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Tibet, China and the United States: Reflections on the Tibet Question.

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[extract]

The Initial Period of Chinese Communist Rule: 1951-1978

When the Kuomintang (KMT) Government of Chiang Kaishek fell to the communists in 1949, the settlement of the Tibetan Question was no closer than it had been at the time of the fall of the Qing dynasty. Tibet was operating as a defacto independent polity but both communist and KMT leaders were insisting that it was part of China. Tibet, moreover, not only was militarily weak because of the late 13th Dalai Lama's decision regarding modernization, but it was also internally disunified as a consequence of a bitter war between the Sera Monastery and the Lhasa government. And internationally, Tibet had failed to secure support for its assertion of independence. Britain and India (and later the United States) dealt directly with Tibet as if it were an independent state, but at the same time continually acknowledged de jure Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. Much of the current confusion over Tibet's previous political status derives from this double-standard on the part of the concerned Western nations.

One example of this occurred in 1943 during World War II when the U.S. wanted to send two Office of Strategic Services (OSS) officers to Tibet. Since China had no control over Tibet, they were forced to secure permission directly from the Tibetan Government through British/Indian intercession. The two U.S. officers entered Tibet from India carrying presents and a letter from President Franklin Roosevelt to the young 14th Dalai Lama asking him to assist them. Although this must have looked like government-to-government relations to officials in Lhasa, in Washington, Secretary of State C. Hull carefully informed President Roosevelt that this letter was addressed to the Dalai Lama in his religious capacity, "rather than in his capacity of secular leader of Tibet, so as not to offend the Chinese Government which includes Tibet in the territory of the Republic of China." However, neither the Tibetan Government nor the Dalai Lama were informed of this subtlety. Tibetans, therefore, had no reason to assume the letter was not sent to the Dalai Lama as head of Tibet, nor that it did not demonstrate U.S. recognition of Tibet's independence.(9)

A more blatant incident occurred in 1948 when the Tibetan government sent a Trade Mission to the U.S. and Britain using its own passports. British officials in Hong Kong

stamped these with entry visas valid for three months. These visas, however, expired while the Tibetans were in the U.S., and when the Tibetans went for what they thought were routine new visas, their request was denied. The Chinese Government (of Chiang Kaishek) in the meantime had asked the British Government how it could accept Tibetan passports when according to its official position it did not accept that Tibet was independent. The British Foreign office then reversed itself and assured the Chinese that a mistake had been made, promising that in the future they would issue no more visas on Tibetan passports. The Tibetans were, therefore, advised to accept entry visas on a separate piece of paper called an "Affidavit of Identity." Surprised and indignant, the delegation refused, saying they would rather not visit Britain than accept this. The British Foreign Office then devised an ingenious solution which truly typifies the double standards rampant at this time. They carefully crossed out the words "three months" on the expired visa stamp and neatly wrote in pen above it, "nine months." This allowed them to keep their promise to the Chinese government not to issue the Tibetans new visas on their passports since this was still the original visa. At the same time they also were able to welcome the Tibetans to Britain on their Tibetan Government issued passports.

Consequently, despite the Wilsonian commitment to self-determination (10) and later reaffirmations such as those in the Atlantic Charter (11), the involved Western countries (and India after independence in 1947), refused to recognize Tibetan independence although they dealt with the government of Tibet directly without reference to China. It is interesting to note that the USSR took a totally different position with regard to Mongolia (the former Mongolian People's Republic), which had a political status parallel to that of Tibet at the time of the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. Stalin actively fought to secure international recognition of Mongolia's defacto independence, persuading Roosevelt at Yalta to agree to a plebiscite for independence, and then together with the U.S., persuading Chiang Kaishek to accept the results of the plebiscite which, of course, unanimously favored independence from China.

Tibet's political subordination to China, therefore, was repeatedly validated by the West throughout the first half of the 20th century, and particularly in the critical years during and immediately following World War II. Despite lofty rhetoric about freedom and self-determination, Western democracies maintained a consistent policy of bowing to Chinese sensibilities and accepting that Tibet was not independent.

The 17 Point Agreement

The victory of the Chinese Communists over Chiang Kaishek and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949 set in motion events which two years later broke the post-1911 Sino-Tibetan deadlock regarding the Tibet Question. Like the KMT and the Qing Dynasty, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949 considered Tibet a part of China.

In its early years, the CCP followed the Soviet Union's lead and advocated a model of nationality affiliation wherein ethnic territories would be autonomous republics and would have the right of secession. By the end of World War II, however, its nationality policy had shifted towards political centralism - the new communist nation would be an indivisibly multi-ethnic state with nationality areas considered only autonomous regions. In late 1949, therefore, the new Chinese communist government proclaimed that Tibet,

like Hainan Island and Taiwan, was an integral part of China, and set its liberation as a major goal for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1950.

The Tibetan government now found itself in a very difficult situation. The fortuitous events that had prevented China from dealing with Tibet - including the Japanese invasion and the bitter civil war - were over and the communists had unified the country under their rule. The earlier concern of the Tibetan pro-modernization clique that Tibet would some day have to defend its independence had now come to pass, and Tibet's military was poorly led and armed, with no effective plan to combat an invasion. Moreover, Tibet's main international supporter, Britain, no longer had interests in Tibet. Once it granted independence to India in 1947, it saw its role as supporting India's foreign policy, which at this time was centered on establishing close and friendly relations with the PRC.

The Tibetan government responded to the communist's victory in the Chinese civil war by sending appeals to the U.S. and Great Britain requesting civil and military assistance in the face of the communist threat. The letter to Britain said:

The Chinese Communist troops have invaded the Chinese Provinces of Lanchow, Chinghai and Sinkiang; and as these Provinces are situated on the border of Tibet, we have sent an official letter to Mr. Mautsetung leader of the Chinese Communist Government, asking him to respect the territorial integrity of Tibet.(12)

We enclose herewith the true copy of the letter which our Government has sent to the leader of Chinese Communist Government, thinking that he may duly consider the matter. But in case the Chinese communist leader ignores our letter, and takes an aggressive attitude and sends his troops toward Tibet, then the Government of Tibet will be obligated to defend her own country by all possible means. Therefore the Government of Tibet would earnestly desire to request every possible help from your Government.

We would be most grateful if you would please consider extensive aid in respect of requirements for Civil and military purposes, and kindly let us have a favourable reply at your earliest opportunity.

From,

The Tibetan Foreign Bureau, Lhasa [4 November 1949] (13)

The Americans were sent a similar appeal. Neither Britain nor America, however, had any interest in encouraging the Tibetans. The U.S. told the British "they were going to send a reply that would discourage Tibetans from expecting any aid." (14) The receipt of these noncommittal replies from the Western democracies who were the main enemy of

communism was extremely disappointing. But with its options limited, the Tibetan Government decided to send missions to the U.S. and Great Britain (and also China and Nepal) in the hope that face-to-face contact would generate support. On 22 December 1949, the Tibetan Foreign Bureau sent the following letter to President Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson:

Though Tibet has remained an Independent Country for about thirty years without any trouble, but recently the Chinese Communist leaders have announced over their Radio claiming Tibet as a part of Chinese territory and many other remarks about Tibet which are absolutely baseless and misleading. Besides the Chinese Communists have already occupied the border Provinces of Sinkiang, Sining (the Capital of Chinghai), and also Shikang [province created in 1927 of the ethnic Tibetan areas now in Sichuan Province].

Therefore it is impossible for us to remain indifferent at such a critical time. Hence we are deputing soon Lachag Khenchung Thupten Sanghe and Rimshi Dingja to lead a special Mission to your country for the purpose of obtaining aid from your government.

We would therefore be most grateful to your honour if you would kindly render every possible assistance to our Mission on their arrival in Washington.(15)

The new communist government protested loudly on learning of this plan, but its concerns were misplaced since the Western democracies were not interested in encouraging Tibetans, in part because they believed that this would make a Chinese invasion of Tibet more likely. They refused, therefore, to accept the proposed missions. The U.S. government feared that even answering the Tibetans in writing might "be considered by the Tibetans as recognition of their independent status," so Washington instructed its Embassy in New Delhi to pass on a verbal reply dissuading the Tibetans from sending the mission.(16) Britain did likewise.

Meanwhile, in China, Mao Zedung was planning a strategy for "liberating" Tibet. He understood clearly that Tibet had an international status that set it apart from every other nationality group in China and was unique in that there were no Chinese living there. Tibet, as we have seen, dealt with foreign nations directly, signed international agreements and regulated entry to its territory. Liberating Tibet, therefore, could have serious international ramifications, and could even draw in enemies of China such as the United States. Consequently, Mao Zedung decided that the best strategy was to "liberate" Tibet peacefully, i.e., with the agreement of the government of Tibet. This would eliminate the possibility of a long drawn out guerrilla war in the mountains of Tibet, and reduce the potential for international intervention. The problem with this strategy was that the Tibetan government was unlikely to renounce its defacto independence voluntarily to become part of his communist state. Mao, therefore, believed that military action would be needed to force Tibet to the negotiating table (as the British had done in 1903-04), but that ultimately the goal should be to secure a peaceful liberation via an agreement. Mao, consequently, in December of 1949, ordered preparations for an invasion of Tibet's eastern province (centered at Chamdo), and by early 1950, the Southwest Military and Civil Bureau(17) in Qongqing was designated to lead the attack. If the Tibetan government did not quickly agree to peaceful liberation, Mao wanted the

attack to start as early as the summer of 1950. He feared that postponing action until 1951 would give the Tibetans more time to muster international support, and was worried that waiting until fall to start the attack could inadvertently lead to such a delay if the troops encountered early snow.

The Chinese communists, therefore, tried to persuade the Tibetan government to begin negotiations for "peaceful liberation" by having well known religious leaders from Chinese-controlled Qinghai and Sichuan Provinces give assurances about religious freedom and so forth. When the Tibetan government vacillated on whether to send a delegation to Beijing and missed a Chinese-issued deadline, Mao ordered the PLA's 18th army to launch the attack on Chamdo. It began on 7 October 1950 with the clear military goal of disabling - encircling and capturing or destroying as a fighting force - the entire Tibetan army stationed in Chamdo - roughly 10,000 troops.

The Tibetan forces were poorly led and organized. Appointment as a general in the Tibetan army, for example, was simply another work rotation for government officials that required no special training. Consequently, when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) crossed the Upper Yangtse River it confronted Tibetan troops strung out in small units all along the river. These were quickly encircled and captured, opening the road to Lhasa. However, in accordance with Mao's basic political strategy, the PLA force stopped its advance and again called for Lhasa to commence negotiations.

The Tibetan government now saw its worst fear realized - it was under a military attack that it had no obvious means to counter. There was not even a plan for the Chamdo army to shift to a guerrilla strategy to harass the PLA. Consequently, Tibet turned for help to the world community, sending appeals to the United Nations (UN), the U.S., India and Britain.

The Tibetan appeal to the UN led to new examinations of the Tibet Question, in particular, whether Tibet was qualified to bring an issue before the UN since it was not a member. Article 35, Section 2, of the UN Charter said that, "A state which is not a member may bring to the attention of the Security Council or the General Assembly any dispute to which it is a party if it accepts in advance, for the purposes of the dispute, the obligations of pacific settlement provided in the present Charter." (18) But was Tibet a "state?" The British Foreign Office examined the issue and concluded that it could qualify as a state, (19) and so could bring an issue before the UN, but the British Foreign Office also felt that India had the primary responsibility for issues dealing with Tibet, and that Britain should follow the lead of the Government of India. London also did not want to see the UN demand that China withdraw its forces from Tibet because it felt the UN could not enforce this and such a failure would weaken the UN's stature. India, moreover, was intent on not letting Tibet hamper the development of close and friendly relations between itself and China, so was opposed to allowing the UN to discuss the issue. (20) Consequently, when the question was raised in the UN by El Salvador, the British and Indian representatives were the first speakers and both recommended that El Salvador's proposal should be adjourned. And so it was.

