

THE TIBETANS:

two perspectives on Tibetan-Chinese relations



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- To secure justice for minority or majority groups suffering discrimination, by investigating their situation and publicising the facts as widely as possible, to educate and alert public opinion throughout the world.
- To help prevent, through publicity about violations of human rights, such problems from developing into dangerous and destructive conflicts which, when polarised, are very difficult to resolve; and
- To foster, by its research findings, international understanding of the factors which create prejudiced treatment and group tensions, thus helping to promote the growth of a world conscience regarding human rights.

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two perspectives on Tibetan-Chinese relations

by Chris Mullin and Phuntsog Wangyal

Contents

Part I by Chris Mullin

Introduction	5
China's minorities policy – in theory	5
Tibet	6
The status of Tibet	7
Tibet before the uprising (1950-9)	7
After the uprising (1959-66)	8
The cultural revolution – and after (1966-79)	9
Tibet today	11
Conclusion	12
Select bibliography	12
Notes	13

Part II by Phuntsog Wangyal

Introduction	14
The setting	14
The Chinese invasion	16
The aftermath	17
Tibetans in exile	21
Some recent impressions	22
Conclusions	22
Notes	23
Appendix I : A full list of minority peoples in China	25
Appendix II : Basic Study Guide No.55 – the official position on religion	27

THE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from any fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if a man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore,

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims

THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6. Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7. All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8. Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10. Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11. (1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14. (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

(2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15. (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16. (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17. (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21. (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22. Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23. (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interest.

Article 24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25. (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26. (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27. (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

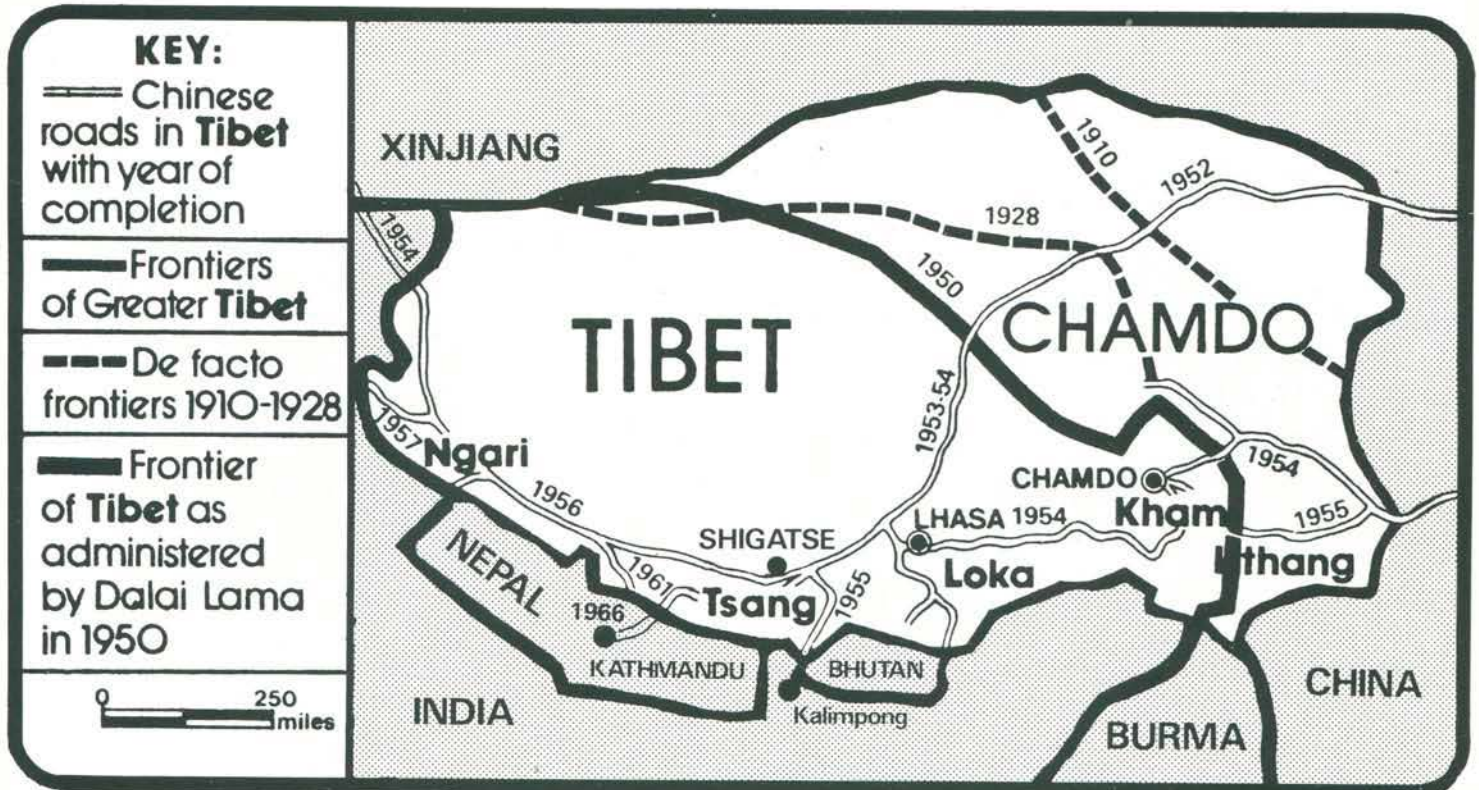
Article 28. Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29. (1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.



'Far East Economic Review'

INTRODUCTION: China's minorities and Tibet

The minority peoples of China divide into 54 nationalities and altogether constitute just 6% of the population. In most other countries they would be considered statistically insignificant. In China 6% of the population is 54 million people. More importantly, they occupy over half the land area of China, much of it strategically vital.¹

Most Chinese – known as Han – are rice and wheat farmers who live crowded into the valleys of the Yangtse and Yellow rivers or in the fertile eastern coastal provinces. By contrast the minority peoples, some of whom do not concede that they are part of China, for the most part occupy the great grasslands, deserts and mountain regions in the extreme north, south and west of China. In some regions they straddle the borders with countries whose relationship with China is either hostile or cool – the Soviet Union, Vietnam and India.

Although nominally the minority nationalities have been part of the Chinese empire for many centuries, effective central government control over minority areas was exercised only by the strongest dynasties before the victory of the Communist Revolution in 1949. This has meant that in the past, provided that they posed no threat to the central government, the minority peoples were generally left in peace. Over the centuries many of them developed unique and sophisticated cultures which survived undisturbed until the coming of the Chinese communists. From the beginning the communists professed a desire to preserve and even encourage the more benign aspects of minority cultures while at the same time enabling the minority peoples to contribute to and share in the development of China as a whole.

In practice this has not always worked out as planned. While there have been undeniable improvements in the health, education and even prosperity of many minority peoples in China, the promise of self-government has proved largely illusory. What has been presented as an opportunity for education and economic development has often turned out to be little more than an attempt to assimilate minority peoples into the Han culture. Religion, language and local agricultural practice has often been suppressed at the cost of great resentment and, in the case of Tibet, armed rebellion.

The Chinese government now acknowledges that serious mistakes have been made in its treatment of minority peoples. At the time of writing, a genuine effort appears to be underway to put right the wrongs of the past. For the first time in 15 years the practice of religion is again permitted; local languages and literature are being revived; Han officials in minority regions are now being replaced by locals. Inevitably, however, a question mark hangs over these latest changes. How long will they last? Will the line change again? Will there be another Great Leap Forward, another Cultural Revolution or another Gang of Four? Nobody knows.

Whatever the answer, one other point must be made. The Chinese communists' treatment of minority peoples in China has, for all its faults, been incomparably more civilized than that meted out by, for example, white settlers to the American Indians, the Australian Aborigines, the Indians in Brazil or for that matter the Palestinians in Israel.

This report looks first at the theoretical basis for relations between the Chinese government and the minority peoples of China. It then goes on briefly to compare theory with practice in China's largest and most difficult autonomous region, Tibet. In a way it is unfair to concentrate on Tibet because it has been without doubt the least successful example of relations between the Chinese communists and a minority people. On the other hand, it does encapsulate everything that has gone wrong with the Chinese government's policy towards minorities.

Tibet offers another advantage. More information is available on the subject than on any other of China's minority regions. This is not saying a great deal. The minority peoples of China dwell in some of the most remote and inhospitable territories of the earth. They have been visited by very few outsiders, either before or since the revolution in China. Much of what has been written is based either on hearsay or interpretation of official publications or broadcasts. Tibet is different. Because its civilization seems to exert a unique fascination on the handful of westerners who have ever reached Tibet, many of them have written copiously about it. Besides which, because Chinese policy there went so badly wrong, 100,000

Tibetans now live in the outside world and have provided a steady stream of information (not all reliable) to anyone who cares to listen. Finally, the Chinese themselves, deeply embarrassed by their failure, have also fed the outside world with a steady flow of information (not all reliable) on Tibet. The result is that we know more about Tibetans than about any other of China's minority peoples.

