 1970s by the renowned ecumenical religious leader Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok. Serthar has more than 8,800 students, of whom over 700 are Chinese from various regions of the Mainland. In June 1999 the administration accused the institute of following the wrong direction and of having too many students. < 7 > 7

On the other hand, the authorities now make frequent attempts to utilize religious figures, institutions, and traditions to further their political ambitions. Even the system of recognizing reincarnate lamas (*tulkus or rinpoches*) is being manipulated.

In June 1999, Tao Changsong, Religious Advisor to the Chinese Government, said that the next Dalai Lama "will not be chosen from foreigners", but that he will be "a Tibetan born in Chinese territory".(8)

It is a measure of China's increasing restrictions on religious freedom and harassment of Tibetan religious figures that the Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa, Orgyen Trinley Dorji, recognized by both His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the PRC government in Beijing, and Agya Rinpoche, a major Tibetan religious figure who held several important political posts under the Chinese administration, had to recently flee Tibet.

Explaining the reasons for his escape, Agya Rinpoche said, "Had I remained in Tibet, I would have been forced to denounce the Dalai Lama and my religion to serve the Chinese Government... I would have been forced to help the government have its choice of the Panchen Lama accepted by the Tibetan people. This would violate my deepest beliefs. It was at this point that I knew I must leave my country."

What is particularly noteworthy is that the new policy of religious repression in Tibet was orchestrated by the highest leadership circles in Beijing.

In his speech to ethnic and religious leaders at the Second Session of the Ninth Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee, Chinese President Jiang Zemin stated, "To correctly handle religious problems, first we should completely and correctly implement the party's religious policy; second, we should strengthen management of religious affairs according to the law; third, we should actively guide religions to adapt to the socialist society."(9)

In order to ensure that religions adapt to socialist society, two things, Jiang said, must be done, "First, the religious masses should abide by our socialist country's law, regulations, guidelines, and policies [religious activities must be conducted within the bounds of the law]; second, religious activities should be subjected to

and should serve the country's maximum interest and the nation's entire interest."(10)  
The battle for hearts and minds

In 1997 the scope of the "Patriotic Education" campaign was extended to cover schools and other educational institutions to ensure the production of "tens of thousands of youngsters who will sincerely love China and carry forward the work of promoting socialism".

Just as in monasteries and nunneries, "Patriotic Education" in schools involves weaning the younger generations' loyalty away from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Tibetan nationalism. In this connection, Chen Kuiyuan made the following remark at the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the "TAR" on July 29, 1995:

"It has been long since the Dalai Clique started a contest to win over Tibet's educational battleground and future generation from us. If our failure to think clearly allows splittist ideas, publications and incitement to infiltrate our schools, and thus, blacken our future generation and create conditions for the people's schools to churn out successors to the splittist forces, we will have made a historical blunder."(11)

The targeting of schools and other institutes is also a direct result of the Third Forum, which stated:

"The Dalai Clique has enrolled lots of teenagers in their schools abroad to imbue them with the idea of 'Tibetan independence' and splittist ideas. They are trying lots of methods to train successors to the cause of 'Tibetan independence'. In our region there are students in schools who wear the red scarfs [indicating that they belong to the Young Pioneers, the junior wing of the Communist Youth League] but go to monasteries to feed butter lamps, and what's more, some have been deceived by the counter-revolutionary propaganda of the Dalai Clique, so that they sympathize with them and take part in splittist activities.

"What will happen after some decades? Will our teenagers grow up as successors to the cause of socialism or to the cause of splittism? This is an important issue that we ought to consider seriously."

#### The panacea of atheism

Towards the end of 1998 the Chinese authorities came up with a campaign to foster atheism in all walks of Tibetan life. This campaign was targeted to achieve its objectives within three years. Heralding its start, Raidi stated on November 15, 1998, "As communists, we cannot hold that all is well because we merely announce that we are atheists. Rather, we should make bold propaganda about Marxist atheism and insist on indoctrinating the masses of peasantry and herdsmen in the Marxist stand on religion."

Then, on January 8, 1999, a meeting of the "TAR" Party Propaganda Department decided that "atheism is necessary to promote economic development in the region and to assist the struggle against the infiltration of the Dalai Clique".(12)

The campaign urged Tibetans to stop the age-old custom of relying on divination or oracles or seeking advice from senior religious persons or using prayer beads or even wearing traditional Tibetan garments in offices. It announced restrictions on putting up prayer flags, burning incense, circumambulating holy places, going on religious pilgrimages, etc. These "superstitious acts", the campaign trumpeted, stood as stumbling blocks to the advancement of society - particularly for the advent of a market economy.

The first targets of this campaign were Tibetan Communist Party members and public sector employees. They were warned against possessing religious objects - such as prayer books, photos, statues, *thangkas* (religious paintings) and altars - and against participating in religious festivals or services, including visiting monasteries and temples on sacred days. This was followed recently by a further decree ordering Party members and government workers to withdraw their children from monasteries and nunneries.

Earlier, in his November 8, 1997 speech to the Second Plenary Session of the Fifth "TAR" Party Committee, Chen Kuiyuan stated:

"...religious believers, and even some Party members and cadres, are not able to free themselves from the shackles of their outlook on the world as seen from religious idealism. Instead of devoting their intelligence and endeavours to the welfare of society and the people, they waste their precious time in futile efforts praying for individual happiness in the next world; instead of using their limited financial resource to improve their economic condition, they unrestrictedly donate their money to monasteries; and instead of

letting their children receive a modern education, they send them to monasteries to become a monk or a nun. Such negative thinking and behaviour prevents science and technology from spreading and impedes the development of productive forces."

The targeting of Party members and public sector employees reveals the Chinese authorities' sense of frustration with Tibetan cadres for dragging their feet on the anti-Dalai Lama campaigns. This became clear from a Tibet TV commentary of August 3, 1999 which stated that those members and cadres who do not support the campaigns "worry that Tibet being the main region of Tibetan Buddhism, where lamaseries and monasteries are ubiquitous and where there are many Buddhist followers, propagating Marxist-Leninist atheism here in a big way is incongruous with the Party's religious policy and propagating Marxist-Leninist atheism will hurt the religious sentiments of the vast numbers of monks, nuns and religious followers".

#### No place for Tibetan architecture

The Third Forum's draconian manifesto also resulted in the demolition of 350 out of 600 historic buildings in the Old City of Lhasa by the end of 1996. The demolished heritage buildings include the Tromsikhang Palace built by the Sixth Dalai Lama in the 17th century, and one of four buildings in the heart of the Old City officially designated for "strict preservation as a cultural relic". Before the destruction of Tromsikhang Palace, UNESCO and many leading conservation experts submitted special representations to the Chinese authorities for its protection as a heritage building.

More recently, the Lhasa administration expelled several members of "The Tibet Heritage Fund (THF)" - an international NGO which had been involved in restoring historic buildings in Lhasa City.<sup>(13)</sup> The THF was set up in 1997 and had restored 76 buildings - some with a recorded history of 1,200 years - by the time its directors were expelled from Tibet in August 2000.

In sum, it is not difficult to assess why the Chinese authorities are intent on suppressing religion, culture and language of Tibet. Anything that in any way can define Tibetans as a distinct race is viewed as a direct threat to the unity of China and the Communist Party leadership.

Chen Kuiyuan made this clear when he said, "They [the Dalai Clique] try to use language and culture as an excuse to create ethnic conflict. Their aim is to separate the Tibetan nationality from the rest of [China's] nationalities...and to make the so-called 'Tibetan culture' opposed to the so-called 'Han culture'."<sup>(14)</sup>

#### NOTES:

1. BBC Monitoring, September 9, 1996
2. July 19, 1996 speech of the Vice-Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Phagbalha Geleg Namgyal
3. TCHRD, *China in Tibet: Striking Hard Against Human Rights*, 1997, Dharamsala, India, p 8
4. TCHRD, *Tibet: Crackdown on Humanity*, 1998, Dharamsala, p 3; *Tightening of Control*, 1999, Dharamsala, p 3
5. TCHRD, *China in Tibet: Striking Hard Against Human Rights*, 1997, Dharamsala, p 14
6. TIN News Update, October 27, 1998
7. TIN News Review No. 28, 1999
8. *South China Morning Post*, June 23, 1999
9. *Xinhua*, March 4, 1999; SWB March 27, 1999
10. *Xinhua*, March 4, 1999
11. The first document of the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the Tibet Autonomous Region
12. *Tibet TV*, January 10, 1999
13. Reuters, Beijing, August 19, 2000
14. *Xizang Ribao (Tibet Daily)*, July 14, 1997

## Education's policy of intend

Ever since its occupation of Tibet, the obsession of the Chinese Government has been to ensure the loyalty of Tibetans to Communist Party rule. This has blinded the authorities to a number of core issues relating to human resource development on the plateau.

Despite the authorities' claim to have "taken on an important task over the past few decades to develop popular education in Tibet", education - the foundation for the development of human resources - has always been put on the back burner of priority programmes.

It was only in the early 1980s that the authorities decided to look favourably at the idea of promoting a pan-Tibet mass education system. Until then "democratic reforms" - and particularly the chaos and madness of the Cultural Revolution - threw mass education into a shambles.

### Right policy, no funding

In 1980 China adopted an ethnic-sensitive social and economic policy for Tibet as part of an internal strategy to encourage the "return of the Dalai Lama to China". The government then sincerely desired to improve educational facilities on the plateau.

Unfortunately, there was no funding to implement this reform. Whatever funding was available was largely invested in developing the market economy - the pet project of China's supreme leader, Deng Xiaoping. Consequently, between 1980 and 1989 more than 62 per cent of primary schools in the "TAR" was closed down and the number of students fell by 43 per cent. (1)

Again, in 1994 Beijing adopted a compulsory education policy for its colonial outpost. But this initiative did not benefit Tibetans since the government failed to change the post-1984 economic policies requiring rural dwellers to fund their own primary education; only minimal assistance from county-level administrations was allotted for capital construction and teachers' salaries. Since the majority of the Tibetans lives in rural areas, these economic policies disadvantaged Tibetans from reaping the benefits of the compulsory education policy.