The Tibetan Government, disheartened and isolated, then sent a negotiating delegation to Beijing in Spring of 1951. Much as they had been forced to do in 1904 after the British capture of Lhasa, these delegates reluctantly signed an agreement on 23 May 1951 - the "Seventeen Point Agreement For The Peaceful Liberation of Tibet." (21)

The 17 Point Agreement was a new chapter in Sino-Tibetan relations since it officially ended the conflict over the "Tibet Question." Tibet, for the first time in its 1,300 years of recorded history, formally acknowledged in writing Chinese sovereignty. In exchange for this, China agreed to maintain the Dalai Lama and the traditional politico-economic system intact until such time that Tibetans wanted reforms. China therefore achieved its most fundamental goal - Tibetan acceptance of its sovereignty over Tibet and agreement to Tibet becoming part of China. It achieved this by agreeing to continue the feudal-theocratic government and political economy, at least for the foreseeable future. The agreement also set Tibet apart from other nationality areas in that it was only with Tibet that Beijing entered into a written agreement with the traditional government that allowed it to continue to rule.

The Dalai Lama first heard of the signing while he was at Yadung, a small Tibetan town near the Indian border where he and his top officials had fled preparatory to making a quick escape to India should the Chinese invade Lhasa. The announcement of the signing of the agreement shocked them since the terms of the agreement had not been cleared before signing. A heated debate ensued regarding how to respond.

Two main factions emerged. One advocated denouncing the agreement and fleeing into exile, while the other argued that the Dalai Lama should return to Lhasa and abide by the terms of the accord. The pro-return faction looked to parts of the agreement such as Point 5 which stated that:

The central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet. The central authorities also will not alter the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama. Officials of various ranks shall hold office as usual.

The "rejection" faction, led by lay officials such as the Council Minister Surkhang, believed the Chinese could not be trusted to abide by these terms once they controlled the country. They viewed with apprehension vague sections of the agreement mentioning that reforms could be made if the Tibetan people wanted them. (22) They also did not like the fact that the agreement gave China the right to station troops in Tibet and handle Tibet's defense and foreign affairs. And ultimately, they feared that admitting Chinese sovereignty now would preclude claims to independence later should the situation change.

The U.S. government, meanwhile, became involved in this debate in conjunction with its policy of containing Communist China. Heretofore it had played a minor role in the Sino-Tibetan conflict, but it now actively tried to persuade the Dalai Lama to denounce the agreement and flee into exile. It even offered to permit him and a few hundred of his leading officials to move to the U.S. (23)

The sixteen-year-old Dalai Lama was not persuaded by this U.S. initiative for a number of reasons including the absence of a clear commitment to support Tibet as an independent country and the unwillingness to promise substantial military aid. He therefore bowed to the opinion of the majority of officials and monastic leaders and returned to Lhasa in August 1951. Chinese troops moved peacefully into Lhasa in Fall of 1951.

The 17 Point Agreement established a written set of mutually agreed upon ground rules for Tibet-Chinese interaction and held out the promise that Tibet could function as part of the People's Republic of China without losing its distinctive way of life. This was far less than the autonomy stipulated in Simla, but it was a formula China formally accepted. The Dalai Lama signaled his formal acceptance of it with a telegram to Mao Zedung sent in late October 1951.

Both sides, however, soon found that operationalizing the terms of the 17 Point Agreement in Tibet was neither straightforward nor easy.

Coexistence Under the Terms of the 17 Point Agreement: 1951-59

What really transpired in Tibet during this critical eight-year period of Sino-Tibetan coexistence has never been seriously studied and is in fact the topic of a new book I am currently preparing.

Mao Zedung, contrary to popular belief in the West, pursued a policy of moderation and patience in Tibet, although his ultimate aim was clearly to transform Tibet in accordance with socialist goals. He sought to persuade Tibet's leaders over time to genuinely accept "reintegration" with China and agree to a societal transformation to socialism. His strategy placed great emphasis on creating cordial relations between Han (ethnic Chinese) and Tibetans, and allaying Tibetan fears and anxieties. The PLA troops, for example, worked hard to differentiate themselves from previous Chinese regimes. Calling themselves "New Chinese," the PLA troops in Tibet emphasized they had come to help Tibet develop, not exploit and abuse it. They were careful to show respect for Tibetan culture and religion, giving alms, for example, to all 20,000 of the monks in the Lhasa area. This rhetoric was supported by enforcement of a strict behavioral code that precluded the PLA from taking anything against the will of the people, and that required them to pay for everything in silver coins (dayan) rather than paper money. Moreover, the old feudal and monastic systems were allowed to continue unchanged - between 1951-59 there was absolutely no expropriation of the property of aristocratic and religious landlords. At the heart of this strategy was the Dalai Lama. Mao saw him, in particular, as the vehicle by which the feudal and religious elites (and then the masses) would come to accept their place in China's new multi-ethnic communist state.

Mao's policy, however, encountered many problems. Within the communist party one clique argued that the party should back Tibet's second greatest incarnation, the Panchen Lama, since he was politically a "progressive." And many of the PLA's battle-hardened commanders in Tibet found it difficult to show respect for the feudal elites and sit by and leave the old system intact. There was strong feeling among the key Chinese generals in Tibet that allowing serfdom to continue was intolerable and that land reforms should begin. Plans were actually made to begin such reforms in 1956 although they were never implemented due to intervention by Mao Zedung.

Such feelings were particularly strong in "ethnographic Tibet" where they were acted upon in 1955-56 at the time of the "socialist transformation of agriculture" campaign. At the end of 1955, for example, Li Jingquan, the Party Secretary in Sichuan, started reforms in the Tibetan areas of Sichuan. The result of this campaign was disastrous for Tibet since it led to a bloody Tibetan uprising which eventually spilled over into political Tibet and was a major factor precipitating the 1959 uprising in Lhasa.

Among Tibetans, Mao's policy also encountered serious problems. Although the Dalai Lama personally favored modernizing reforms for Tibet and was in favor of trying to reach an operational compromise with the Chinese,(24) he was unable to control anti-Chinese activists in his government. From the beginning, therefore, ultra-nationalistic, hard-line Tibetans created a confrontational and adversarial atmosphere. As in the 1920s, the conservative Tibetan faction simply did not want change. They felt Tibet was unique and perfect as it was. Moreover, they felt that because Tibet had been forced into the agreement with China through invasion, they were not really bound by its terms. Rather than try to live with the Chinese, they tried to create unpleasant conditions to compel the Chinese to withdraw and leave at most a new "amban" and a few troops.

By the mid 1950s, the situation inside Tibet began to rapidly deteriorate. Chinese hard-liners were pushing to begin implementing "socialist transformation" in Tibet proper, and Tibet hard-liners were organizing an armed rebellion. Moreover, by 1956 the U.S. was encouraging the anti-Chinese faction, and in 1957, actually started to train and arm Tibetan guerrillas. Mao made a last attempt to salvage his gradualist policy in 1957 when he reduced the number of Han cadre and troops in Tibet and promised the Dalai Lama in writing that China would not implement socialist land reforms in Tibet for the next six years. Furthermore, at the end of that period, Mao stated that he would postpone reforms again if conditions were not ripe.(25)

The Dalai Lama, however, could not quell the unrest within Tibet, and in March 1959, an uprising broke out in Lhasa that ended with his flight into exile in India. The Dalai Lama then renounced the 17 Point Agreement and sought support for Tibet's independence and self-determination. The Tibet Question re-emerged as an international issue. Mao's "gradualist" policy had failed.

At the same time, the Tibetan rebellion also failed dismally. The Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) support for the guerrillas was too little too late, and the Tibetan guerrilla forces were unable to hold any territory within Tibet as a "Free Tibet" base of operations as they initially hoped. The CIA subsequently assisted the guerrillas in establishing a safe-haven base of operations in northern Nepal, but this had no impact on the political situation in Tibet.

In the wake of the Dalai Lama's flight to India, the Chinese government also renounced the 17 Point Agreement and then terminated the traditional government, confiscated the estates of the religious and secular elites, and closed down most of Tibet's several thousand monasteries.(26) Tibet's special status as a traditional political entity within the communist Chinese state was now ended.

The eight-year transition period, therefore, ended poorly for both Tibet and China. On the Tibetan side, Tibet's power elite was unable to develop and implement a realistic strategy that could either induce the Chinese to leave Tibet or create a niche within China in which they could maximize long-term autonomy. Different elements in the Tibetan elite pursued contradictory policies, the result of which was a premature and ineffective military confrontation that resulted in the destruction of the old society including Buddhism and all that they were seeking to preserve. And on the Chinese side, ideological zeal in prematurely implementing socialist changes thwarted any chance of winning over Tibetans to being part of socialist China. China was able to reform land

tenure in Tibet to the benefit of many poor peasants, but, because of its religious policy toward monks and lamas, sowed the seeds of deep-seated feelings of nationalistic enmity toward Han Chinese and China that would later be brought into full bloom by the excesses of the Cultural Revolution.

Another less explicit consequence of the Chinese experience of the 1950s arose out of a serious split within the CCP regarding its Tibet policy. Throughout the 1950s, there were grumblings within the CCP about Mao's moderation policy, particularly what some considered his misguided views about the Dalai Lama who they felt was being duplicitous in giving the impression he was a progressive when in reality he was pursuing "splittist" policies. These elements quietly blamed this policy for the 1959 rebellion and the re-inter-nationalization of the Tibet Question, and today some in China consider this "moderation" policy one of the party's (Mao's) greatest failures.(27)

After 1959, the Tibetan exiles and China competed to legitimize their own representations of recent history and current events in Tibet. The Chinese talked about the extreme cruelty and abuses of the old feudal system and serfdom, and the Tibetans in exile talked about a host of cultural and human rights violations, including genocide, committed by the Chinese. This confrontation of "representations" continues to the present.