CHINA'S MINORITIES POLICY – IN THEORY ²

The importance of remaining on good terms with the minority nationalities has been an article of faith in the Chinese Communist Party from its earliest days. In 1922 – only one year after the foundation of the CCP – the Second National Congress proposed that the Han, Mongol, Tibetan and Turkic peoples of China should inhabit a federation of separate republics along the lines already laid down by Lenin in the Soviet Union. By 1935 this approach had been modified and the CCP declared that national minorities who co-operated in resistance to the Japanese invaders and the civil war against Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang would be given autonomous and equal status in the new China. This meant that while national minorities would not have the right to secede from the People's Republic of China, they would have control over their own affairs. This was to form the basis of future CCP policy towards the minority peoples and it remains in force, in theory at least, until the present day.

The status of the minority peoples in China is set out in three basic documents: *The Common Programme* (1949); *The General Programme for the Implementation of Regional Autonomy for Nationalities in the People's Republic of China* (1952) and the *Constitution of the People's Republic of China* (1954).

Article 50 of the *Common Programme* reads:

'All nationalities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China are equal. They shall establish unity and mutual aid among themselves, and shall oppose imperialism and their own public enemies, so that the People's Republic of China will become a big fraternal and co-operative family composed of all nationalities. Greater nationalism and chauvinism shall be opposed. Acts involving discrimination, oppression, and the splitting of the unity of the various nationalities shall be prohibited.'

Nothing in this clause should be interpreted to mean that the nationalities were to be allowed to opt out of building socialism or communism. The CCP has always accepted that because of the different historical, political, cultural and religious conditions prevailing in the minority area the pace of change might be slower; that there might be some difference in style; that the idiosyncracies of the various nationalities might be tolerated, but the goal has always been the same: prosperity through socialism. This was made clear from the start. This, for example, is what the President of China, Liu Shaoqi, had to say in his *Report on the Draft Constitution* delivered in September 1954:

'The building of a socialist society is the common object of all nationalities within our country. Only socialism can guarantee to each and every nationality a high degree of economic and cultural development. Our state has a duty to help all nationalities within the country to take this path step by step to happiness.'

And this is what the *Peking Review* had to say on the subject 25 years later and after many mistakes in policy towards the nationalities were openly acknowledged:

'The population of the minority nationalities in China comprises only 6% of the total, but the area they inhabit is about 50 to 60% and is rich in natural resources. Since the bulk of China's grasslands and forests and many kinds of minerals are in those regions, their active support and participation is indispensable to socialist modernization.'³

Returning to the *Common Programme*, article 51 states:

'Regional autonomy shall be exercised in areas where national minorities are concentrated and various kinds of autonomy organizations of the different nationalities shall be set up according to the size of the respective populations and regions. In places where different nationalities live together and in the autonomous areas of the national minorities, the different nationalities shall each have an appropriate number of representatives in the local organs of political power.'

At the lower levels of the administration this policy has been generally adhered to. In every prefecture, county, town and province it is no doubt possible to show a percentage of minority representatives which accurately reflects local demography. Even at the National Peoples' Congress minority nationalities are guaranteed at least 150 seats or more than twice the number they would be entitled to on a proportional basis.

¹For notes to Part I see page 13

Appearances are, however, deceptive. For real power in China resides not in the machinery of government, but in the Communist Party and, as we shall see, nearly all the important posts in the Communist Party committees in autonomous regions are occupied by Han Chinese. Even in cases where the principal post is occupied by a representative of a minority nationality, his deputy is invariably a Han and all the evidence suggests that this is where real power lies. The same applies in the People's Liberation Army, which in areas like Tibet and Xinjiang, plays a very important role. Virtually all the senior officers are Han.

Article 53 of the *Common Programme* states:

'All national minorities shall have freedom to develop their dialects and languages, to preserve or reform their traditions, customs and religious beliefs. The People's Government shall assist the masses of the people of all national minorities to develop their political, economic, cultural and educational construction work.'

However worthy the intentions, the record shows that – until recently at least – local languages, traditions and religious beliefs have been systematically suppressed. In minority regions most government business is transacted in the Han language; most education above primary school level is conducted in Han; most literature is written in Han and – at least during the period 1966 to 1976 – the practice of religion was all but outlawed and most churches, temples and mosques physically destroyed. Where there has been economic, social or education progress it has been mainly along guidelines laid down centrally and followed throughout China.

One of the main instruments for developing the political and economic – if not the cultural – side of life in minority regions has been the series of nationalities institutes set up to educate minority cadres. At present there are ten nationalities institutes (including those in Peking, Shanghai, Xianyang, Kunming, Chengdu, Urumqi, Nanning, Changsha) and by the end of 1978 94,000 people were said to have graduated from them. Teaching takes place in Chinese and students must first learn Chinese before they can proceed with other courses. I visited the Minority Institute in Chengdu in April 1979 and was told the syllabus included politics, history, mathematics and animal husbandry. At that time there were 830 students from 11 different nationalities (one third of the total were Han Chinese). The institute had opened in 1951 and was closed during the Cultural Revolution. Inevitably, graduates from nationalities institutes tend to be sinocised having learned the Chinese language and an officially approved version of history and politics.

Overall responsibility for policy towards minority peoples is in the hands of the State Nationalities Affairs Commission headed by a government minister.

TIBET

Tibet is one of the earth's most remote territories, sealed off from the outside world by the massive Himalayan mountains to the south and east and from the north by the wastes of the Qinghai desert. In area it is almost as big as Western Europe and has a population of just 1.8 million. In addition several million other Tibetans live in the neighbouring provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, Qinghai and Gansu. In the high grasslands to the north of the country the people are mainly nomads who make a living rearing yaks and sheep and live in yak hair tents. In the centre and eastern parts of Tibet the people are mainly farmers living in valleys between high mountains and subsisting on a staple diet of barley porridge and butter tea. The average height above sea level of the populated areas in Tibet is about 12,000 feet.

Until 1959 Tibet was ruled by the Dalai Lama and a hierarchy of monks (or lamas) and aristocrats. The Dalai Lama is believed by most Tibetans to be the reincarnation of Chenresi, the Buddha of Mercy, and no amount of Chinese propaganda to the contrary has convinced them otherwise. The present Dalai Lama, who now lives in exile, is the 14th reincarnation. When he lived in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, the Dalai Lama dwelt at the top of the Potala, a spectacular 13-storey palace, from where he was permitted almost no contact with ordinary mortals. When he left the Potala, which he rarely did, he travelled in a curtained sedan chair, escorted by horsemen and foot-soldiers and protected by monk-policemen armed with staves.

When a Dalai Lama died a search was immediately instituted to find his reincarnation. The process sometimes took several years

while high lamas travelled on horseback to all parts of Tibet in search of a baby boy answering to the description of the Living Buddha. Once the reincarnation had been discovered he was taken to Lhasa and closeted in the vast Potala palace. Since the Dalai Lama was always discovered in infancy, Tibet would be governed by a Regent until he attained his majority. The Regent was invariably the Abbot of one of the great monasteries around Lhasa and it was not unknown for fighting to break out among monks of rival monasteries when they were unable to agree on who should be Regent. Despite the respect for all living things which is supposed to characterize the practice of Buddhism, the regents were not above murdering even the Dalai Lama himself in order not to have to surrender power as he attained his majority. The ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth Dalai Lamas all died before they reached the age when they would assume responsibility for governing Tibet. The ninth was murdered and the twelfth died in suspicious circumstances.⁴

Tibetan Buddhism was far from the gentle, peace-loving creed it is often made out to have been. Many centuries before the coming of the Chinese communists Tibetan Buddhism had deteriorated into lamaism – rule by lamas. To consolidate their hold over the population the lamas had devised a fearsome array of demons and monsters which they threatened to turn loose upon any hapless Tibetan foolish enough to stray from the path they laid down. It is not necessary to take the word of the Chinese communists for what went on before they occupied Tibet. Percival Landon, a correspondent of *The Times* who reached Lhasa with a British military expedition in 1904, wrote:

'No priestly caste in the history of religion has ever preyed upon the terror and ignorance of its flock with the systematic brigandage of the lamas.'⁵

Heinrich Harrer, who spent several years in Tibet up to 1950 and who was extremely sympathetic to the old order, wrote of an attempted coup by a former monk Regent:

'The monks of the monastery of Sera revolted ... and panic broke out in the town. The dealers barricaded their shops and took away their goods for safety... The nobles shut the gates of their homes and armed their servants... People were less preoccupied with the political crisis than with the fear that the monks of Sera, who numbered many thousands, would break into Lhasa and pillage the town.'⁶

Clearly these were not monks in our sense of the word.

Altogether about one-fifth of the male population of Tibet were monks and every valley had its monastery – in all about 2,700. The greatest were around Lhasa: Sera, Ganden and Drepung. Drepung, the largest, had about 10,000 monks. Many monks were only children offered up to the monasteries by poor parents in lieu of taxes or debts to act as servants for the more important lamas. Other children were sent to the monastery as an act of devotion and others still because the monasteries offered the only hope of education and advancement in a land which had no secular schools.