This resulted in extreme rural-urban disparity in education, as most state-run schools - which receive substantially greater government funding - are located in urban areas where the Chinese population predominates.

Most Tibetans in rural areas could not afford the expense of sending their children to school. On June 4, 1994, the Chairman of the "TAR" Government, Gyaltsen Norbu, acknowledged that "...one third of children in the TAR cannot afford to go to school".

These are the fundamental reasons why many Tibetans feel compelled to send their children all the way to India to enroll in educational facilities run by the exile Tibetan community. According to a report by the Dharamsala-based Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy, between 6,000 to 9,000 Tibetan children and young adults have fled Tibet since 1984 to seek educational opportunities in India and Nepal.

The authorities claim that the government of the PRC invested a total of 1.03 billion yuan to promote mass education in Tibet from 1990 to 1995. But the reality is that a large portion of this budget went into educating Tibetan students in China in order to groom a new generation of ideologically brainwashed Tibetan cadres.

### Dubious statistics

Tibet's education status is clearly reflected from the situation of mass education in Kham's Chamdo prefecture - one of the most affluent regions of the "Tibet Autonomous Region". An article by Shang Xioling, a reporter of "TAR" Radio, and Tang Ching, a special reporter for "TAR" education gives an alarming insight into education conditions in Chamdo. Their article, headlined *Notes on the Sad Story of Education in Chamdo*, was published in the July 15, 1993 edition of one of Chamdo's Chinese language newspapers.

The authors reveal that of the 110,000 school-age children in Chamdo, more than 70,000 (63.64 per cent) had no educational opportunity. The illiteracy and semi-literacy rate of Chamdo prefecture, they said, was 78.8

per cent. Shang and Tang wrote that although the claimed average school enrolment rate of the "TAR" was 60.4 per cent, the enrolment rate in Chamdo prefecture was only 34 per cent.

This finding of Shang and Tang reveals the dubious nature of Chinese Government statistics. If Chamdo, as one of the most highly-developed areas in the "TAR", has an enrollment rate of only 34 percent, the "TAR" average cannot be as high as 60.4 percent. Furthermore, what the authorities fail to admit is that the "TAR" and other Tibetan areas of Qinghai (Amdo) and Sichuan (Kham) are still lowest on the education index of China-lower even than China's most backward province, Guizhou. (2)

In short, no matter how many institutions the Chinese Government has in reality developed across Tibet since 1959, Beijing's overriding goal in educating Tibetans has always been to groom political allegiance to China. This is clearly reflected in the speech of Chen Kuiyuan to the 1994 "TAR" Conference on Education:

"The success of our education does not lie in the number of diplomas issued to graduates from universities, colleges...and secondary schools. It lies, in the final analysis, in whether our graduating students are opposed to or turn their hearts to the Dalai Clique and in whether they are loyal to or do not care about our great Motherland and the great socialist cause."

### **Tibetan language in the law**

In 1987 the "TAR" People's Congress passed a legislation calling for Tibetan to be used as the sole language of instruction at primary level and stipulating that Chinese should only be introduced from age nine. The legislation promised to set up Tibetan-medium junior secondary schools in the "TAR" by 1993 and to make most university courses available in Tibetan shortly after 2000.

A special committee, known as "The TAR Guiding Committee for Written and Spoken Tibetan", was set up in 1993 to implement this legislation. At the inaugural ceremony of "The TAR Guiding Committee", "TAR" Deputy Party Secretary Tenzin commented, "There is conclusive evidence that nothing can substitute the effect of using Tibetan language to raise educational quality and to improve the nationality's cultural level."(3)

Although this legislation did not satisfy the populace, it was at least seen as a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, there was no political will to implement this legislation.

### **The anguish of Tibetan scholars**

The diminishing relevance of the Tibetan language on its home soil became a source of grave concern for many Tibetan scholars, some of whom openly raised their voices in protest. In 1992 Professor Dungkar Lobsang Trinley, one of the leading cultural and intellectual figures of modern Tibet and recognized by the Chinese authorities as a "national treasure", said: "In spite of Tibetan being declared the first language to be used in all government offices and meetings, and in official correspondence, Chinese has been used everywhere as the working language".

This state of affairs, he further argued, resulted in Tibetans losing control over their own destiny. Professor Dungkar went on to say, "All hope in our future, all other developments, cultural identity, and protection of our heritage depends on this (Tibetan language). Without educated people in all fields, able to express themselves in their own language, Tibetans are in danger of being assimilated. We have reached this point."

Dherong Tsering Thondup raised a similar concern after conducting a detailed survey of the status of Tibetan language in many parts of eastern Tibet, now part of China's Sichuan Province.

In his report, published in the early 1990s, Dherong wrote that out of the 6,044 Tibetan party members and officials in the nine districts forming "Kanze Tibet Autonomous Prefecture", only 991 were literate in Tibetan. Similarly, the majority of the 25 Tibetan students in one class in Dhartsedo (Ch: Tachienlu, now renamed Kangting), could not speak Tibetan at all. Dherong cited three principal reasons for this: The first, he said, is the Chinese government's chauvinistic policy, which accelerates the process of Sinicization; the second is the notion of Tibetan being a worthless language in today's society; and the third, the inferiority complex suffered by Tibetans, which hampers their initiatives to protect their own language.

Elaborating on China's chauvinistic policy, Dherong said that the socialist era calls for joint efforts to promote all nationalities, and not wipe out any particular nationality. The Chinese constitution guarantees each nationality freedom to manage its own education, science, culture, health and hygiene, and the right to protect the nationality's cultural heritage. However, these enshrined rights, he argued, had never been fully implemented for Tibetans.

"The failure to promote the significance and use of the nationality language, in effect, represents a slight on the nationality. If Chinese is used as the lingua franca to the neglect of the nationality language, if all are Sinicized through the policy of nationality chauvinism, and if the nationalities are pushed to ... assimilate into one another for the purpose of helping to bridge economic and cultural disparities, this is totally against the provisions of the constitution regarding the freedom to use and promote one's language."

In May 1994, members of the "TAR" Political Consultative Committee complained against the drastic cut in the budget for Tibet University, Lhasa, and the mass transfer of staff members from educational institutions to other departments.(4)

In 1996 Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, wrote:

"Actually, the Tibetan language has no value in present-day Tibet. For instance, if a letter was mailed with an address written in Tibetan, it wouldn't reach its destination even within Tibet, let alone outside. In the case of travels, no matter how literate a person is in Tibetan, he would not be able to know the bus timing or read the seat number on his ticket. Even if one has to look for a hospital or a shop in the county headquarters or a city, the knowledge of Tibetan is useless. A person who knows only Tibetan will find it difficult even to buy daily necessities. "If our language is useless in our own country, where else will it have any use? If the situation remains like this for long, the Tibetan language will become extinct one day... Rare in Tibet are schools where one can study Tibetan language and culture. "... Moreover, parents have developed the habit of not sending their children to school. This is because the primary school teaches Chinese rather than Tibetan. Even if the students learn Chinese and graduate from the middle school, there is no employment scope in Tibet. They end up herding cattle and working in fields. There is, of course, a slight opportunity for learning Tibetan. But the parents know that Tibetan language is useless in day-to-day life. Therefore, they have no motivation to send children to school.

"...In the cities and county headquarters there are serious cases of people being unable to speak Tibetan, although both their parents are Tibetans. Many of them have lost their Tibetan characteristics. Moreover, the Tibetan officials cannot speak pure Tibetan. One-fifth or two-thirds of the words they use are Chinese. That's why common Tibetans can't understand their speech."(5)

Predictably, these critical observations went unheeded. Instead, a number of retrograde steps were taken in 1996 in line with the recommendations of the Third Forum. The budget for Tibetan academic and literary publications was drastically cut back. The "TAR" Guiding Committee was disbanded and its senior members transferred to the Regional Translation Bureau. Pilot projects for extending Tibetan medium education to secondary schools, along with the four experimental classes, met a similar fate. Around the same time, Tibetan language courses at Tibet University, Lhasa, were discontinued and university staff were ordered to rewrite textbooks in order to expurgate their religious content.

The situation deteriorated further in 1997 when the "TAR" Deputy Party Secretary Tenzin disclosed a decision to make Chinese mandatory for Tibetan students right from primary school.

In his meeting with James Sasser, US Ambassador to China, Tenzin said that the 1987 policy was "impracticable" and "not in conformity with the reality of Tibet" and that "the decision to allow grade one to three boys and girls to be taught only in the Tibetan language will do no good to the children's growth. "TAR" Deputy Party Secretary Raidi stated that an ethnic nationality which studies and uses only its own spoken and written language definitely is an insular ethnic nationality which will have no future or hope.(6) Within a decade, the 1987 legislation had been revoked.

The Chinese policy to undermine Tibetan language and culture is implemented in all regions of Tibet - not only in the "TAR". This is clearly reflected in a recent statement by Zhou Yong-kang, the Communist Party Secretary

for Sichuan province (which incorporates large parts of Eastern Tibet). At a meeting of China's National People's Congress in March 2000, Zhou announced that the teaching of Tibetan in schools was "a drain on government resources".(7)

### **Suppressing incorrect culture**

In late 1996 a historical play and a guide book were banned in Tibet. The play, *Secrets of the Potala Palace*, and its film version featured the Fifth Dalai Lama meeting the Chinese Emperor Shunzi without performing *kow-tow*. Similarly, a pictorial guide to the treasures and history of the Potala Place, edited by scholar Thubten Gyaltzen, was banned because it contained a portrait of Sangye Gyatso, regent to the Fifth Dalai Lama and a great political strategist of the era.