In this competition, the Tibetan exiles initially fared well. The Tibet issue was raised in the UN, and the International Commission of Jurists reported in 1959 that Tibet was "to all intents and purposes an independent country and had enjoyed a large degree of sovereignty."(28) Moreover, the United States took a major step toward recognizing Tibet's right to be independent when in 1960 Secretary of State Christian E. Herter responded publicly to a letter from the Dalai Lama stating:

As you know, while it has been the historical position of the US to consider Tibet as an autonomous country under the suzerainty of China, the American people have also traditionally stood for the principle of self-determination. It is the belief of the US government that this principle should apply to the people of Tibet and that they should have the determining voice in their own political destiny. (29)

The United States also adhered to the UN Tibet resolutions of 1961 and 1965. These, as the following illustrates, used language that supported Tibet's claim to self-determination:

... [The General Assembly is] Gravely concerned at the continuation of events in Tibet, including the violation of the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people and the suppression of the distinctive cultural and religious life which they have traditionally enjoyed,

Noting with deep anxiety the severe hardships which these events have inflicted on the Tibetan people, as evidenced by the large-scale exodus of Tibetan refugees to the neighboring countries,

Considering that these events violate fundamental human rights and freedoms set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights, including the principle of self-determination of peoples and nations, and have the deplorable effect of increasing international tension and embittering relations between peoples,

- Reaffirms its conviction that respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is essential for the evolution of a peaceful world order based on the rule of law;

- Solemnly renews its call for the cessation of practices which deprive the Tibetan people of their fundamental human rights and freedoms, including their right to self-determination;

- Expresses the hope that Member States will make all possible efforts, as appropriate, towards achieving the purposes of the present solution.(30)

For the exiles (31.) the hope that the U.S. would exert leadership in garnering world support for their cause and help them regain their country ended when Kissinger/ Nixon established rapprochement with China in the years after 1969. At this point, the U.S. withdrew its backing for the Nepal-based Tibetan guerrillas and the operation collapsed within a few years. With its China policy focused on improving the accommodation with China, Tibet became an awkward embarrassment for the U.S.. The Tibet Question not only was no longer relevant to U.S. national interests - in fact, it was potentially harmful. By the mid 1970s, therefore, shifting world alignments placed the Tibetan exiles in a much weakened position.

Consequently, the exiles' post-1959 efforts had no impact on the situation in Tibet. The CCP restructured farming and pastoral nomadic areas into communes, and, under the banner of the Cultural Revolution and the "Four Olds" campaign, placed Tibetan traditional culture under severe attack. Since this terrible period in Chinese history is relatively well known, it does not need detailed explication. In brief, in Tibet monasteries and religious objects and books were destroyed and religious activities were forbidden. Tibetans were forced to abandon deeply held values and customs that went to the core of their cultural identity. The class struggle sessions and the constant barrage of propaganda contradicting and ridiculing everything they understood and felt, sought to destroy the social and cultural fabric of the Tibetans' traditional way of life. These were terrible times for Tibetans in Tibet.(32)

Post-Mao Tibet: 1978 to Present

The death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the subsequent fall of the "Gang of Four," and the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping, produced major changes in China that included a new cultural and economic ideology, normalization of relations with the United States, and new initiatives to reconcile two outstanding conflicts that concerned the unity of the People's Republic of China - Taiwan and the Tibet Question.

In Tibet, in 1978, China made a number of unilateral gestures such as releasing a group of prisoners, announcing Tibetans will be able to visit relatives abroad, and issuing visas

to a group of private Tibetans to visit Tibet. This developed quickly into an "external" strategy for trying to solve the Tibet Question by persuading the Dalai Lama and his followers to return to China. Informal talks took place in Hong Kong in 1978 between representatives of the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama's elder brother (Gyalo Thundrup) at which both sides expressed an interest in reconciling the Tibetan Question. Soon after this, in 1979, Deng Xiaoping invited the Dalai Lama's elder brother to Beijing and told him that apart from the question of total independence all other issues could be discussed and all problems could be resolved. He also said that the Dalai Lama could send fact-finding delegations to Tibet in 1979-1980 to observe conditions in Tibet.(33) Beijing obviously believed that the delegations would be impressed by the progress that had been made in Tibet since 1959 and by the solidarity of the Tibetan people with the nation. China also felt that after twenty years in exile the Dalai Lama would be eager for rapprochement with the new, more "liberal" leaders of China.

The Dalai Lama responded by sending three fact-finding delegations to China, including members of his family. But contrary to what the Chinese had expected, these visits revealed to the exiles that Chinese proclamations of socialist progress in Tibet had little substance. The living standard of the Tibetan people was poor, economic development minimal, and the destruction of religion and monasticism almost total. They also revealed that the Tibetan masses, despite twenty years of communist propaganda, still believed strongly in the Dalai Lama and had strong feelings of Tibetan nationalism. Thus, the overall impact of the delegations was precisely the opposite of what Beijing had hoped in that it bolstered the confidence of the exiles at a difficult time in their history.

Beijing's external strategy was paralleled by development of a new internal strategy that sought to resolve the Tibet Question by improving economic conditions in Tibet in a manner that met the ethnic sensibilities of Tibetans. After considerable preliminary investigation of the situation there, the communist party convened a major Tibet Work Conference in Beijing in early 1980. The following statement from that conference illustrates the new attitude:

We have been established [in Tibet] for thirty years. Now the international situation is very complicated. If we do not seize the moment and immediately improve the relationship between the nationalities [Han and Tibetan] we will make a serious mistake. All the members of the Party must recognize the seriousness and we must reach a consensus.(34)

Soon after this, in May of 1980, Party Secretary Hu Yaobang and Vice Premier Wan Li made an unprecedented fact-finding visit to Tibet to see conditions for themselves and determine whether the plan of the Tibet Work Conference needed revisions. They apparently were dismayed by what they saw and heard, finding it worse than they had anticipated. Hu publicly announced a liberal six-point reform program on Tibet which included among its salient points:

1. Full play must be given to the right of regional autonomy of minority nationalities under the unified leadership of the party Central Committee. . . .

The right to decide for oneself under unified leadership should not be abolished. It is necessary fully and independently to exercise this right.

Anything that is not suited to Tibet's conditions should be rejected or modified, along with anything that is not beneficial to national unity or the development of production. The autonomous region should fully exercise its right to decide for itself under the unified leadership of the party central committee, and it should lay down laws, rules and regulations according to its special characteristics to protect the right of national autonomy and its special national interests.(35)

2. . . . Compared with other provinces and autonomous regions of the country, it is conspicuous that in Tibet the people's living standards lag far behind. This situation means that the burden of the masses must be considerably lightened. The people in Tibet should be exempt from paying taxes and meeting purchase quotas for the next few years. . . . All kinds of exactions must be abolished. The people should not be assigned any additional work without pay. Peasants' and herdsmen's produce may be purchased at negotiated prices or bartered to supply mutual needs, and they should be exempt from meeting state purchase quotas

3. Specific and flexible policies suited to conditions in Tibet must be carried out on the whole economic front of the region, including the agricultural, animal husbandry, financial and trade, commercial, handicraft and communication fronts, with a view of promoting Tibet's economic development more rapidly

5. So long as the socialist orientation is upheld, vigorous efforts must be made to revive and develop Tibetan culture, education and science. The Tibetan people have a long history and a rich culture. The world-renowned ancient Tibetan culture included Buddhism, graceful music and dance as well as medicine and opera, all of which are worthy of serious study and development. All ideas that ignore and weaken Tibetan culture are wrong. It is necessary to do a good job in inheriting and developing Tibetan culture.

Education has not progressed well in Tibet. Taking Tibet's special characteristics into consideration, efforts should be made to set up universities and middle and primary schools in the region. Some cultural relics and Buddhist scriptures in temples have been damaged, and conscientious effort should be made to protect, sort and study them. Cadres of Han nationality working in Tibet should learn the spoken and written Tibetan language. It should be a required subject; otherwise they will be divorced from the masses. Cherishing the people of minority nationalities is not empty talk. The Tibetan people's habits, customs, history and culture must be respected.

6. The party's policy on minority cadre must be correctly implemented and the unity between Han and Tibetan cadres must be even more closely enhanced

Full time cadres of Tibetan nationality should account for more than 2/3rds of all government functionaries in Xizang within the next 2-3 years. (italic emphasis added)(36)

This rather remarkable public statement is said to be mild compared to the secret report and speeches Hu Yaobang made to the party cadre, one part of which is said to have equated the previous 20 years of Chinese efforts to develop Tibet as equivalent to throwing money into the Lhasa River.

This decision of Hu Yaobang and the Central Committee of the CCP represents a replacement of the hard-line assimilation policy of the Cultural Revolution with the more ethnically sensitive strategy of the 1950s. The new policy had two main components: (1) an ethnic dimension - making the Tibet Autonomous Region more Tibetan in overall character by fostering a revitalization of Tibetan culture and religion including more extensive use of Tibetan language, and by withdrawing large numbers of Chinese cadre and replacing them with Tibetans; and (2) an economic dimension - rapidly improving the standard of living of individual Tibetans by temporarily eliminating taxes and "below-market" quota sales, and developing infrastructure to allow Tibet to grow economically in the years ahead.

However, unlike the 1950s, Beijing was no longer willing to permit a separate, non-communist "Tibetan" government in Lhasa - Tibet would continue to be ruled by the CCP.⁽³⁷⁾ This is the "unified leadership" that Hu Yaobang referred to above. While Tibetan culture, language and ethnicity would be enhanced, and Han Chinese working in Tibet would have to learn Tibetan, Tibetans could control their region only through Tibetan communist cadres under the auspices of the CCP. Despite Deng Xiaoping's comment that all issues other than independence could be discussed, this, in fact, was simply a given. Rapprochement from the Chinese perspective meant the Dalai Lama had to return to a Tibet ruled by the Chinese Communist Party.

Nevertheless, this new policy represented Beijing's attempt to redress the wrongs that had been done to Tibetans, and in the process, win their trust and support, albeit within the framework that Tibet was an inalienable part of China. These changes were meant to answer critics outside of Tibet while at the same time demonstrating to Tibetans in Tibet that being a part of China was in their interests.

And all this, moreover, was not just propaganda. Although many of the Han and Tibetan officials in Tibet disagreed strongly with this new policy, in the period immediately after 1980, China implemented various aspects of Hu's general program. Individual religious practices reappeared on a massive scale throughout Tibet, monasteries reopened (with certain restrictions) and new child monks poured in to these monasteries to resurrect the old tradition. Signs in Tibetan were mandated on shops and offices, offices serving the public were instructed to use Tibetan language in their dealings with citizens, the number of Tibetan officials was increased, plans were made to improve education in Tibetan language and a number of Chinese cadre left.⁽³⁸⁾ And not only were exile Tibetans welcomed to return for visits, but Tibetans could travel abroad to visit their relatives.

While this "internal" strategy was emerging, Beijing also pursued its "external" strategy with the Dalai Lama. Informal discussions continued during the 1979-81 period, including the following letter sent by the Dalai Lama to Deng Xiaoping on 23 March 1981:

The three fact-finding delegations have been able to find out both the positive and negative aspects of the situation in Tibet. If the Tibetan people's identity is preserved and if they are genuinely happy, there is no reason to complain. However, in reality over 90% of the Tibetans are suffering both mentally and physically, and are living in deep sorrow. These sad conditions had not been brought about by natural disasters, but by human actions. Therefore, genuine efforts must be made to solve the problem in accordance with the existing realities in a reasonable way.

In order to do this, we must improve the relation- ship between China and Tibet as well as between Tibetans in and outside Tibet. With truth and equality as our foundation, we must try to develop friendship between Tibetans and Chinese in future through better understanding. Time has come to apply our common wisdom in a spirit of tolerance and broad-mindedness to achieve genuine happiness for the Tibetan people with a sense of urgency. On my part, I remain committed to contribute to the wel- fare of all human beings and in particular the poor and the weak to the best of my ability without making any distinction based on national boundaries.

I hope you will let me know your views on the foregoing [sic.] points (italic emphasis added).⁽³⁹⁾

The tone of this letter was moderate and encouraging given the normal exile demands for self-determination and independence. However, it continued to talk of Tibet and China as separate entities.