Most land in Tibet was owned either by the monasteries or by the handful of aristocratic families. The position of the Tibetan peasant has been described by Captain W.F.T. O'Connor, the British agent stationed at Gyantse in Tibet around 1904. Captain O'Connor wrote:

'... Throughout the country there are two classes – the great land-owners and the priests – which exercise each in its own dominion a despotic power from which there is no appeal. The peasant on an estate is in almost every sense a serf. He is bound to furnish the greater part of his agricultural produce for the use of his landlord, keeping only enough for the bare support of himself and his family. He cannot without his Lord's permission leave the soil or the country, and he is compelled to provide free transport and supplies to all official travellers – Chinese or Tibetan.'⁷

Captain O'Connor went on:

'But in spite of this state of affairs, it need not be supposed that, administratively, the Tibet peasant is ground beneath a tyrannical yoke. In spite of the arbitrary rule of the nobles and officials the country on the whole is well governed and the people well treated. They are not, it is true, allowed to take any liberties or to infringe the orders of their superiors, but as long as they confine themselves to their legitimate sphere of action and, above all, abstain from political offences, their lives are lived simply and happily enough under a sort of patriarchal sway.'⁸

For those who did not 'confine themselves to their legitimate sphere of action' hideous punishments lay in store ranging from flogging (sometimes to death) to the amputation of limbs, the putting out of eyes and flaying alive. In 1967 the museum in Lhasa contained dried arms and legs hacked off in this way and even the skin of a man allegedly flayed from head to toe.⁹ Heinrich Harrer wrote:

'I was told of a man who had stolen a golden butter lamp from one of the temples in Kyirong. He was convicted of the offence and what we would

think an inhuman sentence was carried out. His hands were publicly cut off and he was then sewn up in a wet yak skin. After this had been allowed to dry, he was thrown over a precipice.¹⁰

While it would be wrong to exaggerate the unpleasant aspects of life in the old Tibet, they should be borne in mind in any objective assessment of what has happened there in the last 30 years. Captain O'Connor perhaps best summarized life under the old order when he wrote of Tibetans as 'simply agricultural people, superstitious indeed to the last degree, but devoid of any deep-rooted religious convictions or heart-searchings, oppressed by the most monstrous growth of monasticism and priest-craft which the world has ever seen.'¹¹ This was the world that the Chinese communists entered in 1950.

THE STATUS OF TIBET¹²

When they entered Tibet in 1950 the Chinese communists did not regard themselves as invading a foreign country. All Chinese governments (communist, nationalist and imperial) for the last 260 years have regarded Tibet as part of China and, by and large, Chinese sovereignty in Tibet has been accepted by the outside world. When central government in China has been weak, as it was for the first half of this century, the degree of control exercised in Tibet has necessarily been tenuous and Tibetans have enjoyed *de facto* independence. Nevertheless the fact remains that no country in the world has ever formally recognized Tibet as an independent country and when the communist government moved into Tibet it merely saw itself as undertaking the liberation of the most remote part of China's territory.

Many Tibetans, not unnaturally, take a different view. They argue that their country is ethnically, culturally and geographically quite distinct from China. Further, they say that whatever the historical relationship between China and Tibet, after the collapse of the Ch'ing dynasty in 1911 Tibet was for all practical purposes self-governing and remained so until the arrival of the communist armies in 1950. Moreover, Tibetans argue, on several occasions between 1911 and 1950 Britain and America and a number of other countries tacitly acknowledged Tibet's independence.

What view one takes of these competing claims depends on where one opens the history book. The International Commission of Jurists in its influential, but extremely suspect, report on Tibet chose to commence its consideration of the question in 1912 and came to the conclusion that Tibet was an independent country.¹³ In reality the matter is a little more complex.

The recorded history of Tibet starts in the seventh century when the country was ruled by a long line of kings of whom the most significant was Song-Tsen-Gampo (said to be the 33rd king). In addition to his three Tibetan wives Song-Tsen-Gampo married two princesses, one from Nepal and one from China. The princess from China brought with her an image of the Buddha, the Jo, which to this day is displayed in the central cathedral in Lhasa (the Jokhang) and is regarded as the holiest idol in Tibet. It was about this time that Buddhism became established.

The 36th king invaded China and conquered several provinces; under the 37th, monks were ordained for the first time; the 40th king agreed a boundary between China and Tibet and the 41st and last king had two sons who quarrelled and caused the kingdom to disintegrate.

The country was reunited in 1253 under the lamas of Sakya, a monastery in central Tibet. Shortly afterwards the Mongol Emperor, Kublai Khan (who later conquered China) appointed the ruling Sakya lama as his viceroy in Tibet.

The Dalai Lamas came on the scene in 1642 with the assumption of supreme religious and temporal power by the chief lamas of the Drepung monastery. According to the present Dalai Lama his previous incarnations were regarded as 'religious instructors' by the emperors of China. A more likely version is that the emperors regarded Tibet as a vassal state (though whether the feeling was mutual is a matter for debate). Officials called ambans were appointed to represent the emperor in Lhasa and the emperor Chien Lung (1736-96) insisted that all appointments of importance in Tibet should be ratified by the Imperial Court. Some ancient Tibetan documents are said by the Chinese to be headed 'By order of the Emperor of China, the Dalai Lama is the Pontiff of Buddhism'.

In the 17th and 18th centuries Tibet was twice invaded – once by nomads from Xinjiang and once by Gurkhas from Nepal. On each occasion imperial Chinese troops were sent to drive them out.

Chinese troops and ambans remained in Lhasa until 1912. Then, taking advantage of the revolution which had deposed the emperor the previous year, the Tibetans evicted them.

But having rid themselves of the Chinese, the Tibetan government made little or no effort to consolidate Tibet's independence by establishing relations with the outside world. The only exception concerned relations with the British who ruled neighbouring India. In 1890 the British had signed an agreement with China which fixed the boundaries with Sikkim and allowed Britain certain trading rights in Tibet. In 1904, having failed to establish contact with the Tibetan government, the British sent a military expedition to Lhasa which forced the Tibetans to sign a trade agreement. Although they dealt solely with the Tibetans the 1904 agreement was later renegotiated with the Chinese, thereby acknowledging Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

In 1913 the British convened a conference at Simla in northern India which was attended by representatives of Tibet and China and which agreed to recognize Chinese 'suzerainty' in Tibet. However, the agreement also provided that neither the British nor the Chinese were to send troops to Tibet or to interfere with the administration of the Tibetan government. Although this agreement was initiated by the representatives of Britain, Tibet and China, the Chinese government immediately repudiated it. Britain and Tibet alone signed.

For the next 38 years Tibet was for all practical purposes independent. The authority of the Tibetan government was absolute and China itself was plunged into civil war and chaos.

The attitude of the outside world was ambivalent. On the one hand no foreign government ever formally recognized Tibet as an independent country, but on the other several countries dealt with Tibet as though it were an independent country. In 1943 the Americans sent a mission to Lhasa to ask the Tibetan government for permission to survey the land route for the passage of supplies through China to Tibet (this was refused). In 1948 a delegation of Tibetans travelled to India, Great Britain, France, Italy and the United States on passports issued in Lhasa.

Meanwhile, however, the Chinese government, although incapable of exercising authority in Tibet, continued to insist on its right to do so. The 1931 Constitution promulgated by Chiang Kai-shek's government clearly specified that Tibet was part of China. Tibetan delegates participated in the Nationalist constituent assembly which approved the 1946 Constitution and they also sat in the Chinese National Assembly in 1948.

So when, soon after the revolution, the People's Liberation Army started to move into Tibet they were merely pursuing the historic claim of Chinese governments that Tibet was an inalienable part of China.

TIBET BEFORE THE UPRISING (1950-9)

The Chinese People's Liberation Army began to move into Tibet in October 1950. After they began their advance Mao Tse-tung advised them to proceed with caution as the Chinese Communist Party had almost no supporters in Tibet.¹⁴ On 19 October the Tibetan and Chinese armies clashed at Chamdo and the Tibetans were decisively defeated. On 7 November the Tibetan government appealed to the United Nations for help. In the UN General Assembly the delegate from El Salvador requested a debate on Tibet but the British delegate proposed that the matter be adjourned *sine die* on the grounds that the status of Tibet was in doubt. He was supported by the Indian delegate who believed that the matter could be settled by peaceful negotiation.