Alluding to the banned works, Chen Kuiyuan said that there were "a small number of literary and artistic works which, by turning things upside down, extol what should not be extolled, and even go all out to sing the praises of the separatist chieftain Di-ba Sang-jie Jia-cuo (Desi Sangye Gyatso in Tibetan)".

In July 1997 Chen attacked Professor Dungkar Lobsang Trinley for demanding the inclusion of Buddhism in Tibetan studies. In a thinly-veiled criticism against Professor Dungkar, Chen said, "Some people, claiming to be authorities, have made such shameless statements confusing truth and falsehood." This, Chen said, "is similar to separatists' attempts to use the spoken language and culture to cause disputes and antagonism between nationalities"(8).

### NOTES:

1. 1995 TAR Statistical Yearbook, PRC
2. UNDP's China Human Development Report 1997
3. TIN Review No. 26, 1997
4. Proceedings of the Sixth TAR Political Consultative Members' second meeting, 15th issue, March 18, 1994
5. Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, *Thunderous Secrets to the People of the Snowland in the 21st Century*, Serthang Thekchen Choeling, Golok, northeastern Tibet, 1996
6. *Xinhua*, March 9, 1999; SWB March 10, 1999
7. TIME, July 17, 2000, Quoted by Tsering Shakya
8. *Xizang Ribao (Tibet Daily)*, November 7, 1997

## **Intensifying Political Repression**

The struggle between ourselves and the Dalai Clique is neither a matter of religious belief, nor a matter of the question of autonomy, it is a matter of securing the unity of our country and opposing splittism...No one should be careless about it. This is a life-and-death struggle, and of course it is not an ordinary issue but an important issue. The Standing Committee of the TAR Congress and the judicial organs should carry out thorough investigations in order to find out problems in the ways we deal with our struggle against splittism, and seriously analyze those problems in the law. If there is anything not yet mentioned in the law, the judicial administrations should give their views quickly and establish laws and regulations to fight against the splittists so that the laws and regulations become more effective ... As "striking relentless blows" is one of the important elements of the Comprehensive Management of Public Security, the judicial organs should organize local public security organizations to solve their own main problems by having focal places to deal with and focal points to solve. We must rely both on the relevant public security offices and on the vast numbers of masses in dealing with public security work.

Third Work Forum on Tibet, Beijing, 1994

This chilling directive was followed immediately by a dramatic escalation of repression throughout Tibet. New security measures were put in place to tighten control over the population. The neighbourhood surveillance system devised during the Cultural Revolution era was resuscitated with networks of informers in offices, work

groups, schools, monasteries, apartment buildings and neighbourhoods. In urban public places surveillance cameras were installed and are still widely used. Many Tibetans are coerced into providing information about colleagues and neighbours on pain of losing housing, employment, education, a place in a monastery, etc.

### **Intimidation of political suspects**

In 1995 the authorities introduced a new strategy for intimidating political suspects. Used mostly in urban areas, this strategy involves detaining suspects repeatedly for short periods, often for about two days each week, during which time they are interrogated through the use of sophisticated torture techniques which leave no visible marks. Such techniques include exposure to extreme temperatures or making detainees stand in icy water in winter or sit in crippling positions for long periods.

This technique is typically used against people suspected of communicating information on the situation inside Tibet to the outside world. When the victims are released, they are sufficiently intimidated not to dare tell anyone about their detention lest they suffer another round of torture. In some cases the victims are so intimidated that they agree to become informers for the authorities.

### **Stepping up repression**

In 1996, China's three major political campaigns of "Patriotic Education", "Spiritual Civilization" and "Strike Hard" adopted the Third Forum's objectives and stepped up repression even further. As with "Patriotic Education" and "Spiritual Civilization", the goal of the "Strike Hard" campaign in Tibet, as already stated, differs completely from that in China.

In China, the campaign was launched to combat official corruption and common crimes, such as murder, robbery, drug trafficking, etc. However, in Tibet, it became the cutting edge of China's "relentless blows" at separatism and the influence of the "Dalai Clique".

Addressing the inaugural rally of the "Strike Hard Struggle" on May 6, 1996, Raidi, Executive Deputy Secretary of the "TAR" Communist Party, linked the campaign to the anti-splittist fight when he said, "Tibet is located on the frontline of the anti-separation struggle, and safeguarding social stability and the Motherland's unity is the most important political responsibility." He further stated that "paying great attention to this struggle to severely crack down on crimes is both an expression of whether or not we have a sense of the masses of people, and an expression of whether or not we attach importance to politics."(1)

To drive home the seriousness of this campaign, *Tibet Daily* on June 17, 1996 carried an article under the name of Bai Zhao, President of the "TAR" Regional People's Court, which urged upgrading of the intensity of the "Strike Hard" struggle and said that severe punishments and death sentences must be meted out to those who deserve them.

### **Trapping rural 'splittists'**

The fact that Beijing perceives the expression of Tibetan culture and identity as a threat to the "Motherland's unity" has widened the scope under which a Tibetan can be charged with "splittist activity".

The charge of 'splittism' is no longer restricted to pro-independence demonstrations or distributing leaflets or sharing information with foreign tourists. The new definition of Tibetan nationalism or "splittist activities" extends to even the most minor expressions of Tibet's distinct characteristics. For instance, three Tibetans were arrested in Dram, the last Tibetan outpost on the border with Nepal, in 1999 for performing the religious ceremony of offering incense to the deities to mark the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on July 6.

Furthermore, with the "Strike Hard" campaign, the authorities has tightened political stranglehold even over the rural masses of Tibet. Commenting on the need for this, Raidi said on January 1, 1998, "The agricultural and pastoral areas have gradually become the frontline in the struggle against separatism... after encountering repeated defeats, the Dalai Clique has in recent years changed the tactics of its scheme by shifting the focus of separatist activities to the vast agricultural and pastoral areas". (2)

In order to consolidate the party's control over rural areas, the authorities in 1998 started installing loyal cadres in key political positions. Raidi, in his public address on November 15, 1998, stated that, "Rural grassroots officials are the key force for uniting and leading the masses in an in-depth struggle against separatism, stabilizing the farming and pastoral areas." The Tibetan edition of the *People's Daily* reported on July 15, 1998 that the "TAR" had "rectified 650 township and town party committees and 3,602 village party branches" since 1995.

### **Striking down hard in court**

The intensity of the "Strike Hard" campaign can be gauged from the 1996 report presented by Bai Zhao, President of the "TAR" Regional People's Court, at the fifth session of the Sixth "TAR" People's Congress on May 20, 1997.

The report stated that the "TAR" Higher People's Court had "resolutely implemented" the decisions of the Party Central Committee and the Regional Party Committee and launched "coordinated actions in a unified way" to execute the "Strike Hard struggle" with the "power of a thunderbolt" and the "speed of lightning". The report boasted that in 1996 the court had handled a total of 2,126 criminal cases and that 1,726 detainees involved in 977 cases had been swiftly convicted at their first trial. The report further stated that among the prisoners, 60.8 per cent (1,049) had been sentenced to more than five years of imprisonment, or life imprisonment, or death (a death sentence with reprieve); 37.34 per cent (645) to less than five years of imprisonment; 1.36 per cent (24) had been exempted from punishment; and 0.43 per cent (eight) had been declared not guilty.

Another court report submitted in May 1998 by Bai Zhao said that the courts had tried 6,291 people in the past five years and had found 0.73 percent not guilty. The report further stated that more than half the convicts had been given sentences ranging from five years to death.

### **Repression breeds resistance**

Such repressive measures, while creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, have also bred widespread resentment, sparking off protest demonstrations in more and more areas of Tibet. According to a report published by the London-based Tibet Information Network, before 1993 political protests tended to be confined to 22 counties inside the "TAR" and nine counties outside the "TAR". However, since 1993 political protests have been reported from 31 counties in the "TAR" and 21 counties in other Tibetan areas.<sup>(3)</sup> This is an increase of 40 per cent in the "TAR", and 130 per cent in the Tibetan areas outside the "TAR". Similarly, detention cases have also increased by 15 per cent from 500 to 600 in Lhasa city and by 250 per cent from 100 to 350 in other "TAR" areas.

Although we have not been able to obtain adequate information on detention cases in the Tibetan areas outside the "TAR", the figures obtained from the "TAR" may be assumed to be fairly representative of the situation throughout Tibet.

To cope with the increase in arrests of Tibetan political suspects, the Chinese authorities have expanded the network of prison complexes in Tibet. In 1997 a new high security detention and interrogation facility was built in the northeastern suburbs of Lhasa. According to TIN, this facility will house people who are strongly suspected of political disloyalty and former leaders who are said to have made serious mistakes, particularly concerning political matters. In addition, Drapchi and Sangyip prison complexes were expanded in 1998.

The current Chinese hardline policies have only added resolve to the spirit of resistance - even in Tibet's prisons - affecting both political and non-political prisoners. Monks and nuns, who form the bulk of political prisoners, know only too well that at the end of their prison sentence they will find the doors of their monasteries and nunneries firmly shut against their re-entry. They share the lay political prisoners' knowledge that their record of political activism will disqualify them from getting jobs and that they will be under the constant surveillance of police and informers. For all practical purposes, their careers are finished. Furthermore, they are constantly

reminded of the increasing threat to the survival of Tibetan culture, religion and identity. This induces a sense of despair in them, driving them to take greater risks to resist their nemesis.

### **The law vs. realpolitik**

In 1990, the then President of the Higher People's Court, said, "Leadership of the Party (CCP) over the courts is the basic guarantee for the courts to achieve their adjudicatory tasks."<sup>(4)</sup> All acts and beliefs contrary to China's Central Communist Party policy are grounds for suppression, regardless of established legal safeguards.