The Chinese government did not respond directly to this letter. Instead it commented on the Tibet Question when the Dalai Lama's brother Gyalo Thundrup secretly met Hu Yaobang in Beijing on 28 July 1981. At this meeting, Hu articulated five points on which rapprochement with the Dalai Lama should be built:

1. The Dalai Lama should be confident that China has entered a new stage of long-term political stability, steady economic growth and mutual help among all nationalities.
2. The Dalai Lama and his representatives should be frank and sincere with the central government, not beat around the bush. There should be no more quibbling over the events in 1959.
3. The central authorities sincerely welcome the Dalai Lama and his followers to come back to live. This is based on the hope that they will contribute to upholding China's unity and promoting solidarity between the Han and Tibetan nationalities, and among all nationalities, and the modernization program.
4. The Dalai Lama will enjoy the same political status and living conditions as he had before 1959.

It is suggested that he not go to live in Tibet or hold local posts there. Of course, he may go back to Tibet from time to time. His followers need not worry about their jobs and living conditions. These will only be better than before.

5. When the Dalai Lama wishes to come back, he can issue a brief statement to the press. It is up to him to decide what he would like to say in the statement.(40)

This position, which at the time was not made public, reflected the Chinese government's preferred view that the Tibet Question was fundamentally a dispute between China and the Dalai Lama rather than between the government of China and the Tibetan "government-in-exile." It also conveyed the Chinese unwillingness to consider a compromise in which Tibet would enjoy a different political system from the rest of China. If the Dalai Lama returned he would "enjoy the same political status and living conditions as he had before 1959," but not live in Tibet or hold positions there, meaning presumably that he would be given a semi-honorary position such as Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress and would be taken care of financially. The political system in Tibet, therefore, would continue to be ruled by the communist party. He and his followers would return as individuals to "live," not as a new government to rule, and they would have to "contribute to upholding China's unity and promoting solidarity between the Han and Tibetan nationalities." Although it was not part of this statement, China's quid pro quo was to permit a distinctly Tibetan ethnic/cultural identity (including Buddhism) in Tibet, and to devote resources so as to improve the standard of living of Tibetans.

Beijing, therefore, was clearly interested in inducing the Dalai Lama to return to China. From its vantage point, finalizing the right kind of rapprochement would end its problems in Tibet. The return of the Dalai Lama would relegitimize Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, end the international dialogue over the Tibet Question, and persuade the masses of Tibetans to genuinely accept being part of the People's Republic of China. The danger, of course, was that if they accepted the wrong kind of rapprochement, they could very well be creating new pressures for separatism in Tibet, or worse, transplanting the seeds of a new uprising there. Consequently, maintaining political control over Tibet was critical. Nevertheless, they were optimistic because they felt that their willingness to let Tibetan culture, religion and language flourish, and their commitment to help Tibet develop economically, made this an attractive package. With this in mind, China invited the Dalai Lama to send a negotiating delegation to Beijing.(41) The Dalai Lama accepted, and in October 1982, three exile representatives arrived to begin what might have been a new chapter in Sino-Tibetan relations.

The problem facing the Dalai Lama and his leaders was how to respond to the Chinese at these meetings. The five-point policy outlined by Hu Yaobang had been a great surprise and disappointment to the Dalai Lama.(42) It, in essence, said that despite the public rhetoric, everything excluding independence was not on the table for real negotiation. Consequently, should he and his officials indicate willingness to accept less than independence, and if so, how much less? Although they felt strongly that history clearly supported their contention that Tibet had been independent, at least from the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, they understood that China had physical control of Tibet and was

a powerful nation that Tibetans could not defeat on the battlefield. The focal decision, therefore, was whether they should take a hard-line approach that held out for their regaining political control in Tibet because time was on their side, or whether they should adopt a more conciliatory posture in the belief that this was a unique moment for them to secure the best deal they could to preserve an ethnically "Tibetan" Tibet. These very difficult choices prompted months of indepth discussions in Dharamsala.

Compromise on anything like the level contained in the Chinese Five Points, however, was very difficult for the Dalai Lama and his leaders to even contemplate. For two decades the Tibetan "government-in-exile's" internal rhetoric had adamantly articulated Tibet's right to complete independence, and had depicted the Chinese communists as bestial, untrustworthy oppressors without a shred of humanity or honesty. Suddenly considering a return to live under a Chinese communist government, therefore, could easily undermine the legitimacy of the Dalai Lama and the exile government among the refugee community. It also could mean throwing away Tibet's right to independence forever, and the exile leaders genuinely worried about going down in history as traitors to their people. This was, therefore, a powerful emotional issue that was hard to intellectualize in an impersonal, cost-benefit, realpolitik analysis. Suddenly, the Tibet Question was more than a contest of "representations" in the world arena - the Dalai Lama and his officials held the fate of Tibetans in their hands and had to weigh carefully what they were committing future generations of Tibet to.

On top of this, the exile government was deeply committed to the recreation of a "Greater" Tibet, that is to say a Tibet that included traditional political Tibet and ethnographic Tibet. This had been a goal of previous Tibetan governments (e.g., at the Simla talks in 1913-1914) and was deeply felt, but it was especially important in exile because of the presence of large numbers of Tibetan refugees from those ethnic areas. The Dalai Lama had worked hard since 1959 to meld the disparate refugees into a unified community by including these Tibetans in the exile government as equals, and by setting as a fundamental political objective the inclusion of their areas in a future "free" Tibet. However, the goal of a Greater Tibet was not politically realistic. Tibet had not ruled most of these areas for a century or more, and it is difficult to see how China could have handed over large areas in Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan, many of which included Chinese and Chinese Muslim populations that had migrated there well before the communists came to power in 1949. However, if Dharamsala decided not to pursue a demand for a Greater Tibet and this leaked out, it would be breaking the faith with the Eastern Tibetans in exile. Like forsaking independence, this issue was highly contentious and could easily split the unity of the exile community if handled wrong.

Working in tandem with these constraints against taking a conciliatory tack was the view of leaders in Dharamsala that they, in a sense, held the upper hand. The visits of their fact-finding delegations had revealed clearly that the majority of the people of Tibet were behind the Dalai Lama, so they felt they brought a powerful chip to the bargaining table - the Tibetan people's loyalty. Consequently, despite the overwhelming power of China and the absence of Western governmental support for Tibetan independence, they felt that China could not solve the Tibet Question without them. In retrospect, this seems somewhat over simplistic and naive, but to the Dalai Lama and his top officials in 1982, it was enough to tilt the balance in favor of holding fast and making no compromises. In effect, they concluded that time was on their side.

In the end, therefore, not only was there no consensus in Dharamsala as to what the Dalai Lama's "bottom line" should be regarding political and territorial concession, but there was pressure not to create one for the negotiations in Beijing. Dharma-sala, consequently, sent its high level representatives to Beijing with a brief to talk only in general terms, e.g., to present historical arguments about Tibet and Sino-Tibetan relations. The discussions, therefore, did not get down to substantive issues about the Dalai Lama's return. The Tibetans made only a single comment about their political position, stating in passing that if China was willing to offer Taiwan the "one country-two systems" option, Tibet should receive far more.

The Chinese were disappointed by the Tibetans' attitude. They had hoped the exiles would come ready to discuss specifics about their return in a friendly and forthcoming manner, and were frustrated when they persisted in talking about general issues and past history in a way that indicated they were not ready to accept a Tibet that was under the "unified leadership" of the CCP. Like the exile leaders' over-assessment of their leverage, this expectation was overly simplistic and naive. Beijing wanted rapprochement, but did not want to enter into a genuine give-and-take with the exiles over the issue of changes in the political control of the Tibet Autonomous Region. In the end, therefore, this historic meeting not only produced no new movement toward solving the Tibet Question, but began to raise serious questions in Beijing about the feasibility of rapprochement with the Dalai Lama.

In the aftermath of the 1982 meeting, the exile leadership showed some good-will by refraining from commenting on the meetings, but at the same time continued to attack Chinese policies and human rights violations in Tibet,(43) often actually going beyond what the actual situation warranted, e.g. with charges of Chinese genocide. Dharamsala still felt more comfortable pursuing an adversarial model of interaction than one that emphasized friendship and harmony as its goal.

On the Chinese side, opponents of Hu Yaobang's Tibet "moderation" policy interpreted the Dalai Lama's unwillingness to get down to substantive issues and his officials' continuation of attacks as a sign of their insincerity. In fact, some explicitly saw this as *deja vu* - as a replay of what they considered the duplicitous behavior of the Dalai Lama and his government in the 1950s. Beijing, therefore, moved to intensify its "internal" strategy by allocating increased funds for development. This policy was finalized at the Second Tibet Work Conference held in Beijing in 1984. It approved 42 major construction projects in Tibet and extended China's "Open Door" policy to Tibet, despite the concerns of some leaders and experts that this would draw more non-Tibetans to Tibet and would therefore exacerbate Tibetan hostility towards China and Chinese. In a sense, since Beijing could not solve the Tibet Question by inducing the Dalai Lama to return to solidify its control of Tibet, it sought to do so without him by quickly modernizing and developing Tibet while allowing Tibetans the freedom to express their culture and practice their religion.

Nevertheless, Beijing was unwilling to cut off discussions with the Dalai Lama, and a second face-to-face meeting between Tibetan representatives and China was held in Beijing in 1984. At this meeting the Tibetans came with a developed negotiating position. They stated that the Dalai Lama rejected the Chinese 5-Point proposal and made their own substantive proposal that included creation of a "Greater" Tibet that would be demilitarized and have a political status in excess of the "one country, two systems"

proposal for Taiwan.(44) It was, of course, futile from the start. Beijing was not willing to discuss real political autonomy for Tibet. It was looking to enhance its stability and security in Tibet, not lessen it by turning over political control of Tibet to its "enemies" in Dharamsala, let alone give up control over a "Greater" Tibet. Dharamsala's leaders, in one sense, had misjudged both their own leverage and Beijing's desire for an agreement, but, in another sense, simply could not bring themselves to contemplate accepting anything less. They were angry and frustrated by the Chinese intransigence. In this strained atmosphere, a proposed visit of the Dalai Lama to China/Tibet fell by the wayside.

China continued to implement its internal policy, and by late 1985-early 1986, many cadre and intellectuals believed that Beijing would soon initiate a second wave of reforms which would fulfill the special autonomous status implied by Hu Yaobang's statements wherein most officials would be ethnic Tibetans and the language of government would be Tibetan. And a new head of the Party in Tibet, Wu Jinghua, was appointed who was himself a minority (from the Yi nationality). He immediately began overt shows of respect for Tibetan culture, wearing Tibetan dress on holidays, and creating an atmosphere of support for development of Tibetan language and culture. Consequently, there was a feeling of possibility in the air in Lhasa, at least among Tibetan intellectuals. This was still China to be sure, and political freedom of expression and assembly as we know them in the West were not permitted in Tibet (or the rest of China), but great strides had been made in permitting Tibetan culture to flourish in a region that was still overwhelmingly Tibetan in demographic composition. Tibetans in exile were visiting Tibet in increasing numbers despite having to get visas as "overseas Chinese," and most Tibetans in Tibet who went abroad to visit relatives returned.

However, another current was gaining momentum in China as Hu Yaobang's liberalness was coming under attack with regard to China itself as well as to Tibet, where senior, more leftist, Tibetan and Chinese cadre felt the policy of making greater concessions to ethnic sensitivity was flawed and dangerous. These senior officials tried to obstruct Wu Jinghua's program in Tibet and criticized his actions in Beijing through personal lines of communication. But the party's policy in Tibet continued unchanged even after Hu Yaobang was forced to resign in January 1987.