Negotiations did take place and on 23 May 1951 resulted in the signing of a Seventeen Point Agreement under Article 3 of which Tibet agreed 'to return to the big family of the Motherland' in return for a number of guarantees. These guarantees included (Article 4): '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.'¹⁵

The Chinese themselves were well aware of the problems they faced in Tibet. This was their interpretation of the agreement:

'Because conditions in Tibet are not ripe, democratic reforms have not yet been carried out there. According to the 17-point agreement... reform of the social system must eventually be carried out. But we should not be impatient; when this will be done can only be decided when the great majority of the people of Tibet and their leading public figures consider it practicable. It has now been decided not to proceed with democratic reform in Tibet during the period of the Second Five Year Plan (1958-62), and we can only decide whether it will be done in the period of the Third Five Year Plan (1963-7) in the light of the situation obtaining at that time.'¹⁶

Under the terms of the 1951 Agreement a series of military/political committees were set up in areas occupied by Chinese soldiers. In Chamdo, which was the first area to be occupied, the Chamdo Liberation Committee was established and in Shigatse a committee was set up in 1954 whose nominal head was the Panchen Lama (then aged 16). The Panchen Lama was Tibet's second highest reincarnation. Membership of these committees consisted of Tibetan dignitaries and Chinese soldiers and cadres. In 1956 these committees were replaced by the Preparatory Committee for the Tibetan Autonomous Region. This consisted of 50 Tibetan members (at least 20 of whom had previously been members of the Chamdo and Shigatse committees) and five senior Chinese officials. The chairman was the Dalai Lama and one of the vice-chairmen was a Chinese general. The secretary was Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, a Lhasa aristocrat and a member of the Dalai Lama's government (Ngapo remained in Tibet after the Dalai Lama fled and he is today chairman of the Standing Committee of the Regional People's Congress). Since the delegates from Chamdo and most of those from Shigatse were in the pockets of the Chinese, the Chinese had an inbuilt majority. Once established the Preparatory Committee began to set up sub-committees to match each department of the Tibetan government.¹⁷

The speed of change depended on proximity to China. Around Lhasa and central Tibet most people's lives remained undisturbed until after 1959; in the eastern area of Kham, however, the Chinese presence was felt almost immediately. Accounts of this period are confused. Some say that the Chinese soldiers behaved well, paid for what they consumed and did not interfere with local life. Others say that the Chinese requisitioned mule transports, porters and labourers for road building and that they paid well below the going rate. Monasteries and wealthy people are said to have been obliged to give 'loans' either in the form of silver dollars or feed for pack animals. Poor people were summoned to meetings where they were told that they had been exploited by the monks and big landowners.

This is what happened in the Lithang valley according to a statement made to the International Commission of Justice. The references to 'riff-raff' and 'lower classes' provide a clue to the class background of the kind of people who led the rebellion:

'In 1954 the Chinese began to organize the lower classes and the riff-raff to rise against the monasteries and wealthy people. By this time they had already begun making propaganda that religious beliefs were all superstitious... the people from the lower classes who had been trained by the Chinese went from village to village making propaganda against the landlords.'¹⁸

The crunch in Lithang came in 1956. The Chinese began to levy steep taxes on traders returning from India and ominously began listing the property holdings of all landlords and monasteries. The Lithang monastery was one of the largest in Tibet and at the end of 1955 the Chinese summoned eight senior monks of Lithang and asked them to compile an inventory of all the monastery's possessions so that it could be assessed for tax. By way of response one of the monks is said to have pulled out a gun and they were allowed to leave. Back in the monastery the monks called a meeting of all village headmen and urged them to take up arms against the communists. So began the Lithang revolt, the first of a series of uprisings against Chinese rule.¹⁹

According to a Tibetan who took part, the fighting began around the end of February 1956 when the Tibetans attacked a Chinese army camp. After the attack the Chinese laid siege to the Lithang monastery which was defended by several thousand monks and local farmers, mainly armed with British 303 rifles (imported from India) and an assortment of elderly Japanese, German, Chinese and Russian guns. The siege lasted for some weeks, at the end of which the Chinese sent in two Peking-educated Tibetans with an offer of negotiations. In return for surrender, the Chinese offered to postpone their reform programme for at least three years. If this was not accepted, they would use aircraft to bomb the monastery.

Since none of the Tibetans had ever seen or heard an aeroplane, the Chinese laid on a demonstration bringing up one aircraft to make a dummy run by dropping its bomb load in front of the monastery and then strafing it. This made a deep impression on the defenders who that night tried to fight their way out through the Chinese lines. Many were killed or captured, but some escaped and fled in the direction of Lhasa.

Lhasa was three months' walk away from Lithang and when refugees from Kham began to reach the city they at first had difficulty convincing the complacent Lhasa aristocrats that there was a serious revolt in the east. In the end the Dalai Lama's cabinet came up with a uniquely Tibetan solution. Instead of appealing to the outside world for help, as they were being urged to do, they launched a nation-wide appeal for gold and jewels for the purpose of constructing yet another golden throne for the Dalai Lama in the hope that this would assuage whatever bad omens they believed were afflicting Tibet.

Others, including the Dalai Lama's own brothers, took more practical action. Before the Lithang revolt they had already established contact with Taiwan and the American Central Intelligence Agency and from about 1955 young Tibetans were quietly smuggled out to Taiwan and the USA for military training. They were then parachuted back into Tibet with orders to organize resistance to the Chinese. Training went on until 1964 and small supplies of money and weapons continued until 1971. Outside aid was, however, never really forthcoming on a scale big enough to influence events.²⁰

Meanwhile in Lhasa a different atmosphere prevailed. From 1952 onwards a number of sons and daughters of aristocrats were sent to be educated in nationalities institutes in China and, far from this causing resentment, there actually seems to have been competition for places. In 1954-5 the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama spent 18 months travelling in China and came away generally impressed with what they had seen. Upon his return the Dalai Lama wrote a poem in praise of Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese communists, whose coming to Tibet he described as 'the timely rain'. This poem was later to be the cause of some embarrassment.²¹

People in Lhasa were, however, becoming increasingly hostile to the Chinese. With the number of refugees from the eastern province of Kham growing daily, word of what was happening there spread rapidly and posters started appearing demanding that the Chinese go home. Another source of resentment was the soaring price of grain caused by the Chinese making local purchases to feed their troops and as a result pushing the price out of reach of many ordinary Tibetans. The Tibetan cabinet, meanwhile, bent over backwards to appease the Chinese – even to the extent of depriving nine leading citizens of their Tibetan nationality and imprisoning three others who had offended the Chinese.²² All this merely fuelled resentment.

In March 1959 a revolt broke out in Lhasa. The Dalai Lama fled to India and thousands of Tibetans followed him into exile. The revolt was crushed by Chinese troops, the Tibetan government was dissolved and its functions were transferred to the Preparatory Committee for the Tibetan Autonomous Region. The Panchen Lama was appointed acting chairman of that committee. Life in Tibet would never be the same again.

AFTER THE UPRISING (1959-66)²³

The Tibetan uprising was probably the most serious resistance to Chinese communist rule ever mounted by a minority people. And since so many Tibetans (most of them members of the class which had most to lose) were able to tell their story in the outside world it was also the cause of considerable loss of face. As a result the Chinese have been at pains ever since to assure the world that all was well in Tibet. Manifestly this was not the case – as the Chinese themselves now admit.

According to Chinese sources, about 600 people were killed or wounded in the Lhasa uprising; Tibetan sources put the figure much higher. After the revolt a large proportion of the able-bodied men in Lhasa seem to have been arrested. They were taken to a valley near Lhasa called Nachen and put to work building a hydro-electric complex. Later they were joined by a large number of conscripted labourers.

During working hours each prisoner was given time off to dictate the story of his life from the age of eight. After about seven months the

prisoners were visited by the Indian and Nepalese consuls. Before the visit they each received a new towel and there was a meeting at which they were told that they should look happy in their work; in answer to questions they should reply only that they did not like the old society. On the day of the visit the soldiers who had been guarding them disappeared and were replaced by officials in Tibetan dress. Such precautions were to become a standard feature of visits by foreigners to Tibet.

After about eight months many of the prisoners were released but continued working on the hydro-electric project as paid labourers. Others were sent to the north to help develop the Chang Thang, a vast inhospitable plateau at an altitude of 15,000 feet and inhabited only by nomads. One of those who volunteered has described how they were misled into believing that good conditions awaited them there, but when they arrived they found only tents:

'We were then told Mao Tse-tung had said "hardship only exists to test the bravery of the people".'

In the countryside peasants' associations were set up and meetings were organized at which people were encouraged to denounce former landlords – some of whom were badly beaten and humiliated. Debt titles and contracts binding serfs to service on the estates of their masters were ceremoniously burned. The estates of landlords and monasteries which took part in the rebellion were dismantled and distributed among the peasants who lived on the land. The estates of landlords and monasteries which did not take part in the rebellion were gradually redistributed with modest compensation being paid to the former owners. The payment of compensation was discontinued at the start of the Cultural Revolution. The living standards of a large number of the poorest people in Tibet must have been transformed by this process.

In the monasteries committees were formed consisting mainly of poorer monks and they too held accusation meetings at which lower rank monks were encouraged to denounce high lamas. According to three monks from Drepung, the largest monastery, the monks were confined to the monastery for two weeks; those judged to be reactionaries were separated from the rest and brought before mass meetings. After being denounced, some 'reactionaries' were taken away and apparently executed. The monks were then told that they could not remain in the monastery since they would have to work for a living. After being lectured on what life in the new Tibet held in store they were allowed to return to their home villages. Those who remained went to work on monastery land on what became known as 'lama farms'. Only elderly monks were allowed to remain as caretakers in the monastery itself.²⁴

In the towns a committee structure was established ranging from the *Dsuk* or street committee; to the *Uyenlhankang* or local committee with full-time officials responsible for about 400 families; to the *Doncha* which covered about 1,000 families whose responsibilities included raising voluntary labour for public works. Obligatory attendance at meetings organized either at workplace level or by the *Uyenlhankang* was to become for many Tibetans one of the more irritating features of life under the new order.