Although China's constitution and laws provide protection to fundamental rights, these protections are often ignored in practice. It is thus not surprising that Bai Zhao is able to boast such high rates of conviction during the period when the party is in the throes of a campaign to root out Tibetan nationalistic elements.

In 1997 Beijing introduced some changes to the Criminal Procedure Law in order to make it more palatable to the international community. The amended law did away with the term "counter-revolutionary crime" and replaced it with new terminologies such as "crime against state security", "subversion" or "attempts to overthrow the state".

Although the change in terminology has put China in a better position to respond to international criticism against human rights abuses, it has done nothing to make the lives of people any safer. Instead, the new Article 103, dealing with the crime of organizing, plotting or acting to split the country, has had adverse impacts on the security of Tibetans. Articles 102 to 106 of the amended law increase the scope of punitive measures for Tibetans accused of "splittist activities".

Tibet Information Network has noted that, "despite the obsolescence of the criminal terminology of "counter-revolution", sentences for the same activities in Tibet are, on the whole, growing longer, more common, and are being handed down by judicial rather than administrative procedures."<sup>(5)</sup>

The amended law has limited the judicial detention without charge to a period of maximum of 44 days. However, Part II of this law allows new possibilities for the extension of the period of detention during investigation. Further window dressing was given to the amendment by the elimination of six forms of pre-trial detention, including "shelter and investigation", an administrative form of detention under which a suspect could be held without formal charges for a period of up to three months. But testimonies of lengthy administrative detentions continue to pour out of Tibet.

The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights noted that, "The core deficiency in the Chinese system is the enormous power that the police have to detain suspected criminals."<sup>(6)</sup>

### **The changing face of torture**

The use of torture is commonplace in Tibet's prisons and detention centres. Torture and other forms of ill-treatment occur throughout the incarceration process: upon arrest, during transportation to detention facilities, in detention centres and in prisons. In 1998, Amnesty International expressed concerns that torture and ill-treatment of detainees in prisons and labour camps remained widespread, sometimes resulting in death.<sup>(7)</sup> According to Physicians for Human Rights, the frequency of torture - including psychological abuse, beatings, rape, use of electric cattle prods, and prolonged periods of starvation - suggest that torture is part of a widespread pattern of abuse.<sup>(8)</sup>

Another form of ill-treatment is the denial of adequate medical care to the detainees and prisoners. The US Department of State, in its 1998 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in China, stated that the lack of "adequate, timely medical care for prisoners continues to be a serious problem, despite official assurances that prisoners have the right to prompt medical treatment if they become ill".

Article 247 of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China stipulates that "judicial workers who extort a confession from criminal suspects or defendants by torture or who use force to extract testimony from witnesses, are to be sentenced to three years or fewer in prison or put under criminal detention."<sup>(9)</sup>

However, such provisions are routinely ignored in the face of political considerations. The aim of torture is to extract "confessions" and names of "accomplices", "organizations", or "foreign associates". The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims observed that despite the imposition of laws barring torture by prison personnel, as enshrined in Article 14 of the 1994 Chinese Prison Regulations, abuses such as extortion of confessions through torture, inflicting corporal punishment or maltreating prisoners, subjecting prisoners to indignity and beating up prisoners or failing to take action when other people beat up prisoners continue.<sup>(10)</sup> Torture is used also to break the spirit of defiance and put prisoners under permanent servitude to the communist party. Small wonder then that almost all the torture victims are those who, during their confinement, had engaged in resistance activities, such as reciting Buddhist mantras, protesting the ill-treatment of inmates, showing allegiance to the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and expressing dissenting views against "political re-education".

In May 1998 at least 10 prisoners in Drapchi Prison, Lhasa, were tortured to death for shouting slogans, such as "Long Live the Dalai Lama" and "Free Tibet", during the visit of an EU delegation composed of Beijing-based ambassadors of Britain, Austria and Luxemburg. Karma Dawa, the leader of the protestors, was executed while the remaining protesting prisoners had their sentences increased by four to five years.

Over the years, torture techniques have become more and more imaginative. The Dharamsala-based Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy has documented a variety of torture techniques or methods that are used against Tibetan detainees and prisoners. These include aerial suspension, hand and foot cuffs, electric shocks, exposure to extreme temperatures, attack by dogs, sexual assault, electric cattle prods applied to sensitive parts of the body, including the genitals and mouths, long period of solitary confinement, urinating in the victim's mouth, forcing victims to watch torture videos, keeping victims standing for long periods of time and deprivation of food, water and sleep.

One notable result of international pressure on China has been a decrease in the execution rate of Tibetan political prisoners over the past few years. Instead of political prisoners, common criminals are executed during times of political tension in Tibet. This serves the purpose of implanting fear in the minds of potential political activists while at the same time posing no great risk of international condemnation. As for political prisoners, execution seems to have been replaced by the use of prolonged torture, leading to quiet death or permanent physical debilitation. The Tibetan Center for Human Rights has recorded 69 deaths since 1987, which have occurred in prisons or immediately after release from prison, either in hospitals or at the victim's residence. All these deaths were attributed to torture in prison.

### **Tapestry of propaganda**

Characteristically, such escalations of repression has not deterred Beijing from publishing White Papers claiming religious freedom and adherence to human rights in Tibet. Obviously, the Chinese authorities believe that they can gloss over their abuses by stepping up propaganda exercises.

The increasing acceptance of China into the world economic mainstream has, no doubt, made the Chinese Government more sensitive to international public opinion. Unfortunately, this sensitivity has not translated into more benign rule over Tibetans. Instead, it has resulted in the development of subtler mechanisms of repression and a mammoth increase in resources for international public relations exercises.

One of the recommendations of the Third Forum was to invite friendly foreign journalists to Tibet and get them to lend their voices to the chorus of Chinese official propaganda. And, indeed, in recent years a number of "friendly foreign journalists" have visited Tibet, where they were carefully guided to interviews with Tibetan officials and puppets bound by golden threads to the country's new masters. Ordinary Tibetans are not allowed to speak even to tourists, let alone journalists. Similarly, journalists deemed to be sympathetic to the plight of Tibetans can never expect to be allowed officially into Tibet.

The Chinese leadership knows only too well that as long as the lions do not have their own historians, the stories of the jungle will be only about the bravery of hunters.

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## **Economic development for political control**

The pattern of development in Tibet since China's occupation in 1959 complies neither with any United Nations declaration on positive development, nor with any precepts of international laws. China's policy of "development at all costs" not only exploits Tibet's natural resources for China's own development, but also marginalizes Tibetans, excluding them from effective participation, and renders them second-class citizens in their own land. The Chinese Government makes constant claims about the improvements that have been made in terms of development in Tibet. In fact China uses the word "development" as a metaphor for their involvement in Tibet since the 1950s. The 50 years under Communist control are presented as a time of enormous growth and alleviation of suffering.(1)

China's government constantly asserts that while there have been difficulties and hardships, things are getting better all the time, and constructional development, in the form of highways, bridges, dams and buildings, is the touchstone for prosperity in people's lives.(2)

According to Chinese governmental doctrine the "primitive and barbarian" pre-communist Tibet is currently transformed into a new "modern" Tibet under the "benevolent" rule of China. From the First Forum on Work in Tibet in 1980 to the Third in 1994, projects to construct highways, hydropower stations, etc. abounded and the continuous disturbance drastically changed the face of Tibet.

But if we look closely at some of these changes and claims we can begin to see the design underlying China's development strategies. Firstly, China aims to totally assimilate Tibetan regions within the People's Republic of China. China has achieved that end by inter-linking Tibet with Chinese cities and pouring thousands of Chinese immigrants onto the plateau. Secondly, to improve its international image and to legitimize its presence in Tibet, China publicizes the sums sent as subsidies for development work in Tibet - a "primitive wasteland". However, China has never disclosed the actual amount it reaps every year since its occupation from the wholesale looting of cultural treasures during the Cultural Revolution, deforestation and indiscriminate mining projects. The income China accrues from exploiting Tibet's natural resources - such as timber, minerals, oil and animal products - far outweighs the few billion yuan it spends in "developing" Tibet.

Furthermore, China uses development as an antidote to Tibetan nationalism, and a means to solve the rising "separatist activities". The Chinese Government has been increasingly transparent about its strategy of using economic growth and "development" to quell Tibetan resistance.

Most recently Vice-President Hu Jintao, who is also a member of the CCP Central Standing Committee, Political Bureau Standing Committee, commented, "The continuous development of Tibet's economic construction and other social undertakings and the achievements attained in recent years are inseparable from our efforts to maintain social stability."<sup>(3)</sup>

Given that China has had 50 years to develop Tibet, it really has not matched its claims with any marked improvements and the negative impacts of those developments far outweigh any claimed positive ones.<sup>(4)</sup> Most of the current development projects facilitate the transfer of Chinese settlers or workers to Tibetan areas, and employ a sizeable and disproportionate number of Chinese. By doing so China consolidates Beijing's control and occupation of Tibet.

During the Third Work Forum, China's then Premier Li Peng announced that China "must expedite Tibet's development and we are fully able to speed Tibet's development". He urged the authorities in "TAR" to firstly ponder on the principle that economic construction was the key while simultaneously promoting "development and stability". Secondly, the administration is instructed "to step up the pace of reform and opening up" to provide stronger impetus to economic development. And lastly, to invite the enthusiasm of the state for the whole country to support Tibet as well as the willingness of Tibet to achieve self-reliance and be determined to improve infrastructure while building to nurture economic growth and strengthen stamina.

Following the Third Work Forum, "TAR" Communist Party has determined a development strategy for Tibet with a social foundation of a united, prosperous and civilized socialist Tibet<sup>(5)</sup>.