Dharamsala, therefore, found itself in an awkward situation. It was clear that Beijing had no intention of allowing them to rule Tibet with a different political system, let alone independence, and it was also clear that Beijing was pursuing, with some success, a worst case scenario in that its new reforms might win, if not the hearts of Tibetans, at least their stomachs. Material life had improved tremendously in both Lhasa and in the countryside where communes had been disbanded. At the same time, China's economic power and international prestige were increasing, and a major goal of U.S. policy in Asia was to strengthen the U.S. strategic relationship with China. Thus, there was now a real danger that the exiles' role in the Tibet Question would be marginalized.

Dharamsala and the Dalai Lama responded in 1986-87 by launching a new political offensive - what we can think of as their "international campaign." (45) It sought, on the one hand, to secure new Western political and economic leverage to force Beijing to offer the concessions they wanted, and on the other hand, to give Tibetans in Tibet hope that the Dalai Lama was on the verge of securing U.S. and Western assistance to settle the Tibet Question, i.e. shifting their attention from their stomachs to their ethnic hearts.

Dharamsala's New Initiative

The U.S. government was central to this new campaign. Of all the Western democracies, the U.S. had provided the most support for Tibetans during the difficult times of the 1950s and 1960s. However, when the U.S. jettisoned its China "containment" strategy in favor of detente, direct support for Tibet was ended. Tibet was no longer an issue even marginally important to U.S. national interests. The exile's new campaign, therefore, sought to regain active U.S. support by working through the soft-underbelly of U.S. foreign policy - Congress. The key innovation in this strategy was having the Dalai Lama for the first time carry the exile's political message to the U.S. and Europe, particularly at governmental forums. Prior to this he had traveled and spoken only as a religious leader.⁽⁴⁶⁾ With the help of Western supporters/donors and sympathetic U.S. congressmen/ congressional aides, a campaign was launched in the U.S. to gain support for the exile's cause, in essence, to re-direct the significance of the Tibet Question from the arena of geo-political national interests to the sphere of core U.S. values - to the U.S. ideological commitment to freedom and human rights. The goal was to create momentum for the U.S. supporting Tibet because it was the just and right thing to do as freedom-loving Americans.

In 1987 several major breakthroughs occurred. The Dalai Lama was invited to speak to the Congressional Human Rights Caucus in September, and in June, the House of Representatives adopted a bill that condemned human rights abuses in Tibet, instructed the president to express sympathy for Tibet, and urged China to establish a constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama (this ended up later in the year as an amendment to the State Department Authorization Bill).⁽⁴⁷⁾

The Dalai Lama made his first political speech in America before the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Caucus on 21 September 1987. It was a carefully crafted and powerful talk that laid out the argument that Tibet had been independent when China invaded.⁽⁴⁸⁾ That invasion began what the Dalai Lama called China's illegal occupation of the country. Specifically, he said, "though Tibetans lost their freedom, under international law Tibet today is still an independent state under illegal occupation." The speech also raised serious human rights charges, referring twice to a Chinese inflicted "holocaust" on the Tibetan people.

The Dalai Lama specifically made a five-point proposal for solving the Tibet Question that called for:

1. transforming Tibet into a "Zone of Peace" - this would include ethnographic Tibet and would require the withdrawal of all Chinese troops and military installations.
2. reversing the population transfer policy which he said threatened the very existence of the Tibetans as a people.
3. respecting the Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms - it asserted that Tibetans are "Deprived of all basic democratic rights and freedoms, they exist under a colonial administration in which all real power is wielded by Chinese officials of the Communist Party and the army."

4. restoring and protecting Tibet's natural environment and abandoning China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and dumping of nuclear waste.

5. beginning earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples.

This was well received in the U.S., and three weeks later, on 6 October, the Senate passed its version of the earlier House Bill. Ultimately, on 22 December 1987, President Reagan signed the Foreign Relations Authorization Act (1988-89) into law including these bills in the form of a Tibet amendment which contained as a sense of the Congress that:

(i) the United States should express sympathy for those Tibetans who have suffered and died as a result of fighting, persecution, or famine over the past four decades;

(ii) the United States should make the treatment of the Tibetan people an important factor in its conduct of relations with the People's Republic of China;

(iii) the Government of the People's Republic of China should respect internationally recognized human rights and end human rights violations against Tibetans;

(iv) the United States should urge the Government of the People's Republic of China to actively reciprocate the Dalai Lama's efforts to establish a constructive dialogue on the future of Tibet; ...

(viii) the United States should urge the People's Republic of China to release all political prisoners in Tibet.⁽⁴⁹⁾

It also added a proviso that with regard to the sale of defense articles, the U.S. should take into consideration "the extent to which the Government of the People's Republic of China is acting in good faith and in a timely manner to resolve human rights issues in Tibet," and authorized no less than 15 scholarships to enable Tibetans to attend college in the U.S.⁽⁵⁰⁾

While this was weaker than the now defunct position stated by Christian Herter in 1960 (see above, p. 15), and it was only the "sense of Congress," it was seen in Dharamsala as a major victory - as the start of a Congress-driven move to create a new U.S. foreign policy that would proactively seek settlement of the Tibet Question in a manner favorable to the Tibetan people. From out of nowhere, therefore, the U.S. was again actively involved in the Tibet Question on the side of Tibet, albeit through Congress rather than the executive branch or the State Department.

The First Riot- October 1, 1987(51)

These activities of the Dalai Lama in the U.S. were widely known and eagerly followed in Lhasa because Tibetans regularly listened to the Voice of America and the B.B.C. Chinese language broadcasts, and the Chinese government also broadcast attacks on the Dalai Lama's visit on local media. On 27 September, less than a week after the Dalai Lama's first speech in Washington, nationalistic monks from Drepung monastery in Lhasa staged a political demonstration in support of Tibetan independence and the Dalai Lama's initiative. They began by walking around the Inner Circle Road (bagor) that is both a main circumambulation route (going around the holy Lhasa Cathedral) and the main Tibetan market area, but, when nothing happened after several circuits, marched down a main road to the offices of the Tibetan Government. There they were arrested.

Four days later, on the morning of 1 October, another group of 20-30 monks demonstrated in Lhasa to show their support for the Dalai Lama and the previous monk demonstrators, and to demand the latter's release from jail. Police quickly took them into custody and started beating them. A crowd of Tibetans who had gathered outside the police headquarters demanded these monks be released, and before long, this escalated into a full-scale riot. In the end, the police station and a number of vehicles and shops were burnt down, and anywhere from 6 to 20 Tibetans were killed when police (including ethnic Tibetans) fired at the crowds.

Beijing was shocked by the riot and the anti-Chinese anger it expressed. There had been clandestine nationalistic incidents for years in Lhasa but these were small, isolated activities that were easy to deal with. Now Beijing had to face the reality that thousands upon thousands of average Tibetans were angry enough to face death and prison by participating in a massive riot against the government and Chinese rule in Tibet. This riot was particularly galling to Beijing because it coincided with the attacks of the Dalai Lama and U.S. Congressmen and seemed to prove to the world that Dharamsala and the Dalai Lama's statements about the horrendous conditions in Tibet were true despite the fact that they felt they were pursuing a moderate policy in Tibet.

The post-riot months in Lhasa saw more demonstrations by monks and nuns, and a steady stream of anti-government posters. Nevertheless, the police were able to arrest them quickly without provoking a riot. A cat and mouse game developed with the nationalistic monks launching demonstrations and the government trying to arrest the demonstrators in a manner that would prevent another riot, for it was clearly the riot that caught world attention, not simply the small demonstrations.

As 1987 drew to a close, attention in Lhasa turned to the coming Tibetan New Year in February 1988 and the accompanying Great Prayer Festival when almost 2,000 monks would come to Lhasa's Central Cathedral for several weeks of joint prayers. The question of the day became whether the Prayer Festival would go on as planned, and if so, would the monks try to use it to launch a major demonstration. The risk of such a demonstration sparking another riot was great since there would be thousands upon thousands of religious Tibetans in Lhasa at this time to witness the event.

Many key senior cadre in Tibet felt that the riots vindicated their contention that the moderate "ethnic" approach was dangerous and could result in the CCP losing power in Tibet. In fact, several ad hoc secret meetings were held in Lhasa and Chengdu (Sichuan) and reports critical of the liberal policy were informally forwarded to Beijing. In Beijing, the new head of the party, Zhao Ziyang, convened a meeting of the larger Politburo to

discuss Tibet, and in November, it decided that part of the present problem in Tibet was the fact that Beijing's Tibet policy had not been properly carried out due to excessive "leftism" in Tibet. However, at the same time, it also concluded that the Tibet policies had been too liberal. This marked the beginning of Beijing's retreat from the earlier approach.

Soon after this, the Lhasa daily newspaper carried the new line reporting that in addition to outside agitation, excessive and incorrect application of "ultra-leftist ideology" on the part of local cadre was a cause of the October riot. Until then it had totally blamed outside agitation for the demonstrations and riot. Now it admitted that its own officials were part of the problem. This was a major attempt to influence the attitude of Tibetans in Lhasa by being realistic and forthright, even though this admission certainly angered many senior officials in Tibet.

Beijing also now made a decision that, in retrospect, was ill conceived. On the defensive internationally, the Chinese leadership apparently felt it was important to show the world that its liberal Tibetan religious policy was working, so it pushed ahead with holding the Prayer Festival. Wu Jinghua, the head of the TAR, announced that just as he had come to the Prayer Festival in Tibetan dress in the past, he would do so again this coming year to publicly show his respect for Tibetans' strong feelings about their religion and culture. He also announced that his three main priorities for Tibet were religion, nationality culture, and united front activities, in essence indicating that the core of his program would continue to be to improve relations with Tibetans by paying attention to their ethnic sensitivities rather than to economic development per se.

But the main event in this attempt at reconciliation was a visit to Lhasa in early 1988 by the late Panchen Lama, Tibet's number two lama. He was sent to Tibet with authorization to make concessions to calm the monks and ensure the success of the Prayer Festival. The plan was to offer the monks substantial financial reparations and a loosening of restrictions if they attended the prayer festival and in the future concentrated on religion, not politics. To assist his efforts, and partially meet the monks' demands that all monks be released before the festival, the Tibetan government on 26 January 1988 released about 59 monks as a gesture of goodwill, leaving only about 15 monks in custody.⁽⁵²⁾ On the following day, at a big meeting at Drepung monastery, the Panchen Lama told the assembled monks at Drepung that the government was willing to give 2 million yuan (\$500,000) in reparations to the three Lhasa monasteries (Drepung, Sera and Ganden).

The Panchen Lama's attempt to defuse the situation, however, was unsuccessful. The anger of most of the monks toward Chinese policies in Tibet was too great to be assuaged by money, partly because they felt that the Chinese were now trying to use the Prayer Festival as propaganda against the Dalai Lama's initiative, and particularly because they felt that time was on their side since the Dalai Lama was now succeeding in gaining the support of the U.S. Given this atmosphere, many of the older monks advised the government not to hold the Prayer Festival in Lhasa since they could not guarantee what the younger monks would do. They strongly recommended that the 1988 Prayer Festival be conducted at their own monasteries rather than in the Central Cathedral in Lhasa.