A ration system similar to the one that exists throughout the rest of China was also introduced covering grain, butter, cloth and other basic goods.

The beginnings of a modest industrial base was established. By 1976 there were said to be 252 'small and medium' industries in Tibet. Of these the biggest are the Lhasa cement plant; the wool and textile factory at Nyinchi (also spelled Lindze), match and carpet factories, quarries and mines. A wide range of mineral deposits including coal, oil, uranium, gold and copper have been discovered. To create and exploit these new resources large numbers of Han Chinese technicians and workers were brought to Tibet.

The whole of Tibetan society was divided first into two and later into six classes ranging from serf-owners and their agents to serfs. Everyone was required to attend meetings at which they had to denounce the old order and at which members of the old order (lamas and landlords) had to undergo *Thumzing* (reform through struggle) which often involved being subjected to physical violence.²⁵ People from the lower orders who were judged not to have denounced their former masters with sufficient enthusiasm were themselves subjected to *Thumzing*.

Although no doubt Tibetan people had many genuine grievances against their former masters these struggle sessions, like so much else in China, were carried to ludicrous extremes. Dhondub Choedon, herself classified as a former serf and a minor official in

the Red Flag People's Commune in southern Tibet until she fled in 1973, has described the *Thumzing* sessions she attended:

'The Chinese make us retail the evils of the old society without the least regard for the truth ... They make the Tibetans bring false accusations and denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama before the gathering. The meeting will not stop till the whole audience denounces the Dalai Lama, and later, the Panchen Lama. If anyone in the audience does not join, the Chinese will declare that he is "infected with blind faith and empty hope"; and saying that he must be "relieved of his mental burden" he will be subject to *Thumzing* in that meeting and made to confess his own "wrong thinking".²⁶ During these meetings everyone had to cry and say "the gods, lamas, religion and monasteries are the tools of exploitation; the three serf-owners made the Tibetans poor, the Chinese Communist Party liberated us and gave us food, clothes, houses and land; the Chinese Communist Party is more kind than our own parents".²⁷

As the various campaigns for reform grew more intense, so more and more people had to face *Thumzing* sessions to be unburdened of their backward thinking. Mrs Choedon, whose account of life in the Red Flag People's Commune is wholly credible, gives many examples of people in her village and from the surrounding area who committed suicide rather than face *Thumzing*.²⁸

Nevertheless, although strongly discouraged, the practice of religion in Tibet does seem to have remained possible until the start of the Cultural Revolution in late 1966. One nun who left Tibet in 1974 told me that her convent – about half a day's walk from Lhasa – was undisturbed until 1961:

'We were then asked to come to an army barracks and for two months we were given political lectures. The Chinese told us we could not remain in the convent; that in the new society we had to work for a living, although we were free to choose what work we wanted to do.'

She and another nun asked to go to Lhasa where they were found a rent-free room and set to work converting wasteland into a vegetable garden. Later she worked as a labourer at the Nachen hydro-electric project. During all this time she remained a nun with her head shaven and wearing her red nun's habit. This resulted in her being labelled a 'reactionary' and a 'greenbrain' at the nightly local meetings; there was also pressure on her to get married, but provided that you had a thick skin it seems to have been possible to continue practising religion until the onset of the Cultural Revolution.²⁹

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION – AND AFTER (1966-79)

The Cultural Revolution was without doubt a traumatic experience for most Tibetans and appears to have alienated irrevocably many who until then may have been able to live with the changes that had overtaken their homeland.

It began when young Red Guards came from elsewhere and were appalled to see the slow rate of social progress in Tibet compared with other areas of China. The practice of religion was still widespread and the move towards agricultural communes – which began in most other areas of China in 1958 – had hardly commenced. The Red Guards argued for immediate transformation towards socialism without regard for local conditions.

These arguments caused a split among the thousands of Han cadres in Tibet and they divided into two factions: the *Nyamdel* who favoured existing policies of gradual transformation, and the *Gyenlog* who wanted instant change. The division quickly spread to Tibetan youth, particularly those receiving Chinese secondary education, and before long serious fighting broke out between the rival factions. For a while the *Gyenlog* triumphed and so began the systematic destruction of much of Tibet's rich cultural heritage.

Young Red Guards, most of them Tibetans, went from village to village seeking out and destroying prayer wheels, prayer beads, scriptures and any other relics of the old order. Mrs Choedon describes how the Cultural Revolution came to the Red Flag People's Commune at the end of 1966:

'One day two Chinese and six Tibetan officials from the sub-district came to our commune and selected thirty young Tibetans from the *nangzen* (serf) class who held Party membership. These thirty recruits were then appointed as the Red Guards and told what they should do.³⁰

They were given the task of destroying the 'Four Olds': old thought, old culture, old habits and old customs:

'The Red Guards started off by destroying all the small shrines and pulling down the prayer flags. Then they confiscated all religious objects and articles, even prayer beads. They destroyed all religious monuments and paintings in our area. They took the statues in the Tramdub Dolma

Lhakhang (monastery) and sold them to the Chinese antique shop in Tsethang and burnt all the ancient holy scriptures. They cut off the long hair of all the men and women and killed all the dogs ... Tibetans found lighting incense were charged with attempting arson and paraded with dunce caps. Old people murmuring silently were denounced as being superstitious.³¹

One man from Nuplung, a hamlet in central Tibet, described how villagers were ordered to dismantle the disused local monastery and the stupa in front of his house. The scriptures taken from inside the stupa were mixed with manure and spread on the fields. 'Many of the people were crying and fainting while they did this and as a result of this incident the caretaker of the monastery went out of his mind.'³²

Only a handful of the greatest monuments in Tibet were spared: the Potala and the Drepung monastery in Lhasa, the Tashilunpo monastery in Shigatse and perhaps another half dozen or so of the great treasure houses of Tibet. The rest were destroyed (many smaller monasteries had already been demolished before the Cultural Revolution).

The Jokhang in the centre of Lhasa, one of the oldest and holiest shrines in Tibet, was severely damaged; the spectacular Dzong (government headquarters) which dominated Shigatse for centuries was dismantled stone by stone; Ganden, Tibet's third largest monastery, was completely destroyed; the Yumbu Lagang, said to have been built by the first Tibetan king more than 2,000 years ago, was also laid to waste. Tibetan festivals, songs, dances were banned as remnants of the old order.

Two features stand out from this orgy of destruction. One is that despite the apparent hysteria it was carefully controlled. Recent visitors were, for example, told by local people that the destruction took three stages. First, experts came and marked the precious stones and they were then removed; then came metal experts who marked the precious metals for removal; the buildings were then dynamited and timber was taken away for use by the local commune and the stones were left for anyone to use.³³ In Phari, in southern Tibet, four of the five local monasteries were dismantled, but the most important was left untouched; in Lhasa the homes of the 300 to 400 Nepali community were left alone and even the raids on the Jokhang were not carried out until objects of value had been removed.³⁴

Secondly, most of the destruction was carried out by young Tibetans. The Chinese took care to stay in the background. No doubt the Tibetan youth were egged on by the Chinese; no doubt many now regret what they did, but the fact remains that the actual destruction of Tibet's cultural heritage was carried out by Tibetans. For example, at the Tashi Kensa peoples' commune outside Shigatse, I was told by Tibetans that 200 young people from the commune had taken part in the destruction of the Dzong.

The Cultural Revolution also saw the introduction of communes throughout most of Tibet. Many Tibetans who had previously benefited under the redistribution of land from the monasteries may have felt they were losing what they had earlier gained. From now on most land would be communal, farmers were paid a basic ration of grain and the surplus would have to be sold to the State at fixed prices (well below the open market rate); grain was also set aside for tax (6%), seed and reserves. The share of the proceeds from grain sold to the State was allotted according to work-points and earning these required working for longer hours than Tibetans were accustomed to.

The commune system in Tibet was not greatly different from that already introduced (and working tolerably well) throughout the rest of China. Tibet, however, had certain peculiar features.

Firstly, in most of the rest of China there is simply not enough land to go round, making some form of collective farming unavoidable if everyone is to eat. The same rationale does not apply in Tibet which, although it lacked the capital for private farming, is sparsely populated and in which vast tracts of cultivable land lie unused.

Secondly, besides the 120,000 Han cadres and technicians living in Tibet there is also an army of perhaps 250,000 soldiers, most of whom are Han. Although many Han grow their own vegetables and although much of their food is imported from the interior of China, much grain has to be purchased locally. What's more, Han eat wheat while the Tibetan staple diet is barley. The result is that Tibetans found themselves being ordered to grow wheat instead of barley much of which they were then obliged to sell at an artificially low price, often leaving insufficient for their own consumption.

