

Reflections on the Current State of Theoretical Policy on Tibet.

by The Tibet Youth Association for Theory.

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Editor's Note.

Over recent years Bourgeois Liberalisation has run rampant over ideology and political theory in all of our country, and without any doubt has also affected our Tibet. The urgent need, and the hard task facing policy theorists in the region, is how to proceed from the realities of our Autonomous Region to oppose Bourgeois Liberalisation and eliminate its harmful effect, while both enacting the spirit of the Fourth Plenary Session of the Thirteenth National Party congress.

In Tibet Bourgeois Liberalisation, while it displays general features, has specific features that come from the special conditions, and these make the counter-struggle even more difficult. We need to distinguish between right and wrong and reality and falsehood in our theoretical explorations. Of course, as an exploration this article has its biases and mistakes. In order to carry out our Party's "Double Hundred" Policy, we publish it here as "one school among a hundred" for people's reference. After reading the article we believe you will be able to come to your own conclusions and make the distinction between truth and falsehood.

One

Reflections on political policy in Tibet over the last decade shows that while people's spirit has become more liberal and their minds more active, and that great achievements have been made, there is one ideological strain of thought that has been becoming stronger and stronger. At the end of the decade it has spread to all areas.

Political problems have been solved politically and theoretical problems now need to be solved theoretically. Now it is [again] possible, correct and necessary, to study this ideology from a Marxist standpoint and approach.

A bourgeois liberal ideology that negated socialism appeared in China soon after the downfall of the Gang Of Four. Over the decade since then this thought, rather than being held in check, has become stronger. Now it has finally run rampant. While the basic

pattern in Tibet has been the same as elsewhere in the country, in many ways this bourgeois liberal ideology has manifested itself differently.

The movement to "Redeem Wrongs" started in Tibet between 1979-1980, when there were two main events. The first was the major discussions on "Practice is the only Yardstick for Truth" during March-April 1979; the other was the First Symposium on Work in Tibet held by the Central Government in March 1980. After the ten year disaster of the Cultural Revolution and the errors of "leftism", the priority in politics was to make practical theoretical decisions both to negate leftist ideology and [the theme] of "taking class struggle as the key link".

Since that time developments have not been as correct as was expected. From June 1979 to November 1985, though there were a great many speeches aimed at eliminating "leftism", among those hundreds of editorials and reviews there were only eight articles that stuck to the "Four Basic Principles" [Socialism, Marxist-Leninism, the Democratic Dictatorship of the People, and the Leadership of the Party], all of which were published during the campaign for "the Elimination of Bourgeois Liberalisation".

Over this long period theoretical and ideological emphasis has been on a discussion of "Re-understanding of Tibet" and "Proceeding in all Cases from the Reality of Tibet". Theoretical nationality and religion became the most popular subjects.

Though many socio-political activities were in the name of Marxism and Maoism, as well as proceeding from the reality of Tibet, in practice the Marxist and Maoist principles were lost and the sense of "Proceeding from the Reality of Tibet" was twisted. There was a period when the leadership of the Party and Government dropped to the lowest level which had an effect in every political, cultural and economic field, especially at the local-levels. In rural areas the two "Long-term Constancies" became the two "Long-term out of Controls"; work and leadership took on a laissez-faire attitude. In a sense, the redeeming of political wrongs from the past made the socialist revolution in Tibet appear less significant. From time to time it was denied that in 1959 there had been a rebellion that required suppression, or that democratic reform followed. Yet no-one counter-attacked. Under the excuse of a major regional and national "special case", Marxism and Maoism were automatically listened to. The faults of the "redeeming the wrongs of the past" policy of nationalism, religion and the united front [overseas Tibetans] hurt people on a large-scale: over the last two years the separatist forces at home and abroad collaborated, making riots. When faced by these counter-revolutionary events we were hesitant in pointing them out for what they were, soft in dealing with them, light in punishing them, and did not criticise them enough ideologically. The result of this was that the unhealthy trends increased, and the healthy ones decreased, and the blame for the riots was put on the Party and Government.

Looking back over the past decade we find that the shadow of "leftism" has been hanging over Tibet, and under the threat of this "leftist shadow" tens of year's of history of socialist revolution was being denied. The ideological and theoretical confusion created

by this increased the tension between nationalities, and obstructed every course of development.

Two

[It is true that] the ten years of disorder [the Cultural Revolution] did great damage to Tibet. It is necessary and correct to put everything in order, and these wrongs have to be redeemed: the [true] question has to be why those whose stand is "Proceeding in all cases from the Reality of Tibet" have not done this. Tibet has had a different social history from other parts of our country, as both the great social changes and moves forwards [in Tibet] have been [immediately] before, during and after the period of the Cultural Revolution. No matter from whichever side such difficult issues are viewed, it is obvious that to negate the Cultural Revolution would be also to negate the socialist revolution that took place here, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.

We have a responsibility both to history and the people, but so far we have not had responsible explanations. The socialist revolution of Tibet was fundamentally different from the nation-wide political disorder [of that time] the similarity between the two being only one of dates. Theoreticians have not paid attention to this and it is hard to be sure that such an oversight has not been used by someone.

The debates on "Practice is the Yardstick" and Proceeding from Tibet's Reality" were to eliminate and oppose "leftism". These turned into discussions on the chauvinism of Han people. Looking back at the situation of that period, it is impossible that at one level these debates were other than influenced by a crude ethnology and a bourgeois reactionary ethnology.