Also, the Third Work Forum established that:

Tibet's economic growth rate will be maintained at about 10 per cent. With that growth rate, Tibet's GNP will be greatly raised by the year 2000, double that of 1993. This growth rate will be greatly higher than the region's six per cent average growth rate between 1981 and 1993 and higher than the eight to nine per cent in the national plan. By then, Tibet will have basically realised self-sufficiency in grain and oil and will have fulfilled the task of eradicating poverty, with the majority of the masses enjoying comparatively well off living standards.

The general level of Tibet's national economy and social undertakings in their entirety will be elevated by a wide margin. The installed generating capacity [power] will be double the existing capacity. Programme-controlled telephone exchanges will be installed in all counties, with 80 per cent of them linked to the national long-distance automatic exchange network. Every county will boast a secondary school and every township a complete primary school, with 80 per cent of school-age children attending. Medical services and public health conditions will be improved markedly and the radio and television broadcast coverage area will be greatly increased.

Today it has been six years since the Third Work Forum and the plans to accelerate the conversion of Tibet's natural economy to a market economy is still at an embryonic stage. And despite any rise in productivity, poverty still lingers in every village and town in Tibet. Realizing its failure, China has now moved to another programme of poverty reduction - this time a large-scale one.

### **Development's deeper agenda**

To avoid a territorial disaster, as witnessed with the break up of the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia, China is trying hard to close the economic disparity between its rich eastern coastal regions and poor underdeveloped western regions by a new mass campaign of "revamp the west" and make it more habitable for prospective Chinese settlers.

This much-ballyhooed large-scale Western Development Programme received overwhelming support from Beijing, overseas Chinese and foreign investors. Unlike previous regional five-year plans, this one encompasses

5.4 million sq. kms. and 300 million people across six provinces (Gansu, Guizhou, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan and Yunnan), three autonomous regions (Ningxia, Tibet and Xinjiang) and one city (Chongqing). According to the *People's Daily*, March 20, 2000, the government has announced that it "will make its first investment of 31 billion yuan (US\$ 3.7 billion) this year to develop the infrastructure in its western regions". Later, in June, the Chinese Government disclosed a list of 225 projects ranging from agricultural to high-tech sectors, tourism, mining, electronic equipment manufacturing etc., with preferential policies for foreign investors to attract more capital(6) . According to China Daily, "by the end of May 2000, 349,537 foreign companies or enterprises have made investments in [western] China and contracted capital exceeded US\$63.3 billion"(7) . Out of the total 5.4 million sq. km., 2.5 million sq. km. constitute Tibetan areas of U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo. Chen Kuyuan, in his March 2000 interview with Renmin Ribao staff reporter, acknowledged that this Large-scale Western Development Programme is a chance to take "advantage" of exploiting Tibet's natural resources "both on and under the ground". And as said, for Tibet, the new programme of large-scale development means nothing more than a vehicle for further suppression or colonization of the land and people. Despite China's avowed aim to alleviate poverty by a certain year and modernize the whole of Tibet, its real intention is to make the Tibetans a minority in their own land through mass population transfer under the banner of "economic development".

Most of the large-scale development projects announced so far for Tibet have been major public works projects: highways, rail lines, international airports and natural gas pipelines that will eventually extend from Amdo's (Ch: Qinghai) Tsaidam Basin all the way to China's coastal city of Shanghai and fertilizer factories will soon meet China's agriculture needs.

Undoubtedly these developmental projects have an underlying agenda to further dilute the Tibetan population and intensify the process of Sinicization.

#### **Results of 'poverty alleviation'**

In February 2000 China announced that this year would see poverty eradicated from Tibet. And already, in its February 2000 Human Rights White Paper, Beijing stated that 95 per cent of rural dwellers in the whole of China have enough to eat and wear and that the targets "to solve the problems of food and clothing of the entire Chinese people, and to enable them to live a relatively comfortable life, have already been basically achieved".(8)

In its master plan to eradicate poverty in Tibet, China has focussed heavily on income generation in certain areas of the plateau, hoping that a rise in income statistics - taken out of the context of the many other accepted indicators of poverty such as health, education, nutrition, clothing, housing, quality of life, access to the right to development and so on - will show that poverty in Tibet has been conquered. Furthermore, increases in income statistics often reflect a change from barter to market economics and can paint a false picture of prosperity even when the replacing market economy is entirely insufficient for people's needs but the pre-existing barter economy provided amply.

Even so, vast rural areas on the plateau remain neglected. This raises important questions in terms of access to the development and wealth-generation that is occurring in Tibet. The current rampant development is large-scale, inappropriate, and largely alien to the traditional economy and rich local community life.

Beijing's claims about poverty eradication are purely money-based. In China's latest statistics on income, there are marked differences between urban and rural, and real questions must be asked about the means of calculating such figures by the authorities. Chinese figures state that in 1998 the average annual per capita income of rural Tibetans in the "TAR" was 1,158 yuan, (US\$ 144.75 ) while the average income of predominantly Chinese populated urban areas in "TAR" was 5,400 yuan (US\$ 675) per annum.(9)

These numbers can be compared to incomes in China as a whole. The average annual income per rural resident in China was 2,162 yuan (US\$ 270.25) in 1998, almost double that in "TAR" for the same period, while the average annual income per urban Chinese resident was an equivalent 5,425 yuan (US\$ 678.125) in 1998.(10)

This equalization of urban income fits into China's strategy to focus on urban centres in Tibet. China claims that this leaves only 110,000 poor people in "TAR", but as we can see the rural figure in itself leaves Tibetans in the countryside in "TAR" earning nearly half the "one dollar per person per day" global poverty measure (if based on the official exchange rate of roughly one US dollar to eight yuan).

Not only is it true that a narrow focus on income will not give a clear or accurate picture of the level of poverty in its many senses, but the average annual income measure in itself often underestimates the real extent of deprivation by not looking at issues such as access to health and education, the nature of subsistence production, the gap between official income statistics and actual consumption, and more detailed surveys of the standards of living in Tibetan areas.

It is often difficult to find accurate statistics for Tibetans living in areas outside of the "TAR" such as those domiciled in Gansu, Yunnan, Sichuan and Qinghai provinces (erstwhile Amdo and Kham).

There are also indications that the inequalities developing in Tibet go beyond the urban/rural divide. Amdo is relatively more developed than other areas of the plateau; in 1998 the per capita income of farmers in Amdo rose to 1,347 yuan (US\$ 168.38) with that of herdsmen at 2,300 yuan (US\$ 287.5).(11) These figures still fall well below acceptable rates but begin to reflect regional inequalities.(12)

As the International Commission of Jurists states in their 1997 report, 70 per cent of Tibetans in the "TAR" are living below the poverty line.

In UNDP's 1997 *China Human Development Report*, the "TAR" and other Tibetan areas ranked lowest on the Human Development Index of China.

Even the Poverty Alleviation Projects launched by China, such as the US\$5.5 million UN World Food Program Project in Amdo (Qinghai), are aimed at increasing wheat production for Chinese consumption rather than barley which is the subsistence food of Tibetans(13). The report further argued that in the 1990s, "nearly all Tibetans continue to exist at subsistence level, their lives little touched by China's massive investment in Tibetan infrastructure and superstructure."(14)

Despite China's assertion about its successes in alleviation of poverty and hunger elsewhere in Mainland China, there are many indications that in Tibet poverty and basic subsistence issues dominate the daily structure of life. Over the years, there is little evidence to suggest that this situation has changed, and heavy taxation continues to burden the households of rural Tibet.

### **Environmental destruction**

China's compulsion to "develop" Tibet's economy threatens any attempt to protect the environment. Over the 40 years since its occupation, China has marked, surveyed, mapped, and paved every knoll with any kind of natural resources, and looted minerals, timber, oil and animal products to transport to China; this has resulted in economic marginalization of Tibetans in their own homeland and caused irreversible harm to Tibet's natural environment.

Tibet was once an environmental paradise where species were abundant, unfettered by extensive human contact, protected and respected and Tibetans lived harmoniously with nature. Today in Tibet the escalating environmental destruction and degradation is a cause for great concern (for current data refer to *Tibet 2000 Environment and Development Issues*).

Massive and rapid urbanization - along with many excessive development projects like big mining sectors, large hydropower stations, and huge infrastructure maintenance - has caused severe environmental degradation and displacement of Tibetans and wildlife. Ecological crises such as water pollution, deforestation, extinction of rare endemic species, soil erosion, climate change, dumping of nuclear materials and wastes and unrestricted mining threaten not only Tibet, but every downstream and neighbouring region.

With China's policies of development, industrialization, resource extraction and population transfer, extensive interventions in Tibet's rivers and lakes have occurred. The massive network of dams in Amdo has resulted in

disastrous river fragmentation while deforestation is destroying hydro-ecology in the upper reaches of the Yangtze, Mekong and Brahmaputra rivers - all of which originate in Tibet. With China's intensive drive to extract minerals, most rivers on the plateau have been experiencing pollution from toxic mining wastes.

After the Yangtze River's floods of August 1998 and 1999, which resulted in a human death toll of 3,656, an economic loss of US\$37.5 billion, and affected more than 66 million people, China - in a significant ideological departure - admitted its culpability due to deforestation of upstream regions and imposed logging bans on those areas(15). Even in its current Large-scale Western Development Programme, China has outlined reforestation and environment protection projects for the upper reaches of the Yellow, Yangtze and Mekong rivers as one of its major priorities.

With China's desire to become a respected world power and be a member of the World Trade Organization, the role of "good international citizen" is a priority in its national policy. Environmental diplomacy is a chosen vehicle to enhance Beijing's standing internationally. In actuality, China painfully lacks in environmental protection, legislation, and policy enforcement. Development with blatant disregard for environmental protection will only escalate in the 21st century - especially in Tibet.