Although food production in Tibet undoubtedly increased substantially in the years after 1959, the benefits of this increase do not seem to have devolved upon Tibetan peasants. Complaints of food shortages were a persistent theme of all Tibetan refugees. Dhondub Choedon gives examples of families who had to live for months on wild vegetables after their grain ration ran out and in some cases starving to death.³⁵

Thirdly, a large proportion of Tibetans are nomads who live by barter. With the introduction of communes barter was forbidden; instead they were obliged to sell their produce to the State at less than market rates and strict controls were introduced on the killing of animals for meat. Mrs Choedon cites an example of a woman who killed a ewe without permission and who was denounced and paraded round the commune with the bloody sheep's head round her neck as a warning to others. This kind of behaviour was not designed to win friends.

Finally, whatever the merits of the commune system (and it is undoubtedly one of the most successful institutions of communist China) as far as Tibetans were concerned it was just another feature of an alien creed. The communes were introduced ruthlessly and insensitively by the same officials who were in the process of destroying the rich cultural heritage of Tibet. In the circumstances Tibetans could hardly be expected to welcome the communes and by and large they didn't.

Besides increasing the steady trickle of refugees into India and Nepal the drastic transformation of feudal Tibet also provoked resistance. In 1967, for example, a group of Tibetans led by a nun from Nyemo, about 40 miles south-east of Lhasa, attacked a Chinese military post killing soldiers and hideously maiming local Tibetan officials. The revolt lasted several months and when it was finally ended 16 of the ring-leaders were publicly executed.³⁶

In September 1971 nine young people were publicly executed in Lhasa after being caught trying to set up a resistance movement. The following year sentences of between five and 15 years were imposed on 12 people for what were described as 'underground activities'.³⁷

By 1969 the worst of the Cultural Revolution was over. The army stepped in and arrested leading members of the Gyenlog faction and some effort was made to repair the worst of the damage. Funds were made available for repairs to the Jokhang and the few surviving national treasures such as the Potala Palace and the Drepung monastery. Some relaxation of the official attitude towards religion occurred. In 1974, for example, a group of 40 Tibetans were allowed to visit Bihar in northern India to attend a sermon given by the Dalai Lama, saying that news of the sermon had been announced in their village by the Chinese authorities who had told them that those wishing to attend could do so.

In the border regions a more lenient policy had always been applied. Officials were under instructions to observe a ten-point policy which included fewer criticism meetings, a less rigid agricultural policy and lenience towards offenders. The purpose was to discourage people from voting with their feet by fleeing to India and Nepal. Presumably a similar policy applied in all China's vast border regions.

In 1975 and 1976 a handful of foreign visitors were allowed into Tibet. They were the first for many years and included the author Han Suyin and the writer and film-maker Felix Greene. Careful preparation attended their coming. Through the network of factory, district and communal committees people were advised to wear their best clothes and not to talk politics; if asked about independence they were to say that it would not be a good idea because life was bad under the old society. They were also warned that plain-clothes security officers would accompany the visitors.

The fall of the so-called Gang of Four in Peking at the end of 1976 had no immediate effect in Tibet. Although the political demise of Madame Mao and her colleagues led to widespread liberalization in the rest of China, Tibet was too remote to be affected by what happened in Peking. Perhaps the most telling sign of business as usual in Tibet was that, although 20 years had passed since the Chinese takeover, both the government and Communist Party of the Tibetan Autonomous Region were dominated by Han officials, many of whom did not even speak the Tibetan language.

The first signs that life for Tibetans was about to change for the better came in July 1979.

TIBET TODAY

At the Tibet People's Congress in July 1979 the retirement was announced of the Han General Ren Rong who, as Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of the Autonomous Region, had been in charge of the province for most of the previous decade. At about this time a delegation of Tibetan exiles representing the Dalai Lama began a long tour of their homeland as guests of the Chinese government. For three months they were allowed to go where they wanted and see whoever they wanted. At times they were greeted by scenes so emotional that even the Han guides travelling with the delegation were in tears.

When they emerged the delegation of exiles were extremely critical of what they had seen. Although no official account of their report was published it is believed to have come as a profound shock to the central Chinese government in Peking.

In April 1980 the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party held a special session on Tibet – a measure of the importance they attach to the subject. Later it was announced that the General Secretary of the Party, Hu Yao-bang, would be visiting Tibet to see for himself what was going on. On 15 May the appointment was announced of a new First Secretary for the Tibet Communist Party – Yin Fatang, also a Han military man, but his job was said to be to eliminate 'ultra-leftist influence' and take into account real conditions in Tibet.

Hu Yao-bang arrived in Tibet on 22 May and seems to have read the riot act to officials on the spot. While he was there the Chinese news agency published a list of six requirements aimed at creating a 'new, united, prosperous and highly cultured' Tibet. These included:

1. '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 to the development of production.' Demanding 'uniformity in everything' was condemned as 'subjectivist'.
2. Efforts must be made to 'lighten the burden of the masses'. To this end all taxes and State purchasing quotas were abolished for at least the next two years. People should not be assigned work without pay and prices for produce purchased by the State should be negotiated and not fixed by central authorities.
3. 'Peasants should plant whatever crops they wish and no one should interfere'; private production should be encouraged as 'getting rich is nothing to be afraid of'; 'policy requirements should be relaxed, relaxed and relaxed again'.
4. Although the central government already spends more funds in Tibet than in any other province or autonomous region the centre will increase funds for Tibet still further. In particular primary school teachers, whose salary was the responsibility of the local commune, will in future be paid by the State.
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 fine Buddhism, graceful music and dance as well as medicine and opera, all of which are worthy of serious study and development.'
6. 'Unhealthy tendencies' prevalent among some Han cadres should be corrected. These tendencies were said to include 'taking advantage of position and power to assign jobs to their own men' and 'violating nationality policy'. More responsibility should be given to Tibetan cadres.³⁸

As yet it is too early to say what the effect of these new policies will be. In the main cities there are signs that they are being implemented seriously, but reports from the remote countryside suggest that local officials are having difficulty coming to terms with the change of line in Peking. As of September 1980 the situation appears to be as follows:³⁹

Religion

Tibetans are now allowed to worship unhindered in the great shrines of Lhasa and Shigatse. The metal gates which until April 1980 barred the entrance to the Jokhang in Lhasa have disappeared and the Jokhang is now open to the public for eight hours a day. The Potala palace seems to be open only on Sundays on payment of a small entrance fee. The Drepung, Sera and Tashilunpo monasteries also appear to be open daily, admission free. State funds are being used to restore the main temples although it seems unlikely that

local people will ever be allowed to restore the thousands of small temples and monasteries destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Tibetans representing the Dalai Lama who travelled for more than three months in the Tibetan countryside say they saw no intact monasteries or temples outside the three main cities.⁴⁰ They also report witnessing incidents of harassment of people trying to practise their religion.⁴¹

The official attitude to religion is perhaps best summarized in a small booklet called 'Basic Study Guide No.55' (*Lobjung Che Zhi*), published by the Information Office at Chamdo in April 1980. It contains advice for members of the Communist Party and Youth League and cadres. The full text is reproduced as Appendix 2. Here is an extract:

'Anyone above 18 years has the right to have faith or not, and the right to propagate atheism. No one can induce a child under 18 to do anything religious or take them to a religious service. Anyone wishing to practise religion must obey all the laws and regulations passed by the government. No one can try to revive the power of religion that has already been destroyed. Anyone interested in being a member of the Communist Party or Communist Youth Organization cannot practise religion. It is the duty of the Communist Party to try to persuade any members who have a slight faith in religion to give it up. If they refuse, the Party should expel them ... 'Has policy on religion changed recently out of a desire to induce the Dalai Lama to return? Our policy has never changed; the recent relaxation is not a new policy. Whether the Dalai Lama returns or not, we must carry on our policy on religion.'⁴²

In Lhasa and Shigatse the altars before all the shrines are piled high with the offerings of pilgrims; butter lamps burn before the statues of Buddha and even pictures of the Dalai Lama are publicly displayed. Tibetans young and old, from town and countryside are to be seen prostrating before the Jokhang and other great temples.

As word that worship of the Buddha is again permitted has seeped out over the high passes and into the lonely valleys, pilgrims from all over Tibet have started to make their way to Lhasa and Shigatse, often walking for up to three months. Pilgrimages of this length must be extremely disruptive of commune life and it is unclear to what length the officials go to discourage them. According to the Dalai Lama's representatives people leaving their village without permission forfeit their ration cards and, once lost, these are difficult to regain.⁴³ Since grain is not available on the free market, food would be extremely difficult to obtain for a long journey. Nevertheless there are now hundreds of pilgrims from the eastern province of Tibet camped around the Jokhang in the centre of Lhasa.

The position of monks and lamas is less clear. Most of the main shrines are looked after by elderly monks and there are a handful of monks in their 30s and 40s who entered the monasteries as boys. The Drepung monastery which was before 1959 the largest in the world with over 10,000 monks now has just 240; the Tashilunpo in Shigatse once had 3,700 monks and is now said to have 535 – about 100 of whom live on the premises while the rest work at farming some distance away. The Dalai Lama's delegation say that except in the three main cities they saw only 'one person in monk's robes outside official circles'.⁴⁴

The key test of how serious the new climate of religious freedom is, will be whether young men are allowed to become monks. At Drepung five or six new monks are said to have come forward since the liberalization and elsewhere in China Buddhist monks and Catholic priests have been ordained; so the signs are promising. What is clear, however, is that the monks will never again be able to live off the people as they did in days gone by.