Over these [last] ten years religion has always been a sharp and thorny problem. There was one period when religion became almost Government policy and practice, and on that basis expanded without limits. In Marx's terms this was no longer a "purely personal right". The major argument debate of "religion as opium or not opium" has never been worked through; but in a minor way - which nevertheless could influence leadership policy - the sayings that "religion is harmless", "religion is as perfect as Marxism" and that "some religious theories are a basic part of Socialist Spiritual Reconstruction" became very popular. Even now, in school education, in the social training of young people, in nation-wide political training, and even in ideological debate, the issue of whether the Communist Part or Temples be dominant has never been worked through. Should Communist and Socialist or some other ideology be the commander? This problem also exists at local levels of political power. This issue has not been solved, at least not theoretically.

So too with the issue of nationalism. The argument for a special regional and national character became so popular it was as if Tibet could move along a path diametrically opposite to that of the modernization of the rest of the world. So special that it could do whatever it wanted at the cost and interest of the whole country, even carrying out "autonomous independence movements under the limitations given by the Communist

Party". It seemed as if the alliance under nationalism could outweigh internal political differences and completely remove the political struggle within a nation. It seemed as if in the problems of relations between nationalities there was only a Han Chauvinism, but no local national differences. It seemed as if it was right to put sole and heavy emphasis on the so-called "inequality in relations between nations" [then] simplified to "Han Oppression" and to deny or reduce the importance of the common efforts of all nations, and especially the backward nations themselves, in eliminating the [material] differences left by history. Taken to extreme, this argument for regional and national character led to study and the carrying out of work in Tibet solely from the perspective of nationalism, ethnology or the [outside Tibetan] united front. Those who hold these views often quoted from Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, but they never paid any attention to the integrity of their thoughts.

[The saying is] "Be united together, love our county and be progressive", yet being progressive was relegated to a following position. The means and tactics for the development of Tibet was prudence, but this prudence became not just the means but the yardstick for decisions and final goal. The idea was [just] to adopt the traditional Tibetan culture left by the backward serf system as a whole, as national culture, without any sifting or sorting.

This guiding thought showed everywhere, including Tibetology. With some people Marxism too was turned into nationalism, and there were people who discreetly introduced the idea of "self-determination" under the concept of "human rights" to Tibet, giving a theoretical ground for arguing for "independence"...

Three

[Summary: there was a sentimental wavering in politics and problems in theory, as a proper Marxist anthropology was not firmly established.]

A first problem was that theories were redirected according to the political wind and the views of a few authoritative persons. Marxism and Maoism were made into dogmas or simplified, and there was a pragmatism and corruption in the direction of theorising. In some ways we were influenced by the academic thought of Tibetology in other countries.

A second serious problem came from our neglect of the co-existence of two ideologies, to the point of our unawareness or ability to distinguish between the successive central government dynasties had been different to that between other national minorities and the central government, some people held that this should continue, calling it "dialectical materialism". Even those who were influenced by it became aware of the confrontation and conflict between these two ideologies (communism and religion). For example when atheism and communism were put forward they were resisted by religion and from other areas. It is natural that contrasting ideologies should resist each other, and our fault was to try to find the conditions and ways in which Marxism and religion could co-exist.

Hence we should not be surprised that students of socialist universities have finally opposed the Communist Party in politics. Though we had never claimed that we wished

to give up Marxism or Leninism, or political training, our advocacy of these and work for many years has not been as powerful as those of people with ulterior motives. Theories in Tibet have not developed to the point where people like Fang Lizhi or Su Xiaokan can appear, but under the special social and historical conditions of Tibet many of their followers can surface.

[Summary: Thirdly, we oscillate between the extremes of "left" & "right" in our thoughts, trying to apply these labels in all conditions.]

Four

The influence of Bourgeois Liberalisation is not always directly clear, and its spread and links form in many ways. There are arguments and views that deny the leadership of our party, deny Marxism, deny the socialist system, and deny the democratic dictatorship of the people; but Tibet, while it has the same atmosphere as the rest of the country and opposes and denies the "four principles", here it has taken its own form. Its character is to counter the interests of the whole country with national interests, to deny Marxism and Maoism's guiding position with religious national consciousness, and to take crude, bourgeois ethnology as the basis for the study of social science.

As some knowledgeable people have already pointed out in examining the errors of our Party, Han people have only political sentiments, not national sentiments; but with some national minorities it is the opposite; in reaction to the nihilism and pain that once was inflicted on their nation and its culture, there arises a kind of reverse psychology in which "nationalism" becomes a standard of value. This sentimental obstruction makes the original isolation more extreme and creates a centrifugal force in politics. Sentiment and love of one's own nation is easily controlled by evil-intentioned people, and the common man is not often aware of its drawbacks in politics.

Since the Second World War one strategy used by foreign reactionary forces to fight against the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of eastern Europe has been to stir up national and religious sentiments and drive a wedge between national minorities and these socialist countries, sabotaging national unity and integrity. These foreign reactionary forces have planned to use religion and nationalism as a pressure on socialist countries: "splittism" both inside and outside Tibet flaunts the flag of religion and nationalism, dividing the country. This makes the political struggle against splittism even more complex, and any fault in politics can lead to a serious loss in politics.

We should be aware that some people also advocate rethinking on nationalism. But their awakening, rethinking and vitalisation are not guided by a modern consciousness and a knowledge of historical development. They cannot make us move towards a higher level of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation. If we lose the right leadership of our Party, drift from the direction of socialism, splittism, which would be a serious step backwards towards a feudal consciousness and the middle ages.

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