### **Population transfer**

An integral part of China's current mass demographic strategy focuses on limiting population growth among minorities in the "backward" western part of the country.(16) With its expertise in propagating oxymoronic rhetoric to justify its ill deeds, China claims, "the rising population in the west, where most ethnic minorities live, could adversely affect regional development as population growth is putting increasing pressure on the environment and resources in the (western) regions". Simultaneously, China is trying to woo Chinese migrants to western regions - including Tibet - by offering them discriminatory incentives of higher wages and a more lenient childbearing policy, ostensibly due to the sparse population of those regions.

The Chinese occupation of Tibet has been characterized by various attempts to diminish Tibetan identity - either through direct violence or structural means such as assimilation. One such indirect means of attempting to change and control the nature of Tibetan culture and identity has been the encouragement of Chinese population transfer into Tibet.(17)

A transfer mostly of officials and army personnel into Tibet marked the early period of the Chinese invasion. Since the 1980s, with the Chinese decision to integrate Tibet into China's economy and social structure, we see a conscious decision by the Chinese government to transfer Chinese peasants, agricultural workers and other groups of labourers and traders into Tibet.(18)

During the Third Work Forum, further decisions were made to implement the Chinese Government's policy to integrate Tibet within the structure of China's economic needs. The major thrust of the implementation strategy was "to open Tibet's door wide to inner parts of the country and encourage traders, investment, economic units and individuals from China to Central Tibet to run different sorts of enterprises."(19)

The population transfer of ethnic Chinese into Tibet has been massive and further enforced by the presence of over 200,000 troops.(20) From the era prior to the 1940s, when there were virtually no Chinese in Tibet,(21) Chinese settlers today outnumber Tibetans in Tibet by "7 to 7.5 million to 6.1 million".(22)

The population transfer of Chinese settlers into Tibet has had devastating economic effects on Tibetans. Settlers, encouraged by government incentives, arrive in search of jobs in an industrialized Tibet. Their presence threatens the livelihood of the Tibetans and is central to the government's integration of the Tibetan economy into the Chinese economy. Chinese settlers have come to dominate the Tibetan economy, and they own virtually all the businesses there.(23)

There appears to be a strong degree of segregation between the mainly urban Chinese settlers and Tibetans in remote areas such as the nomads.

In addition, there is a trend of transferring poor Chinese to Tibet through various resettlement schemes such as the Western Poverty Reduction Project. Although the World Bank withdrew its US\$40 million loan to this project, China seems quite adamant that it will go ahead with its own money. The project aims to transfer 58,000 Chinese into the Dulan area of Amdo.

Population transfer into Tibet is one of the greatest threats to Tibetan culture and identity. It also has a great impact on the kind of development that takes place in Tibet. Beijing's subsidies, and much of the infrastructure in place, have been directed at maintaining a distinct, controlling Chinese community in Tibet. This can be seen to be mainly urban, administrative, mercantile or military, and segregated from the bulk of Tibetan communities. The much-heralded, Chinese-sponsored infra-structure projects such as highways, mines and housing have mainly been built to facilitate this settlement, fulfil military objectives and to expedite resource extraction. Subsidized economic growth has encouraged and facilitated Chinese settlement as part of the wider attempt to absorb Tibet.

But in many ways this process has been one-sided and has left much of Tibet's urban landscape Sinicized. Population transfer has also impacted on Tibetan access to land, food and meaningful employment. Tibetans are becoming a minority in their own country, excluded from participating in and benefiting from the development that is being carried out on their land and in their name.

### **Poverty of development**

As the eminent economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen states, freedom is indispensable to development. China's claim to "developing" Tibet is based on Beijing's policies of pursuing economic growth at the cost of destroying Tibet's environment and further disempowering Tibet's people in their homeland.

Thus, in reality, Chinese policy is creating two economies and two societies in Tibet: the urban, wealthy Chinese economy, and the rural poor, undercapitalized Tibetan economy. Also the gap between the official discourse of development and the lives of the people is often blurred by the use of impressive facts and figures. Any development that has taken place in Tibet, rather than benefiting the Tibetan people has actually occurred at their cost resulting in a violation of their socio-economic rights, or broadly their right to development. The reason why China's development programmes are of no benefit to the majority of Tibetans is clear from the explanation of the Australian Agency for International Development, an agency of the Australian government, which was hired by China to evaluate investment in the Tibetan area of Amdo. The agency concluded that the Chinese subsidies pump money into large superstructures rather than targeting the poor. This approach to poverty alleviation places emphasis on activities that are project oriented in nature and not necessarily on the participation of the poor in identifying and developing solutions to their poverty. It also places emphasis on large enterprise activities and does not target poor households.(24)

The large, cost-intensive projects create such developments as dams and roads that do not directly raise the local income. Not only is much of the budget of large-scale projects spent on equipment, manpower, and materials imported from the Chinese lowlands, but a large fraction is also drained off by the cost of project management. Also the subsidies Beijing regularly give to Tibet have a direct effect on the GDP but do not help the poor in raising their income. Because the wages paid to the construction workers is included in the gross domestic product (GDP), increased subsidies to non-Tibetans will immediately increase the GDP.

For instance official Chinese reports are not short of statements like, "The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Tibetan Autonomous Region was 3 billion yuan in 1992 and 3.6 billion yuan in 1993. But by 1997 it was 7.35 billion yuan, an increase of 83.57 % since 1993 in adjusted terms and representing an annual increase of 12.9%."(25) Recently China's Statistics Bureau reported that for 1999, "TAR's GDP reached 10.335 billion yuan, up 9.1 percent over 1998, and surpassing the national average for six consecutive years."(26) But what is this rise in GDP, if the lives of the average people are still filled with impoverishment?

Since changes in Tibet have been taken with a preconceived notion of the desired future for Tibet, Beijing could listen to the actual needs of Tibetans in so far as the populace agreed to fall into line with the projects designed

for them. Any discordant observations or behaviour on the part of Tibetans will be seen as some kind of deviance or attributed to a "splittist movement" backed by the "Dalai Clique" with "paralysing influence on progress" and will lead to the prison cell or even death.

The Tibetan Government-in-Exile (TGIE) instead of being a "paralysing influence on progress", as China puts it, eagerly awaits some positive development in Tibet leading to real prosperity for nomads and farmers. In *Guidelines for International Development Projects and Sustainable Investment in Tibet* TGIE even encourages western investors to participate in the sustainable development of the plateau.

TGIE looks to the future for sustainable developments on the plateau that will enhance the ability of Tibetans to fully participate in any transformation of their land and to retain control over their natural resources. Also any projects that empower, educate, employ Tibetans and promote the culture, language and identity of Tibetans are highly encouraged by Tibetans in and outside Tibet.

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## **New external Propaganda Strategy**

Why a media offensive now?

One area where the Tibet issue has seriously damaged the image of China is in external publicity. In terms of international media coverage Dharamsala has made significant advances with Beijing fighting a rear-guard campaign.

This vulnerability has been noted by the Chinese authorities. In 1993, on the anniversary of the March 10 Uprising, "Old Tibet Hands" and experts met in Beijing to rectify the situation by devising a propaganda offensive on the issue of Tibet in an attempt to regain lost ground.

The meeting was attended by Zeng Jian-hui, Vice-Minister of the Propaganda Ministry, who articulated significant guidelines. The recommendations the group made had a critical impact on the formulation of the decisions made at the Third Work Forum on Tibet held the following year in Beijing.

The foremost concern of the group who met in 1993 was the realization that China was losing the propaganda war over the situation in Tibet. The dilemma which confronted Chinese officials was the western media's consistently positive - and often outraged - coverage of the Tibetan tragedy. The Beijing authorities noted that the Western media's repeated depiction of China as the big, bad bully in regard to Tibet undermined China's image and proved a major irritant in China's global diplomatic dealings.

The mandate of the group was to reverse this damaging trend by coming up with new and fresh ideas which would be translated into concrete and supposedly imaginative policy guidelines.

### **A history of war of words**

A brief survey of the history of the war of words between the Tibetan movement and Beijing reveals the ground lost by the Chinese and gained by exile Tibetans. This is illustrated by the apocryphal conversation that Mao Zedong had with Nikita Khrushchev when the Chinese leader briefed his Soviet counterpart on China's successful crackdown on the 1959 Tibetan Uprising and the mopping-up that followed. After Mao's glowing briefing, couched in communist rhetoric, about dealing a blow for the socialist world, Khrushchev asked Mao, "And what happened to the Dalai Lama?"

"He escaped," Mao replied smugly, with an air that said good riddance.

"Then you lost the war," said Khrushchev.

This conversational fragment comes down to us as an insight into the myths and legends that surround the Cold War era; most importantly it illustrates the extent to which the Tibetan refugees were able to make their voices heard in the world within a matter of several decades and change international public opinion in their favour on the vexed question of Tibet.

Earlier, when the PLA invaded the plateau in 1949, China was considered the new beacon of the socialist world - especially for countries which suffered western colonial domination. Because of Tibet's isolation, and its absence from influential global fora, international media coverage of the invasion became almost an afterthought and was ill-informed.

At the same time Communist China's propaganda machinery worked overtime to successfully put a spin on the event, depicting the invasion as a "liberation" of long-suffering "serfs" and "slaves". China was also, to some extent, successful in portraying those who opposed the invasion as "running dogs of the capitalists" bent on wrecking the socialist camp. Tibet was projected as a Cold War issue which succeeded in silencing the socialist camp.

At the same time China could tell the world what it wanted the world to believe about Tibet, without any effective Tibetan response.

Beijing was largely helped in its monopoly of positive international news coverage of its rule in Tibet by leftist intellectuals and writers who sang praises of the new socialist Tibet. The avalanche of books by fellow-travellers was started by Roma and Stuart Gelder with their *Timely Rain* which put a positive spin on Chinese rule in Tibet and ended with Han Suyin's *Lhasa: the Open City* which painted a glowing picture of a progressive socialist Tibet.