Education

With the exception of a few secondary schools in the main cities – many of whose pupils are the sons and daughters of officials – the standard of education in Tibet is very poor. Primary school education was, until the recent changes were announced, the responsibility of the commune. Teachers are usually youths who have themselves had just six years' education; there is almost no teaching material in the Tibetan language and many children work on the land with their parents rather than attend school. A delegation of Tibetan exiles who spent three months travelling in Tibet in 1980 said they did not meet a single Tibetan who had a university education. Tibetans trained at nationalities institutes in Peking generally received six years' basic education in Chinese and the early years are spent learning to read and write Chinese. All secondary education in Tibet is in Chinese.

Health

Even to the casual observer it is evident that the standard of health care is much lower than in the rest of China. The number of qualified Tibetan doctors is minute and the quality of many barefoot doctors, who receive only a few months' training in basic medicine, is hair-raising. Good hospitals do exist in the main cities, but like so many other parts of the modern infrastructure, they appear to serve Han or Tibetan officials.

The written word

The main bookshop in Lhasa contains almost no literature, not even textbooks, in the Tibetan language. Nearly all street signs and official notices are in Chinese and where there is a Tibetan translation it has only been tacked on as an afterthought.

Administration

Despite the fact that they have had nearly 30 years to train Tibetans for positions of responsibility, Han officials still dominate the upper and middle levels of the administration; most technicians are Han and in many factories even the majority of workers are Han. Most Han do not speak a word of Tibetan, they do not eat Tibetan food and live separately from Tibetan people. Some are openly contemptuous of the Tibetan way of life.

Overall about 40% of all cadres in Tibet are Tibetan and these are mainly concentrated at the lower end of the administration.⁴⁵ As we have seen, since 1979 the Chairman of the Autonomous Region has been a Tibetan, but the most powerful position – First Secretary of the Tibetan Communist Party – is occupied by a Han; seven of the 13 vice-chairmen of the Autonomous Region are also Han.⁴⁶ A visitor to the Lhasa vehicle maintenance factory in 1975 reported that of the 863 workers only 231 were Tibetan.⁴⁷ As of September 1980 the Lhasa Branch of the China Travel Service employed no Tibetan drivers and only took on its first Tibetan English interpreters in August 1980.

Many Tibetans – and presumably other minority peoples – are excluded from membership of the Communist Party by virtue of the regulation, cited above, that only atheists are eligible for membership.

The Chinese government now acknowledges that this situation is unsatisfactory and steps are being taken to change it. Several thousand Han cadres are in the process of leaving and their jobs will be taken by Tibetans; Tibetan language courses are being arranged for many who remain and the government says it intends to double the number of Tibetans in positions of responsibility over the next two or three years.⁴⁸

Prospects for a settlement

The Dalai Lama and about 100,000 Tibetans live in exile, mainly in India and Nepal, and their presence outside Tibet constitutes a grave embarrassment to the Chinese government. In the last two years the government has gone to considerable lengths to woo them back. Contact between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama was secretly renewed in 1978 and in August 1979 the first of a series of delegations of Tibetan exiles left for lengthy fact-finding visits to Tibet. Their reports have been extremely critical (and to some extent exaggerated). Nevertheless these seem to be the main source of information for the Chinese central government about what has been going on in Tibet – in the absence of accurate accounts from their own officials. As a result serious efforts appear to be underway to rectify the wrongs of the past.

The Dalai Lama at this stage is reserving judgement:

'My general disposition is looking, watching. Frankly speaking it is difficult to trust the Chinese. Once bitten by a snake you feel suspicious even when you see a piece of rope.'

Although he speaks highly of the new Chinese leaders, he is very critical of local officials in Tibet:

'Their behaviour is very silly. I doubt whether the senior Chinese leaders actually know the situation, so my own people are making careful, unbiased observation. They will explain to the Chinese leaders and, according to the situation inside Tibet, I will have discussions with the Chinese leaders. If both sides are genuine, the right solution will be found.'⁴⁹

It is unclear what exactly might form the basis of a settlement. The Chinese will never concede that Tibet is an independent country and it is unlikely that the Dalai Lama would insist on this (though

some of his followers might). Apart from that everything else is negotiable. The Dalai Lama has often described himself as sympathetic to socialism which, he says, has many good points in common with Buddhism. He has also said that he would not insist on political office for himself, though clearly many Tibetans would expect this. Of the future, the Dalai Lama says simply:

'The main question is the happiness of our people. Once the Tibetan people are actually – not artificially – satisfied, then certainly I will return.'⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

Despite lip service to the contrary – and in contrast to their earlier policy – it seems to have been the object of official Chinese policy since the Cultural Revolution to Sinocise the Tibetan people with little regard for local feelings. The main features of this policy were as follows:

1. The domination by Han officials of the highest levels of the party and administration in the autonomous regions;
2. the failure of the Han to learn local languages or respect local customs;
3. between 1967 and 1979 the systematic suppression of religion and the destruction of cultural relics;
4. the introduction of drastic changes such as the commune system without regard for local conditions, and the forced settlement of nomadic peoples;
5. serious damage to the local economy by, for example, insisting on growing wheat in place of barley or pastureland;
6. all secondary education is in Chinese.

Although the speed and intensity with which ethnic minorities were integrated into 'the big family of the Motherland' varied from one region to another, reports from Xinjiang, home of the Uighur and Kazak peoples, suggest that their experience has been remarkably similar to that of Tibetans.⁵¹ There may, however, be variations in regions like Inner Mongolia where an autonomous region was established as early as 1947 (two years before the final victory of the revolution) and where the communists enjoyed indigenous support from the beginning.

To be fair, the many negative aspects of attempts to Sinocise the minority peoples have to be balanced against undoubted improvements in health, welfare and in many cases living standards. It should also be said in mitigation that the Chinese government now acknowledges the failure of its minorities policy and is committed to making amends. It must be judged by results.