But the government now dug its heels and insisted the Prayer Festival had to go on. Foreign journalists had been invited so the government cajoled, threatened and pleaded with the monks to appear. Although many monks boycotted, most came and all went well

until 5 March 1988, the last day. As the monks completed the procession of carrying the statue of Chamba (Maitreya), a monk shouted demands to the ranking officials seated at the ceremony that a monk who remained in custody should be released from prison. A Tibetan official told him to shut up, and he and other monks immediately responded that Tibet is an independent country. Just when everyone thought that the ceremony had passed without a disaster, the situation went out of control and the latent anger exploded into the second terrible riot in Lhasa. Arrests and a clamp-down in Tibet followed that further drew the mass of people to the side of the radical nationalists.

Etiology of the Riots

It is important to examine why the series of riots occurred if China, as was indicated, was pursuing a moderate, ethnically sensitive, reform policy. The Chinese, as mentioned above, claim that the demonstration was in part inspired by Dharamsala. While it is not clear whether Dharamsala (or other exile elements) actually asked one or more of the Drepung monastery monks to organize a demonstration, it is clear that the monk's demonstration was meant to counter Chinese criticisms broadcast on Lhasa T.V. and demonstrate support for the Dalai Lama's new initiative in the U.S. while he was there. To this day the monks are proud that they risked (and are risking) their lives to support the Dalai Lama's efforts in the West on Tibet's behalf.(53)

One factor underlying this was the interpretation by Tibetans of events in the U.S. in the framework of the Chinese system of government. In China, delegates at the People's Congress basically rubber-stamp what has already been decided by the party, so it was natural for Tibetans in Lhasa to believe that the support shown by members of the U.S. Congress similarly reflected U.S. government support for the Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence. Many average Tibetans in Lhasa believed, therefore, that the Dalai Lama's speech to Congress was a turning point in Tibetan history, and that the U.S., in their eyes the world's greatest military power, would soon force China to "free" Tibet. Events in the West are well-known and play an important role in determining the attitude of Tibetans, particularly Lhasans.

In any case, it is clear that those first monk demonstrators never dreamed their civil disobedience in support of the Dalai Lama would provoke a bloody anti-Chinese riot. The real cause of the massive riot - as distinct from the small political demonstration - is complex. Despite the Chinese reforms, a volatile residue of bitterness and resentment against the government (which in Tibetans' minds was synonymous with the Han Chinese) remained.

Tibetans were still very angry about the personal and collective (ethnic) suffering they had experienced since 1959 under direct Chinese rule. Like some minority groups in the U.S., they view past oppression as a part of the present reality and are angry at today's Han Chinese for this. The condescending attitudes of many Han in Tibet tended to reinforce this.

Moreover, the Chinese insistence on a crash program of economic development in Tibet created new problems, the most important of which was the large influx of non-Tibetans (Han [ethnic Chinese] and Hui [Muslims]) into Tibet since 1984. Ironically, this does not appear to have started as a deliberate Chinese scheme to swamp Tibet with Han

"colonists," as is often charged, but rather began as the outgrowth of the government's wish to develop Tibet quickly.

The disbursement of large funds for development projects created a substantial economic ripple effect, attracting thousands of Han construction workers whose presence in turn created a demand for scores of new Chinese restaurants, shops and services. That this was problematic was understood, and the Party Secretary in Tibet at one time in 1984 actually stopped Han and Hui coming in from Qinghai. But the larger need in Tibet for carpenters, masons and so forth gradually overwhelmed these attempts, and the success of these Han tradesmen and craftsmen sent a message to the surrounding provinces that there was profit to be made in Tibet, drawing in even larger numbers of new Han and Hui annually.

Nowadays even Han beggars ply their trade throughout Lhasa. Thus, most Tibetans in Lhasa resented the Han Chinese increasingly controlling their local economy, taking jobs away from them and Sinicizing their beloved city. They wanted economic improvement but not at the expense of transforming the ethnic and demographic character of Lhasa and Tibet.

The accelerated development program for Tibet, therefore, exacerbated existing local feelings of anger and bitterness over past harms done to Tibet during the Cultural Revolution, and worked to undermine the positive impact of the new reforms on Tibetans' attitudes and feelings. Moreover, it focused Tibetans' attention precisely on the volatile ethnic or national issue - too many Han in Tibet and Han getting too many benefits out of Tibet. In turn, this fueled the Tibetans' feeling of powerlessness and abuse at the hands of the dominant Han.

Another important problem area was Beijing's reluctance to permit as full an expression of cultural and religious freedom as Tibetans wanted. Continuing restrictions on the monasteries in the form of limits on the total number of monks angered the monks and many laymen, highlighting the fact that Tibetans are still beholden to an alien, Chinese value system for permission to practice their own religion and culture in their own homeland. This, of course, from Beijing's perspective, was a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy dilemma. Since the monasteries were hot-beds of nationalism and pro-independence activists, it was difficult for Beijing to allow them to grow in size and wealth since that would have meant strengthening the very people who were most dedicated to challenging China's position in Tibet.

And last but not least, one cannot underestimate the strong historical sense of Tibet being the exclusive homeland for Tibetans. Because there were no Han Chinese in Tibet in 1950, all adult Tibetans remember vividly a completely Tibetan Tibet. Tibetans felt that the Chinese had taken their country and were transforming it into just another part of China. They had (and have) a view that Tibet should be a Tibetan country (whether independent or not) that is run by Tibetans, uses Tibetan language, and follows laws that are in accordance with deeply felt values and beliefs that are at the heart of Tibetan culture. For most Tibetans, the new reforms had made progress toward that end, but it was not enough to be allowed as individuals to turn prayer wheels and burn butter lamps if Tibet were not a homogeneous ethnic entity. The influx of Han workers was clearly a serious step in the wrong direction and was not in keeping with the spirit of Hu Yaobang's policy.

In Fall 1987, on the eve of the first riot, Lhasa Tibetans, therefore, had ambivalent attitudes and feelings. Pent-up anger, resentment and frustration competed with the realization that cultural, linguistic and economic conditions had improved dramatically. And critically, the new successes of the Dalai Lama in the U.S. offered them what seemed a realistic alternative to China to achieve their aspirations - it gave them new hope that with the work of the Dalai Lama and the power of the U.S., independence was just around the corner.

In this atmosphere, the monks, the quintessential symbol of Tibetan culture, provided the catalyst needed to ignite the anger. The 1987 and Spring 1988 riots, therefore, were primarily spontaneous outbursts of pent-up resentment and anger. They were unplanned responses to a situation that Tibetans felt symbolized the loss of their nationhood and the denigration of their culture since 1959 by a dominant and alien group, rather than a rejection of the reform policy since 1980. They share many similarities with the terrible racial riots the U.S. experienced in Watts and other inner city neighborhoods, or the anger of Native Americans that exploded at Wounded Knee. When Tibetans saw the police beating up the unarmed monks, they responded with their ethnic hearts. They responded not to poor material conditions, but to past injustices and to present domination by an alien majority. Building one more stadium, or road, or factory or apartment building could no more eliminate that problem in Lhasa than it could in the U.S. ghettos.

Beijing's Shift to a Hard-line Strategy in Tibet

The concatenation of new Congressional support in the U.S. and the demonstrations cum riots in Tibet, led the exiles to conclude that they were making progress in amassing the critical leverage they felt they needed to pressure Beijing to yield to their demands for total political autonomy. This led to a major statement by the Dalai Lama.

In April of 1988, the Dalai Lama responded to a Chinese announcement that if he publicly gave up the goal of independence he could live in Tibet (rather than Beijing), saying that he would make public proposals within 12 months. Two months later, on 15 June 1988, the Dalai Lama made such a proposal in an address to the European Parliament at Strasbourg. It was the first public announcement of his conditions for returning to Tibet. Its main points were that a "Greater Tibet" should become a self-governing democratic political entity founded on a constitution that granted Western-style democratic rights. This enlarged political Tibet would operate under a different system of government than the rest of China and would have the right to decide on all affairs relating to Tibet and Tibetans. China would remain responsible for Tibet's foreign policy, although Tibet would maintain and develop relations through its own Foreign Affairs Bureau in non-political fields like commerce, sports, education, etc. China could maintain a limited number of troops in Tibet until a regional peace conference was convened and Tibet converted into a demilitarized zone. The Dalai Lama indicated he was ready to talk with the Chinese about this, and announced the membership of his negotiating team, including among them a Dutch national as its legal advisor.

The Strasbourg proposal did not seek independence, but it also did not accept the limited autonomy of the Chinese political system. Rather it called for Tibet to have a new status as a kind of autonomous dominion. Since this proposal had been presented to Beijing at the secret 1984 talks, the contents were not new to the Chinese. Nevertheless, the Strasbourg speech was important because it was the first time the Dalai Lama openly told

his people (and the world) that independence was not a realistic goal and that he was willing to accept Tibet as part of China if it could be totally autonomous. It was in this sense a courageous initiative.

The proposal was also an effective political move. If, as the exile leaders hoped, their victories had persuaded Beijing to view this level of political autonomy more favorably than in 1984, serious negotiations could have ensued. At the same time, it placed Beijing in a difficult situation since Deng Xiaoping and other top leaders had repeatedly said that with the exception of independence they would discuss anything. Now the Dalai Lama had given them just such an opportunity before the eyes of the world. Consequently, even if Beijing's views had not changed and the overture was rejected, the Dalai Lama's international reputation as a statesman willing to forsake the goal of complete independence in order to attain a lasting peace would be enhanced.

The Strasbourg Address initially threw Beijing into confusion. The leadership's basic view on what it was willing to accept as a compromise solution had not changed, but there was support for at least giving the impression that they were willing to discuss the Strasbourg proposal since it was not independence per se. Ultimately, after evincing some initial interest in meeting again, the more hard-line view predominated and Strasbourg was rejected as an indirect form of independence. In retrospect, given the internal situation in China, it is difficult to see how Beijing could have permitted Tibetans to have the freedoms associated with Western-type democracies and not offer the rest of China the same options, let alone how it could allow creation of a Greater Tibet. It was also unnecessarily provocative for Dharamsala to include a Western advisor on the negotiating team given China's feelings about outside interference. Although Dharamsala presented this proposal as a conciliatory move, and although it created a stir in exile politics where it was criticized by many as a sell-out, it was in reality a continuation of Dharamsala's previous policy in which the bottom line was a refusal to accept anything less than real political autonomy.(54)

Six months later, in December 1988, a third bloody riot in Lhasa was precipitated by monks demonstrating in commemoration of International Human Rights Day.

In the midst of this deteriorating situation, the unexpected death of the Panchen Lama produced a new initiative from Beijing. In early 1989, China tried to cut through the impasse by having its Buddhist Association quietly invite the Dalai Lama to participate in the memorial ceremony for the Panchen Lama. This initiative gave the Dalai Lama the opportunity to return for a visit to China without any overt political connotations or preconditions. He would come ostensibly as a religious figure. The rationale behind this approach was the belief by some in China that the negotiations had failed because Beijing had been unable to talk directly with the Dalai Lama whom they felt was more moderate than his ministers. Consequently, getting the Dalai Lama to come to China might provide an opportunity to break the deadlock.

The Dalai Lama and his officials, however, were reluctant to accept the invitation. The Chinese had indicated he would not be allowed to visit Tibet, so there was concern that Tibetans in Lhasa would feel abandoned if he went to China but not Tibet. There was also real concern that China might treat the Dalai Lama in a humiliating way, ignoring him or treating him as a minor figure. And since this was not a "government" invitation, there was suspicion that it would yield nothing of value in terms of the Tibet Question

while providing the Chinese a propaganda victory. With events in their view going well, the exile leadership took the safe course and the Dalai Lama declined the invitation.