In all this journalistic hype, the destruction which was inflicted across the plateau during Mao's "democratic reforms", the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution went unreported and was therefore a historic blank for the outside world. Autobiographical statements made by exile Tibetans describing the atrocities that were rife in Tibet were dismissed as "refugee statements" with the implication that refugees would naturally have a vested interest in saying bad things about China to justify their exile existence.

China's success over Tibet-both on the ground and over the airwaves-was complete. The invasion of Tibet was largely forgotten by the international community and the Chinese occupation of the roof of the world was hailed as a victory for the "liberated" toiling masses. In short, the international community considered the issue of Tibet a non-issue. In this vein some commentators described the Tibetan exiles' efforts to keep the issue alive as "beating a dead yak to life".

But then international media coverage slowly reversed itself as Tibet became more known. Several factors were responsible. One was the frequent world tours of His Holiness the Dalai Lama since 1979. He was able to tell the Tibetan side of the story with great persuasiveness. His winning personality and transparent honesty instantly made powerful friends and supporters. The sustained efforts of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and the unwavering courage and determination of the Tibetan people kept the issue alive. The increasing western fascination with Tibetan Buddhism turned individuals' attention to Tibet's political fate - many of whom became vocal Tibet supporters.

China's limited opening up of Tibet to the outside world with liberalization attracted a flood of tourists in the early 1980s. The impact of Tibetan good cheer made an indelible impression on early tourists. They returned to their countries and formed Tibet Support Groups - working doggedly to see that the suffering undergone by Tibetans was accurately reported in the media.

The Tibetan official fact-finding delegations from Dharamsala - which China accepted into Tibet from 1979 to 1985 - brought out evidence on still and movie films of the appalling conditions in Tibet and the depth of loyalty Tibetans still felt for His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

In the midst of this, a book appeared which helped to significantly change international opinion on the issue of Tibet. John Avedon's path-breaking *In Exile from the Land of Snows* gave to the world the first detailed account of the Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule. It carried graphic accounts of horror stories during the Cultural Revolution and in the prisons and labour camps and of the strength of the Tibetan spirit to endure.

This book, written with elegance and with an insider's knowledge of people and events, triggered the trend of the present growing Western fascination with Tibet. Hollywood noticed this expanding market and decided to join the bandwagon by producing *Seven Years in Tibet* and *Kundun*, two films on pre-invasion Tibet which reached out to millions of viewers around the world.

In the late 1980s a monitoring agency was launched in London which disseminated precise news of events unfolding inside Tibet. Tibet Information Network greatly enhanced the outside world's knowledge of political upheavals and sentiments inside Tibet. On top of this, thanks to US Congressional legislation in the early 1990s,

a Tibetan language service of Voice of America was able to beam news directly to Tibet. It was later reinforced by the establishment of Radio Free Asia and Voice of Tibet's Tibetan language broadcasts. All three stations address Tibet directly and those living under China today describe their broadcasts as "medicine for a sick person".

### **Learning from Dharamsala**

The purpose of the meeting of China's spin doctors in Beijing on March 10, 1993 was to ponder the factors which enabled the Tibetan leadership and people in exile to take a true great leap forward in stealing international public opinion in their favour under the very nose of China.

The media czar and propaganda chiefs met in Beijing to devise counter- strategies to win public opinion back. With typical Chinese logic they relied on Sun Tzu's classic *The Art of War* and also on some tricks learned from the Tibetan exiles' media strategy. "Know your enemy" is one of the injunctions of *The Art of War*. Beijing was also concerned about the Tibetan exiles' successful efforts in "internationalizing the issue of Tibet". Because of the support drawn to the nonviolent appeal of the Tibetan struggle, the Chinese authorities realized that winning over international public opinion must be a key factor in the success of their own efforts. "Our struggle against the Dalai Clique and the international enemy force is to a large degree carried out through propaganda and public opinion. External propaganda plays an outstanding and special role... Looking at it in a larger picture, the external propaganda work on the question of Tibet has a bearing not only on the development of Tibet, but also on the image of China as a whole in the world, as well as the creation of a good international environment for reform, open policy and the construction of the modernization of all China."(1) In reaching their objective, the officials - in a throwback to Cold War rhetoric - identified three areas as China's main problems. The first was the Dalai Clique; the second, hostile western forces and the third, foreign reporters. The officials suspected very strongly that there was a definite collusion between the three forces to destabilize China.

The other policy which was outlined in Beijing was to make a sustained effort to win over Tibetans living abroad and in this way isolate the establishment in Dharamsala headed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The officials also recommended that propaganda work in Tibet amongst the general populace be intensified. The official identification of His Holiness the Dalai Lama as a problem, and heaping abuse upon him, became a major departure in policy. Even at the height of the demonstrations which rocked Lhasa in the later 1980s, Chinese officials were measured in their criticism of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This is no longer so. The policy today is to "expose" the Dalai Lama and undermine his credibility not only as a religious leader and spokesperson for the Tibetan people but importantly as a major voice on global affairs which Beijing sees as tarnishing its image.

In this regard Zeng Jian-hui, Vice-Minister of the Propaganda Ministry, said, " Fourthly, the strategy of their struggle continues to be double-faced. On the one hand, he (the Dalai Lama) stops at nothing in labelling himself as "a fighter for international human rights", "fighter for peace" and an "advocate of nonviolent struggle". On the other hand he secretly masterminds turbulence... Our external propaganda work should write articles in this respect to expose him."(2)

### **World support alarms Beijing**

Many recommendations made at the Beijing propaganda meeting were incorporated into decisions of the 1994 Third Forum on Work in Tibet. All the issues which hurt Beijing's image were spelt out in the extensive comments Raidi made on the outcome of the Third Work Forum in Lhasa in 1994:

"By attacking the Dalai Clique we must try to gain support throughout space and in people's hearts... By raising the standard of planning and anticipation, by improving the efficiency of propaganda work abroad, by using well our policies and tactics, and by improving our ability to carry out propaganda work abroad, we must gradually change the international point of view. We must boldly do propaganda work showing that Tibet is a part of China..."

"We must reveal the true colours of the Dalai Clique and the dark side of the serf system of old Tibet...The Western countries are supporting and encouraging the Dalai Clique and using the so-called Tibet issue to

interfere in our country's internal affairs... By working hard we must defeat their hope of internationalizing the Tibet issue."(3)

One alarming trend for China is the growing grassroots support for Tibet. China's alarm is revealed in the phrase "Western enemy forces". Invention of this phrase is not only a contribution to China's already rich vituperative vocabulary but reveals Beijing's nervousness when faced with the vital force of this support. "Western enemy forces" covers everything from individual Western supporters to Western parliaments, human rights groups, aid organizations, NGOs and countries which routinely support tabling of human rights resolutions at the annual UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

To counter this Beijing's propaganda team recommended that China's publicity must focus on "overseas people". The 1993 meeting recommended, "Multi-level and different forms of vivid and lively propaganda should be carried out regarding sovereignty and human rights record. Its aim is to promote the further understanding on the part of the overseas people of the question of Tibet so as to eliminate the impact created by the Dalai Clique and the international enemy forces through their distortions and attacks against us... and to win the support and sympathy of the overseas people for us."(4)

To follow up on this recommendation Beijing has hosted a long list of parliamentarians, UN officials, foreign leaders, reporters and businessmen in Tibet. From 1997 to 1999 over 20 foreign delegations visited the plateau.<sup>5</sup> Despite the VIP nature of these visits, China was unable to ultimately hide its atrocities. In May 1998, during an EU troika delegation's visit to Lhasa, the inmates of Drapchi Prison staged a protest demonstration to attract the attention of the delegation to the worsening plight of the Tibetan people. The guards reacted to this by torturing ten prisoners to death and executing the leader.

In changing the opinion of influential people on the situation in Tibet, China is successful to an extent. For example, in September 1999 the Australian National Party member of parliament, Garry Nehl, visited Tibet and told the Australian media, "I did not see any road blocks, checkpoints or any other signs of restrictions on freedom of movement. Equally, there were no restrictions on people entering monasteries or temples and throughout Lhasa there were a great many people perambulating themselves with prayer wheels and freely prostrating themselves on the ground in prayer."(6)

However, China has focussed its greatest efforts on foreign correspondents in an attempt to make them reiterate the Chinese side of the Tibet story. Official Chinese documents are unusually frank on this issue.

"We should reinforce the work of utilizing the power of foreign propaganda...Therefore, we should be more open-minded in our external propaganda work on Tibet. By arranging foreign journalists and other people to go to visit Tibet we should be able to use foreign forces to carry out our external propaganda and gradually change their minds about us through what they have seen with their own eyes."(7)

Currently China is pursuing this 1993 media policy with greater vigour. Beijing's official news organ, *People's Daily*, reported the visit on September 3, 2000 of a media delegation to Lhasa. The news item was headlined "Tibet Welcomes Foreign Journalists for Objective Reporting". It reported that Raidi, Deputy Secretary of the "TAR" CCP, told the Thai media delegation that "The Dalai Lama, under the pretext of religion, engages in activities at splitting the country. His cheating and hypocrisy goes against the doctrine of Buddhism." The news report stated that the Thai media group agreed with the Lhasa official's observation. Tulaya Sirikulpipatana, head of the Thai delegation, allegedly told Raidi, "The purpose of the Dalai Lama to bring Tibet back to a society of surfs (sic) goes against historical trends."

Furthermore, in July 2000 China invited N. Ram, the editor of *Frontline*, a weekly published from the south Indian city of Chennai, for a week-long visit to Tibet. His regurgitation of Chinese communist propaganda was splashed over 36 pages of the September 15 edition. Unusually for a professional journalist, N. Ram makes his bias clear right from the first sentence. He describes himself as an "Indian ... who has no sympathy for the Dalai Lama's separatist, revanchist and backward-looking agenda."(8)

On September 7, 2000 the Taipei-based *New China News Agency* reported that a 17-member delegation comprising representatives of major Taiwan media left Taipei that day for a "news coverage mission" to Tibet.