Beijing's situation in Tibet, meanwhile, deteriorated further in 1989. Tibetans in Lhasa continued to mount repeated small nationalistic demonstrations, one of which turned into the fourth Lhasa riot on 5 March 1989. At this juncture, Beijing accepted the fact that the situation in Tibet was out of control and initiated strong measures to quell the unrest - it took the drastic step of declaring martial law in Tibet.

1989 brought another dramatic setback for Beijing when the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Tibetans everywhere considered this a major victory - an indirect but powerful statement that their cause was just and valid, and a sign that the world was lining up behind the Dalai Lama in his fight with China. On top of all this, 1989 also brought the Tiananmen debacle. Although this had no direct impact on the situation in Tibet because Tibetans had little interest or sympathy in what they considered a "Han" affair, it fostered a more hard-line political policy in China that made it easier to utilize such a policy in Tibet.

By 1989, therefore, Beijing's internal and external strategies for Tibet were in shambles. Unless China was willing to agree to relinquish direct political control in Tibet and accept a Strasbourg-like dominion status there, the exiles appeared bent on continuing their international campaign. This would certainly encourage more demonstrations internally and new accusations internationally. Momentum appeared to have shifted to the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama's international initiative had successfully turned the tables on China, placing Beijing on the defensive both internationally and within Tibet.

Beijing reacted predictably to the threat this posed to its basic position in Tibet. Just as it did in 1905 when the British invasion threatened its national interests, it now moved to a more hard-line, integrationist policy. In Beijing, it was hard for moderates to refute the historical parallelism of Mao's policy of supporting the Dalai Lama precipitating the 1959 rebellion and Hu Yaobang's, the 1987-89 riots. The conclusion in Beijing was that it had to stop "coddling" the reactionary and superstitious Tibetans before matters got completely out of hand. This policy shift, as mentioned earlier, began in late 1987 as a result of the first riot, and expanded in 1988 after two investigatory visits by Chao Shi, the head of security, and Yan Mingfu, the head of the United Front Office. Both of their impressions were heavily influenced by the views of the many senior Han and Tibetan cadre in Tibet who disapproved of the policy being implemented by Wu Jinghua.

China's new policy, therefore, evolved gradually as internal and external events pushed sentiment away from the more moderate Hu Yaobang approach. The final decision to shift gears to a new policy was officially decided at a Politburo meeting in the winter of 1989. A number of major new directives were issued. The general feeling among the leadership was that the measures Beijing had taken to liberalize conditions within Tibet had not produced greater appreciation from the Lhasa masses nor convinced them that their interests could be best met as part of China. To the contrary, they had increased nationalistic aspirations and had yielded disturbances and riots that actually weakened Beijing's position in Tibet. This failure prompted Beijing to devise a strategy in which control over Tibet would be secured in ways that were not dependent on having to "win over" the large segment of the current adult generation who were considered hopelessly "reactionary."

In terms of general direction, the new policy had a number of major components. One key conclusion of the meeting was a decision to abandon any remaining hope that the Dalai Lama could be persuaded to play a constructive role in Tibet. The failure of the Dalai Lama to accept the invitation to participate in the funeral activities of the Panchen Lama in early 1989 was a major factor in precipitating this decision and the new policy in general. The Party would now solve the Tibetan problem by itself. In order to be able to accomplish this, a major effort was to be made to strengthen the leadership of the party in Tibet by sending better educated and more highly skilled personnel (non-Tibetans) who could help to modernize the area and its people. Similarly, greater emphasis was to be placed on educating young Tibetan cadre at higher levels. This reinvigoration of the party structure was to occur at all levels - from the top down to the village level.

A third component dealt with the problem of disturbances by employing enhanced security mechanisms to prevent the ongoing string of demonstrations from escalating into riots and to prevent the development of underground organizations with the capacity to create serious incidents. These measures have been very effective, and have created tremendous confidence in Beijing that they can handle whatever tactics Tibetan dissidents (or exiles) try in Tibet. During the four years since martial law was lifted in 1990, there have been no new riots, despite frequent demonstrations. This control was accomplished, moreover, without restricting the day-to-day life of the inhabitants of Lhasa - so long as Lhasans did not engage in political dissidence, they were free to go where they wished, meet with friends, invite monks for religious services, and have parties and so forth.

The cornerstone of the central government's new policy was (and is) economic growth and modernization - i.e., accelerating economic development in Tibet by Beijing providing large subsidies for development projects aimed at building infrastructure and productive capacity. This strategy seeks to modernize Tibet's economy and people, increasing their standard of living, and reducing their isolation by inextricably linking Tibet's economy with the rest of China.

The new strategy is premised on the view that the key to winning over Tibetans is to improve their standard of living and modernize their society, and that to do this effectively, Tibet had to be rapidly developed. Beijing's current plan includes 10% economic growth per annum and a doubling of average income by the year 2000. Beijing, therefore, is now trying to solidify its position in Tibet by investing substantial funds into development rather than by making more and more concessions to ethnic sensibilities. Just this year, for example, Beijing committed 2.38 billion yuan [about 270 million dollars] for a new program of 62 construction projects. And China also just announced that it is again considering building a railroad to Tibet at the anticipated cost of 20 billion yuan (2.36 billion USD).(55)

In some ways, the new strategy is doing what Beijing hoped. A number of Tibetans have clearly benefited economically, and others are now turning their attention from politics to capitalizing on new economic opportunities. However, on the whole, the policy appears problematic in that it is creating a serious backlash.

A component of the "economic integration" approach is the freedom of non-Tibetans (Han Chinese and Hui Muslims) to do business in Tibet. Tens of thousands of Han and

Hui have been drawn to Tibet to participate in construction projects and to open businesses, and these numbers are continuing to increase as Beijing escalates its economic funds and subsidies there. These non-Tibetans are part of the phenomenon called "floating population" in China - that is to say, individuals who are permanent residents in one area (usually a village) but who live and work temporarily in another, usually a city. They do not have "citizen" rights in the place where they work so are not "colonists" in the usual sense, but nonetheless live there for all or part of any given year.(56)

As mentioned above, this began when China extended its "open door" policy to Tibet in 1984-85, but has accelerated tremendously as a result of the rapid economic development. There are no accurate data on the numbers of such people in Tibet (TAR) but they have dramatically changed the demographic composition and atmosphere of Lhasa, and are beginning to expand out into smaller "urban" areas such as county seats (xian). The number of these non-Tibetans is unprecedented in Tibetan history and has turned Lhasa, the political heart of Tibet, into a city where non-Tibetan residents appear to equal the number of actual Tibetans.

This influx has also resulted in non-Tibetans controlling a large segment of the local economy at all levels, from street corner bicycle repairmen to electronic goods store owners, to firms trading with the rest of China. There have been many complaints about this from Tibetans in Lhasa who argue that this flood should be stopped or severely limited because Tibet is a minority "autonomous region" where Tibetans, not outsiders, should be the primary beneficiaries of the new market economic growth. Tibetans believe they cannot compete economically with the more industrious and skilled Han and Hui, so without government intervention to ensure the welfare of the citizens of the autonomous region, they will certainly become increasingly marginalized economically as well as demographically.(57) Beijing, however, has decided against stopping the flow of non-Tibetan workers coming to Tibet, responding to critics that Tibet is poor and that these people have more skills and business know-how than Tibetans and are necessary to develop Tibet quickly.(58)

Beijing's reluctance to terminate this influx is, of course, also understandable politically. The large numbers of non-Tibetans living and working in Tibet provide Beijing a new and formidable pro-China "constituency" that increases its security there.(59) Although these Chinese do not see themselves as permanent colonists, the reality is that at any given time there are a large number of ethnic Chinese residents in key urban areas in Tibet. And many of these, like Americans who end up living their lives in cities where they went to work for just a few years, may end up living their lives in Tibet as well. Thus, since Beijing can not now persuade the majority of Tibetans to accept that being part of China is in their best interests, it can allow people to live in Tibet for whom this is a given. And one can easily imagine that if China's control over Tibet became seriously threatened by violence, not only will more troops be rushed in, but new laws could be promulgated to permanentize the large Han presence by offering attractive perks to the "floating population" to persuade a substantial portion to accept permanent status in Tibet.

Even more important to China's leaders is the expectation that these Chinese will provide a powerful model of modern thinking and behavior that Tibetans will see and gradually emulate. Based on the history of other minority areas, Beijing's leaders are partially banking on a process of acculturation in which the more "advanced" Han will open up

Tibetans to new ideas and attitudes and create a new "modern" Tibetan in the process who will not be so influenced by religion and lamas. Thus, while Beijing realizes that its open-door policy will likely create much pain and anguish among Tibetans in the short run, it feels that this is the price it must pay for modernizing Tibetan society, and that in the long run it will triumph.

Beijing is also trying to use the education system to create a "modern," better educated Tibetan elite. For example, in addition to the standard school system in Tibet, a program of building special Tibetan lower-middle schools in other parts of China began in 1985 and was expanded substantially after 1987. Today there are roughly 10,000 Tibetan youths attending such schools throughout the rest of China, and more also attend upper middle schools and vocational schools. In 1994, another wave of educational and party reform was begun within Tibet that seeks both to reduce illiteracy and to control more closely the content of education so that Tibetan students will not be exposed to subtle nationalist, separatist ideology. Similarly, in 1994, Tibet government officials were ordered to recall any of their children who were attending school in Dharamsala and to cease keeping photographs of the Dalai Lama in their homes.(60)

While such measures are unlikely to eliminate ethnic loyalties and sentiments - e.g., Tibetans living in inland China in many instances actually have their ethnic identities reinforced when they encounter prejudice and bigotry at the hands of local Han - they may well in time create a category of better educated, less religious Tibetans who feel more comfortable living as part of Chinese society. It is too early to assess this clearly.

Beijing's current Tibet policy, moreover, extends also to cultural issues. While Tibetans are free to dress, speak, write and live "Tibetan," Beijing is now reluctant to implement (institutionalize) additional "cultural" changes that would emphasize the distinctness of Tibet and isolate Tibet further from the rest of China, for example, language reforms that would mandate Tibetan language as the standard for government offices. It also continues to maintain ceilings on the number of monks monasteries can hold and has tightened up control over rebuilding old monasteries or renovating/expanding ones already in use. Nor is it willing to consider the argument that relative demographic homogeneity is needed for Tibetan culture to flourish. In essence, therefore, Beijing's post-1989 hard-line policy has implicitly redefined what is meant by ethnic or cultural autonomy in Tibet. There are still special subsidies and preferential treatment in a number of areas such as family planning and education, but the basic policy has moved from the view that Tibet has a special status in China because of its past history to the view that Tibet is just another ethnic group in a multi-ethnic state. Tibet, therefore, is seen now as a region in which Tibetans can practice their culture if they wish, but without a special commitment to demographic and linguistic homogeneity.

Thus, although the cultural freedoms of Tibetans were not rescinded, the overall thrust of the earlier approach was shelved as unrealistic and ineffective and a more hard-line policy was implemented in which modernizing Tibet and creating a new breed of "modern" Tibetans took precedence over catering to ethnic sensibilities. Similarly, measures that made Tibet more distinct and separate from the rest of China were rejected as antithetical to China's national interest. All of this, however, strikes at the heart of Tibetans' view of Tibet as the homeland of their people and culture. It highlights their continued powerlessness vis-a-vis Han interests and exacerbates the bitter enmity many Tibetans feel toward Han Chinese and the central government. Beijing, therefore, has

embarked on a high-risk strategy in Tibet that may very well backfire and exacerbate the very violence, bloodshed and hatred it seeks to overcome.

This new high-risk strategy in Tibet has relegated the Dalai Lama to the sidelines and is forcing him to watch events unfold that from his point of view are tragic. For well over a thousand years of recorded history, through wars and conquest, famines and natural disasters, Tibet remained the exclusive home of a people. Now Tibetans in Tibet and in exile see this being lost right under their eyes. The Dalai Lama continues to experience great international sympathy and has tremendous influence over the attitudes of the local Tibetans in Tibet, but he has no leverage to stop China's new policy since it is not dependent on winning the approval of local Tibetans (in the short run at least) and since the international community has refrained from providing him meaningful support. Beijing, therefore, has, in a sense, turned the tables back on Dharamsala, and the triumphs won by the Dalai Lama's international campaign look more and more like pyrrhic victories. The international initiative won significant symbolic gains for the exiles in the West, but not only did it not compel China to yield to its demands, it played a major role in precipitating the new hard-line policy that is changing the nature of Tibet. Ironically, by threatening China's political hold over Tibet, Dharamsala and its Western supporters provided the advocates of a hard-line Tibet policy the leverage they needed to shift Beijing's Tibet policy away from the ethnically sensitive one advocated by Hu Yaobang in the early 1980s.

Notes

(9) The full letter said: "Your HOLINESS: Two of my fellow countrymen, Ilia Tolstoy and Brooke Dolan, hope to visit your Pontificate and the historic and widely famed city of Lhasa. There are in the United States of America many persons, among them myself, who, long and greatly interested in your land and people, would highly value such an opportunity.

As you know, the people of the United States, in association with those of twenty-seven other countries, are now engaged in a war which has been thrust upon the world by nations bent on conquest who are intent on destroying freedom of thought, of religion, and of action everywhere. The United Nations are fighting today in defense of and for preservation of freedom, confident that we shall be victorious because our cause is just, our capacity is adequate, and our determination is unshakable.

I am asking Ilia Tolstoy and Brooke Dolan to convey to you a little gift in token of my friendly sentiment toward you. With cordial greetings. (cited in Goldstein., op cit., p. 392.).

(10) Woodrow Wilson, for example, on 11 February 1918 told a Joint Session of Congress that, "National aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. 'Self-determination' is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril." (cited in Moynihan, op. cit., pp. 78-79.).

(11) In August 1941 Roosevelt and Churchill stated that, "They respect the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live." (Ibid., p. 93).

(12) Apropos the controversy over whether "ethnographic Tibet" was actually part of political Tibet in 1949, this letter indicates clearly that the then government of Tibet understood that these areas were not under their control so did not feel that it had been invaded when the communists "liberated" them in 1949.

(13) Goldstein op. cit., p. 625.

(14) Ibid., p. 626.

(15) Ibid., pp. 628-629.

(16) Ibid., p. 630. By contrast, President Truman ordered the U.S. 7th fleet to begin patrolling the Taiwan Straits in June 1950 to overtly show the U.S. commitment to the security of Taiwan. (Harding, H. The United States and China since 1972. 1992).

(17) In 1949-50, China was divided (by the Chinese communists) into four large Military-Civil Bureaus. These were charged with operating newly liberated areas until a time when "people's governments" could be established. The S.W. Bureau was in charge of Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Tibet.

(18) Goldstein, op. cit., p. 715.

(19) So did the United States.

(20) India also argued that it feared bringing up the Tibet issue at that time would hurt its efforts to achieve a cease-fire in Korea.

(21) Claims that this agreement is invalid since it was signed under duress are misleading. Certainly the Tibetans did not want to sign a treaty acknowledging Chinese sovereignty, but like many defeated countries had little choice. The Chinese negotiators on several occasions made threats to continue the invasion into Central Tibet if certain points were not accepted, but the Tibetan negotiators were never themselves physically threatened and were free to refuse to sign an agreement right up to the end. Similarly, the common charge that the seal of the Tibetan Government was forged by the Chinese is incorrect. The Chinese made only personal seals for each of the Tibetan delegates and these are what they used to sign the agreement. See Goldstein op. cit. Chapter 20, for a detailed discussion of this agreement.

(22) Point 11 stated: "In matters related to various reforms in Tibet, there will be no compulsion on the part of the central authorities. The local government of Tibet should carry out reforms of its own accord, and when the people raise demands for reform, they shall be settled by means of consultation with the leading personnel of Tibet." (cited in Goldstein op. cit., pp. 766-68.).

(23) The development of U.S. involvement is discussed in detail in *Ibid.*, p. 763 ff.

(24) Dalai Lama, interview.

(25) It is interesting to note that this was taking place while Mao was turning more leftist in China proper, launching the anti-rightist campaign in 1957 and the Great Leap Forward in 1958.

(26) Immediately after the 1959 uprising, monasteries were classified according to whether they were involved in the uprising or not. In those so designated, most monks were either sent home or sent to work units (as laymen). A few monasteries not involved in the uprising such as Tashilhunpo, the seat of the Panchen Lama, continued to function as monasteries until the Cultural Revolution. In other important monasteries, a small number of monks were permitted to remain to look after their possessions, etc. The well known destruction of monastic buildings, books, statues and so forth mainly occurred a few years later during the Cultural Revolution in 1966-67.

(27) It should be remembered that Deng Xiaoping was intimately involved in the Tibet Question. From 1949-1955 he was Political Commissar of the SW Bureau in Qongqing (which was in charge of the 1950 invasion and administration of Tibet). He then moved to Beijing in 1955 where he served as General Secretary of the Party.

(28) International Commission of Jurists. *The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law*. Geneva, 1959, p. iv.

(29) Public Records Office (FO371 150710), 20 Feb. 1960 reply of Christian A. Herter to Dalai Lama.

(30) U.N. Resolution 1723 (XVI) of 20 December 1961 as cited in Van Praag, M. *The Status of Tibet*. Westview Press, 1987.

(31) And presumably, an indeterminate number of Tibetans in Tibet.

(32) See Goldstein, M.C. and Beall, C.M. *Nomads of Western Tibet: The Survival of a Way of Life*. U. of California Press., 1990, pp. 40-46.

(33) *Tibetan Review*, June 1978, p. 4.; Feb. 1979, p. 9ff.; Feb 1989, p. 9. Deng Xiaoping had also raised the Tibetan Question on 28 December 1978 when he responded to U.S. newspapermen that "the Dalai Lama may return, but only as a citizen of China." And, "we have but one demand patriotism. And we say that anyone is welcome, whether he embraces patriotism early or late." ... Deng added that even though the Dalai Lama disliked the government in the past, if he now likes it, the past is irrelevant. (Ren min Ribao (People's Daily, Beijing edition), "White Paper," 9/24/92).

(34) From the "Report of the National United Front Work Conference," 23 January 1982, (Minzu zhengce wenxuan, Selected Documents of Nationality Policy. Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1985, p. 10), as cited in Sharlho, T W. "China's Reforms in Tibet: Issues and Dilemmas." *The J. of Contemporary China*. 1 (1): 38, (1992).

(35) National here refers to nationality or ethnic.

(36) Summary of World Broadcasts. 30 May 1980 (NCNA in Chinese).

(37) In China there are no "nationality" communist parties. Consequently, the communist party in Tibet is part of the one undivided Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and is subordinate to its policies.

(38) It should be noted that the Han cadre withdrawal policy ran into many obstacles in Tibet because disapproving "leftist" cadre dragged their feet in implementation and because many of these Han cadre decided it was in their economic well-being to remain in Tibet. Generally, the Chinese officials with special skills such as doctors, scientists and so forth were eager to leave because they had no trouble finding suitable work, but those without such skills quickly found that they were worse off in inland China. The Central Government had stipulated that their home province had to accept them, but had not stipulated that this acceptance would be at the same salary and with equivalent the perks as they received in Tibet. These officials also had their families with them in Lhasa, most of whom were earning income. When they came to realize that returning to inland China would mean a drop in their standard of living, a large number protested and insisted that the salary/perks issue be decided in advance, i.e. before they left Tibet. The combination of these issues resulted in the withdrawal policy never being fully implemented. In fact, it probably had the unintended consequence of having the best, most skilled cadre leave and the least skilled remain.

(39) *News Tibet*. September-December, 1993, p. 7.; and a ms., Office of Tibet (emphasis added).

(40) *Beijing Review*. 49 (5): 10, 1984.

(41) *Tibetan Review*. May 1983, p. 5.

(42) Letter from Dalai Lama to Jiang Zemin, 11 September 1992. (Office of Tibet, N.Y.C.).

(43) In October 1982, e.g., the Office of Tibet in NYC submitted a 14 page document on "Chinese Human Rights Abuses in Tibet: 1959-1982."

(44) One Tibetan scholar has written that the exiles raised these points at the 1982 meeting but that appears to be incorrect (Dawa Norbu. "China's Dialogue with the Dalai Lama 1987-90: Pre-negotiation State or Dead End?" *Pacific Affairs*. 64 (3) 1991).

(45) The new strategy was finalized, it appears, after a series of high-level meetings between key Tibetan and Western supporters in New York, Washington and London in 1986/87.

The history of these developments have not yet been well documented and details are still sparse.

(46) In fact, he first visited the U.S. only in 1979, having previously been denied a visa for ten years (Grunfeld, T A.. "The internationalization of Tibet." unpublished manuscript).

(47) *News Tibet*. 22 (3) May August 1988, p. 8. The exile Tibetans had received their first explicit support from the U.S. Congress in July, 1985 when 91 Congressmen signed a letter to Li Xiannian, President of the PRC, expressing support for continued direct

talks and urging the Chinese to "grant the very reasonable and justified aspirations of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his people every consideration." (Point 14 of Section 1243 of Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989 cited in Congressional Ceremony to Welcome His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet, U.S. Government Printing Office 1992).

(48) The talk used "Greater Tibet" as the referent for "Tibet."

(49) Ibid., p. 96.

(50) Ibid.

(51) Much of this and the next section was adapted from Goldstein, M. "The Snow Lion and the Dragon." In Kane, T (ed.) China Briefing 1990. Westview Press, 1990.

(52) All but one of these were eventually released before the Prayer Festival started.

(53) Other accounts of these events are found in Sharlho, op. cit., and Schwartz, R.D. Circle of Protest: Political Ritual in the Tibetan Uprising. Columbia U. Press, 1994.

(54) It was strongly criticized, for example, by the Tibetan Youth Congress, the European Tibetan Youth Association and the elder brother of the Dalai Lama, Thupten Norbu. The latter sent a letter to Tibetans throughout the world attacking his brother's decision to relinquish the goal of independence.

(55) International Campaign for Tibet, 2/11/1994.

(56) They are, therefore, coming not on orders from Beijing but because there are lucrative jobs to be had and money to be earned.

(57) One is reminded of the difficulties indigenous populations in Malaysia and Indonesia faced trying to compete with Chinese.

(58) This is somewhat surprising given that Beijing has not permitted the kind of laissez faire economic competition that is allowed in Tibet to develop between Chinese and the industrial world.

(59) Since Beijing does not have to worry about votes for its policy in Tibet, this is not a constituency in the normal Western sense. It resembles more the "facts on the ground" type of constituency that Israel uses on the West Bank, although these "facts" do not have citizenship in Tibet.

(60) The very fact that Tibetan cadre were doing this illustrates the magnitude of Beijing's problem.