They were joined in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province by Mainland Chinese media representatives. The news report said a total of 40 reporters from television companies, news agencies, newspapers and radio stations on both sides of the Taiwan Straits left for Tibet the next day on a 10-day visit.

The report stated that this was the first time that Taiwanese journalists have been allowed to provide coverage from Tibet. The NCNA further stated: "Mainland sources said the visit is a part of Beijing's drive to publicize Tibet's cultural, economic and human rights development over the past half-century under communist Chinese rule."

In Lhasa the Taiwanese and Mainland journalists met with Raidi, who is increasingly prominent as the "TAR" spokesperson. Raidi delivered the standard line and said, "We firmly oppose any people, any group and any nation to interfere in China's internal affairs by using the Dalai Clique and the so-called Tibet issue."<sup>(9)</sup> This imaginative initiative to venture into new - and what is still enemy territory - was decided by the 1993 Beijing meeting. The high-level resulting document called "Guidelines and Content of the External Propaganda Work on the Question of Tibet" said, "This year, on the premise of thoughtful planning and careful arrangement, we shall choose the right time to properly arrange for foreign journalists and those from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan to visit Tibet."<sup>(10)</sup>

China now aims to dominate the world news industry. On September 8, 2000 the Beijing bureau of *AFP*, the French news agency, reported that China would start beaming round-the-clock television news in English. The 24-hour English language satellite news broadcasts will cover 98 per cent of the world. CCTV 9 will go on air on the eve of the anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 2000. This global TV channel aims to dwarf existing news channels like BBC and CNN.

Behind this savvy media strategy is Zhao Qizheng - a nuclear physicist brought to Beijing from Shanghai in 1998 to head the Information Office of the State Council, who thus in effect became China's foremost spin doctor.<sup>(11)</sup> Zhao Qizheng doubled the frequency of media briefings and urged officials to be more accommodating to journalists. He is behind the new and refurbished charm offensive of Jiang Zemin, China's President. During Jiang's recent visit to New York to attend the millennium UN summit of world leaders, Zhao ventured into the lion's den and addressed more than 100 reporters at the National Press Club, where he wondered aloud, "Why is the mainstream US media against China? Why should the US keep interfering in issues concerning China's Taiwan, Tibet and religion?"<sup>(12)</sup>

However, despite the efforts of Zhao Qizheng - who has the backing of Washington's powerful China lobby, the prestigious PR firm, Hill and Knowlton, and Henry Kissinger it will take years for Beijing to enjoy good coverage on the issue of Tibet as long as China remains a one-party totalitarian system. Rather than relying on media strategies, China will need to significantly improve the lot of the Tibetan people before its tarnished image is restored to greatness the Chinese people deserve.

#### NOTES:

1. Excerpted from a statement by Tenzin, Deputy Secretary of "TAR" and published in "China's Public Relations Strategy on Tibet". Classified Documents from the Beijing Propaganda Conference, published by International Campaign for Tibet, Washington, D.C., 1993
2. Excerpted from a guideline outlined by Zeng Jian-hui, Vice-Minister of Beijing's Propaganda Ministry, published *ibid*.
3. Excerpted from comments made by Raidi, Deputy Secretary of "TAR" at the annual meeting of the "TAR" Communist Party Committee meeting in Lhasa, September 5, 1994. These documents are now published as *Cutting Off the Serpent's Head - Tightening Control in Tibet, 1994-1995*, by the London-based Tibet Information Network and Human Rights Watch/Asia, New York, 1996
4. "China's Public Relations Strategy on Tibet" - Classified Documents from the Beijing Propaganda Conference, published by ICT, Washington, DC, 1994.
5. "Tibetan Stake in China-West Relations", an article by Kalon Tempa Tsering. *Tibetan Bulletin*, November-December, 1999

6. "Australian Parliamentarians in Tibet: the Credibility Gap" in *Australia Tibet Council News*, October 1999
7. China's Public Relations Strategy on Tibet: Classified Documents from the Beijing Propaganda Conference, published by ICT, D.C., 1993
8. *Frontline*, September 15, 2000
9. As quoted in *People's Daily*, Beijing official organ, September 14, 2000
10. China's Public Relations Strategy on Tibet, ICT. 1994
11. *Asiaweek*, September 22, 2000
12. *ibid*

## Conclusion

This study of China's overall policy on Tibet reveals the widening gap between the subtle but increasingly repressive campaigns initiated in Tibet and the massive propaganda material China churns out to white-wash its repression. The greater the repression, the more frenzied is official propaganda. In fact, the sole purpose of China's propaganda, including the several white papers it has issued recently, is to divert attention, both domestic and international, from China's ultimate aim of the destruction of Tibet's distinct cultural and ethnic identity. In the pursuit of this objective China's propaganda policy can be likened to a desperate and despairing attempt to tell a mountain of lies in the hope of making people believe in a yak-size truth.

The other important element of China's Tibet policy revealed by this study is Beijing's total lack of interest in negotiating with Dharamsala. China's gesture of going through the motion of willing to re-start negotiations with Dharamsala is a tactic employed to gain time. This is made absolutely clear in a document brought out of China and quoted in one of the exile Tibetan language newspapers. According to the highly classified document, a leading Chinese official said, "We have no need to engage in dialogues with the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama's return to China will bring a great risk of instability. We will then not be able to control Tibet. The Dalai Lama is now fairly old. At the most, it will be 10 years before he dies. When he dies, the issue of Tibet is resolved forever. We, therefore, have to use skilful means to prevent his return."(1)

A part of the official Chinese paranoia of His Holiness Dalai Lama is his widening appeal to an increasing cross-section of people in China. This is made clear from the reaction of the Chinese leadership to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's expressed wish to make a pilgrimage to Wutai Shan, an important Buddhist pilgrim spot, believed to be the abode of Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom. His Holiness the Dalai Lama repeated this wish when he visited Taiwan in 1997. Internally, the Chinese leadership rejected the request on the ground that the Tibetan leader's presence, even during a single visit, in China would make Tibetans and the Mongolians go crazy. He might even become a rallying-point for the human rights activists, followers of other religions and those simply disaffected. The leadership reasoned that it would prove extremely difficult to manage the excitement and turmoil generated by such a visit, which might spin out of control, with devastating political consequences. This is one reason why the Chinese leadership has opted out of dealing with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The decision to both out-wait His Holiness the Dalai Lama and sideline him in China's on-going efforts to solve its Tibet problem is wrong and is clearly based on fear and paranoia rather than on any hard-nose examination of ground reality or the psychology of the Tibetan people. Till now His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been a moderating influence on the more radical elements of the Tibet movement. By ignoring him, the Chinese leaders are set on a head-long collision course with an angrier form of Tibetan nationalism. In this connection, Melvyn C. Goldstein wrote, "The crux of the matter is that Tibetans are unlikely to sit by for much longer watching Beijing transform their homeland with impunity. Nationalistic sentiment combined with desperation and anger make a powerful brew, and there are Tibetans, inside and outside Tibet, who favour a campaign of focused violence."(2)

"Such a strategy would not seek to drive China out of Tibet but rather pressure Beijing to adopt a more conciliatory line. If such a strategy was successful, it could help destabilize China, but even if only partially successful, it could curtail tourism, impede the growth of overseas investment, threaten the security of all non-Tibetans and heighten international awareness of the seriousness of the problem. It would, in essence, seek to demonstrate to China the futility of the hard-line policy by showing that ethnic sensibilities of Tibetans cannot be discounted."<sup>(3)</sup>

Apart from the unpredictability of the course of Tibetan nationalism without the moderating influence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Beijing's policy to conjure up the Tibetan leader as the enemy of the Chinese people to deflect the anger of China's resurgent nationalism away from the Beijing regime will prove costly and counter-productive. While Beijing wants the Chinese people to wallow in a one-party state, in the cyberspace the Chinese people are enjoying a measure of democracy and plurality of ideas and inspirations. Despite Beijing's efforts to paint the Tibetan leader in a bad light or to curtail the Chinese people's access to information technology, the Internet will increasingly undermine Beijing's hold on people and how or what they think. By making him into an enemy, Beijing is denying itself both domestic and international goodwill, which is vital for China's continued stability and prosperity.

Lastly, Beijing's assumption that the mortality of the Tibetan leader puts time on its side and so it can filibuster on Tibet negotiations is a huge mistake. By assuming this and reducing the issue of Tibet to just the person of the Dalai Lama, Beijing is making a costly mistake of ignoring or choosing to ignore the common aspirations of a whole people and the strength of their beliefs, which, without the Dalai Lama's presence, will burst with dangerous consequences for China and Tibet.

For these reasons and in whatever way Beijing looks, "The Dalai Lama will be central to any compromise."<sup>(4)</sup> In order to do this, Jiang Zemin and his colleagues would need to act the statesmen rather than politicians desperately holding together an amorphous coalition. By re-starting serious negotiations with His Holiness the Dalai Lama which will lead to a mutually acceptable solution to the issue of Tibet, Jiang Zemin and his colleagues would help preserve Tibet's true personality within a confident, stable and prosperous China. This would rebound hugely in terms of international goodwill as people from Taiwan to Xinjiang look with new eyes to Beijing.

#### NOTES:

1. Published in Tibet Times, August 31, 1999, an independent Tibetan-language newspaper published from Dharamsala.
2. The Dalai Lama's Dilemma by Melvyn C. Goldstein, an article published by Foreign Affairs, January-February 1998, New York.
3. ibid
4. ibid

*"If China want Tibet to remain with China, then it must create the necessary conditions for this. The time has come for the Chinese to show the way for Tibet and China to live together in friendship... If we Tibetans obtain our basic rights to our satisfaction, then we are not incapable of seeing the possible advantage of living with the Chinese."*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama's memorandum to Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, September 1, 1992