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NOTES

- 1 For a full list of all the minority peoples of China and where they live, see Appendix 1.
- 2 The documents quoted in this section are taken from 'The Consolidation of the South China Frontier', by George Moseley, 1973, pp. 4-11.
- 3 *Peking Review*, 22 June 1979, p. 5.
- 4 I am indebted to Hugh Richardson, former British Consul in Lhasa, for this information.
- 5 'The opening of Tibet', Percival Landon, London, 1905, p. 191.
- 6 'Seven Years in Tibet', Heinrich Harrer, Pan 1956, p. 196.
- 7 Landon, *ibid*, Appendix D, pp. 345-6.
- 8 Landon, *ibid*, p. 346.
- 9 'Inside Story of Tibet' by Ratne Deshapriya Senanayake, Afro-Asian Writers Bureau, 1967, pp 154-60. Hugh Richardson comments: 'I do not believe the stories of flaying alive and hacking off of limbs and know of no such allegations before the Chinese occupation'.
- 10 Harrer, *ibid*, p 76.
- 11 Landon, *ibid*, p 347.
- 12 In this section I have relied for the Tibetan exile point of view on the following sources: 'Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic', report of the International Commission of Jurists, pp 139-49, Indian edition (1966); 'My Land and My People' by the Dalai Lama, 1962, McGraw Hill, chapter 4; I am also indebted to Sir Algernon Rumbold, President of the Tibet Society, for a note he prepared for me on the subject. For the Chinese point of view I have relied on accounts by authors favourable to China, including Senanayake, pp 37-52, *ibid*; and 'Lhasa, the Open City' by Han Suyin, Cape 1977, pp 11-19. Among the more scholarly accounts Hugh Richardson's 'Tibet and its history', London, 1962, is the best.
- 13 For an account of the doubts that surround the ICJ report see article by Chris Mullin in *China Now* No.78, May/June 1978.
- 14 Mao Tse Tung, collected works, Vol V, pp 73-4
- 15 ICJ, *ibid*, p 172.
- 16 From a selection of Chinese communist party documents published by the Union Research Institute, Hong Kong, p. 287.
- 17 Dalai Lama, *ibid*, p 133.
- 18 ICJ Appendix one, statement No.50. Despite my earlier reference to the 'suspect' nature of the ICJ report I have cited cases which I have been able to corroborate in conversation with eyewitnesses.
- 19 For an account of the uprising in Lithang and the events surrounding it, see 'How the CIA went to war in Tibet' by Chris Mullin, *Guardian*, 19 Jan 1976; also *Far East Economic Review*, 5 Sept 1975. This is based on interviews in India and Nepal with Tibetans who took part in the CIA operation.
- 20 Mullin, *ibid*.
- 21 For the full text of the poem see 'The Timely Rain', by Stuart and Roma Gelder, Hutchinson, 1964.
- 22 Dalai Lama, *ibid*, pp 135 and 162.
- 23 This section is based mainly on 'Red Roof of the World' by Chris Mullin, *Guardian*, 6 June 1975. This article is based on interviews with Nepalese citizens with access to Tibet in 1975 and Tibetan refugees who at that time had only recently left.
- 24 ICJ Appendix one, statement No.33.
- 25 *Thumzing*, or struggle session, was similar to the 'speak bitterness' campaigns held throughout China during land reform.
- 26 'Life in the Red Flag People's Commune' by Dhondub Choedon, p 60, published in 1978 by the Information Office of the Dalai Lama, Gangchen Kyishong, Dharamsala, Himachel Pradesh, India.
- 27 Choedon, *ibid*.
- 28 Choedon, *ibid*, pp 68-9.
- 29 Mullin, 'Red Roof of the World', *ibid*.
- 30 Choedon, *ibid*, pp 64-5.
- 31 Choedon, *ibid*.
- 32 Mullin, 'Red Roof of the World', *ibid*.
- 33 Tibet News Review, Vol.I, No.3/4, report of the second delegation representing the Dalai Lama, p 19.
- 34 Mullin, 'Red Roof of the World', *ibid*.
- 35 Choedon, *ibid*, pp 36-7.
- 36 Mullin, 'Red Roof of the World', *ibid*.
- 37 Mullin, *ibid*.
- 38 New China News Agency, 30 May 1980 (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, June 4)
- 39 This summary is based on a short visit I made to Tibet in September 1980; I have also quoted from a report by Phuntsog Wangyal, a member of the second delegation of Dalai Lama's representatives which visited Tibet between May and August 1980. Like many Tibetan exiles Mr. Wangyal can be inclined at times to exaggerate—for example, he told a meeting in London on 1 November 1980 that Tibet was 'a barren country with naked people'; that Tibetans worked 18 hours a day; that 'two-thirds' of school time was spent studying Mao's thoughts; that every able-bodied man has to give a pint of blood each week; that all new buildings were in the Chinese and not Tibetan style. Allowing for this, however, his report is worthy of study—not least because he travelled in areas of Tibet which few outsiders have ever seen. Mr. Wangyal's report appears in *Tibet News Review*, Vol 1, No 3/4, Winter 1980/1.
- 40 *Tibet News Review*, *ibid*, p 19.
- 41 *Tibet News Review*, *ibid*, pp 24-5.
- 42 Purchased in Chamdo by a member of a Tibetan exile delegation in May 1980.
- 43 *Tibet News Review*, *ibid*, p 21.
- 44 *Tibet News Review*, *ibid*, p 21.
- 45 Interview by the author with Losang Tsetin, a vice-chairman of the autonomous region, in Lhasa, 19 September 1980.
- 46 New China News Agency, 1 September 1979 (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 4 September).
- 47 Han Suyin, *ibid*, p 116.
- 48 Losang Tsetin, *ibid*.
- 49 Interview with the author, *Guardian*, 27 March 1980
- 50 *Guardian*, 27 March, *ibid*.
- 51 For example, reports from Xinjiang—the autonomous region in the west of China—say that Kazak herdsmen were forced to settle down and grow wheat (with disastrous results); religion was forbidden and mosques destroyed during the Cultural Revolution; all secondary education was in Han; and to this day there is almost no literature in the Uighur and Kazak languages. In 1960 60,000 people fled to the Soviet Union from Xinjiang. For recent reports see 'China's Turkic Moslems ...' by Fox Butterfield, *International Herald Tribune*, 31 October 1980; 'The Moslems of China' by W. Zafanolli, *Le Monde*, 20 January 1980.

INTRODUCTION

Tibet hit the headlines in 1959 when the Dalai Lama, spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people, fled from Tibet into exile in India, to be followed by thousands of Tibetan refugees. Two decades followed that witnessed what must rank as one of the great tragedies of the twentieth century, the total destruction of Tibetan civilization and culture. One of the handful of westerners to have lived in Tibet, and the representative of the British and Indian governments there, Hugh Richardson, commented in 1982:

'The Tibetans had a civilization that had developed for 1300 years. They had an immense literature . . . and they had developed a very special and very important practice of Buddhism. They are a unique people; they have their own language and their own civilization. Surely it is a tragedy to see any civilization dying, even if it is not so long established, so literate and so polished as the Tibetans?'¹

But in Tibet, this tragedy is not over; it continues to be repeated in terms of political oppression and the ongoing absence of human rights. Yet the reactions of the world, both at a government and individual level, have been singularly unimpressive. In 1950, when China invaded Tibet, the Tibetans appealed to the United Nations. Their appeal was shamefully blocked by the United Kingdom and India, the very two nations who should, morally, have supported them, and who forced an adjournment. The issue of Tibet was dropped in the United Nations until three resolutions were passed, in 1959, 1961 and 1965, the last of which demanded 'the cessation of all practices which deprive the Tibetan people of the human rights and fundamental freedoms which they have always enjoyed.'

By modern standards, Tibet was a backward society, with some elements reminiscent of mediaeval Europe. The social framework preserved within it the Buddhist way of life which the Tibetans chose and which to them was so very precious. The Chinese 'liberation' of Tibet was not brought about by any internal force; it was thoroughly imposed, and cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered as a genuine social transformation. 'In China the revolution grew out of the discontent of the ordinary people; in Tibet it was the ordinary people who were opposed to the Chinese'.² The question remains as to whether the advantages of Chinese 'liberation', to the ordinary Tibetan, outweigh the systematic destruction of a living, thriving civilization and the annihilation of a national identity, with all its attendant loss of life and human misery. The charges which the Chinese face with respect to their rule in Tibet range from: the colonial exploitation of the Tibetan people, racial discrimination, gross inefficiency and criminal mismanagement of all Tibet's resources, and denial of human rights, to genocide. Yet in 1982 a Chinese government spokesman in the Netherlands was able, in all seriousness, to sum up the well-documented horrors of the Chinese subjugation of Tibet in the following way:

'The Chinese Liberation Army went into Tibet and was warmly welcomed by the Tibetan people and highly placed patriots. After this a democratic reform took place; the backward and cruel serfdom was abolished, millions of serfs regained freedom, and the Han people and Tibetan people began a new relationship of equality and unity, of mutual help and co-operation, of simultaneous development.'³

China has admitted her mistakes in Tibet and indicated where she would like the blame to be seen to fall; such is the power of the Chinese propaganda machine that it would be quite possible for a western observer to relax in the comfortable assumption that the inhumanities perpetrated in Tibet were the work of a few high spirited vandals and the 'Gang of Four', and that the much-heralded post-1979 policy of 'liberalization' had indeed turned a new page in Tibetan history. The Tibetans, on the other hand, have no such powerful means of presenting their case to the world.

The result is that the question of Tibet as a whole has been polarized, to the extent that merely to investigate the atrocities committed in Tibet or the Tibetan cause is to run the risk of the emotive accusation: 'anti-communist'. The extreme end of this attitude, articulated by the Chinese and their sympathizers, would have us believe that before 1959 Tibet was a 'hell on earth', and that the struggle for human rights and freedom in Tibet is nothing more than a right-wing crusade against communism headed by an 'upper strata clique'. Frequently it is also characterized as being sponsored

by an imperialist regime, if possible the C.I.A. – but seeking a non-existent counter-revolutionary devil behind Tibetan nationalism anyway is an inevitable hazard of an inflexible conviction in the ideological formula that nationalism equals bourgeoisie. The accounts given by Tibetans-in-exile of what is happening in Tibet are passed off as hysterical and exaggerated.

The Tibetans are now a divided people, some six million of them living in Tibet, and 100,000 in exile. The refugees are mostly peasants and herdsmen, ordinary Tibetan people, not the upper classes of the Chinese propaganda, as almost the entire ruling class was arrested by the Chinese in 1959. They still continue to arrive in India. To try to discourage this, the Chinese have implemented a special '10-point' border policy of reduced work and political education, along with greater rations, in the border areas. The most striking characteristic of the Tibetans in Tibet is their intense nationalism. They share with the exiled Tibetans a common dedication to the Dalai Lama, and the refugee community alive, as well as attempting to awaken a perception in the world of the real conditions faced by the Tibetans in their homeland. It would be an even greater tragedy if Tibet were just to become the preserve of ill-informed political pundits or shrewd career-hungry journalists, for behind all the words lie the real questions of Tibet, unanswered: Are the Tibetans happy? Do they have any right to determine their lives and future? And to whom does Tibet belong?

As the status of Tibet has been the subject of much discussion, and the Chinese distortion of Tibetan history is in danger of becoming a myth, it is necessary to touch upon the history of Tibet, where it concerns relations between Tibet and China. The conditions of life described in this report are, unless otherwise specified, those which prevailed in 1980, when I visited Tibet as part of the Dalai Lama's second delegation.

THE SETTING

Tibet

The area inhabited by people speaking the Tibetan language and practising Tibetan culture comprises the 'Three Provinces' of Tibet – Amdo, Kham, and U-Tsang. This area, more than 1,500 miles across and 500 miles from north to south, is composed of a plateau on average 12,000 feet above sea level, surrounded by the Himalayas, the Karakoram, Kumlung and Altya-tagh mountain ranges. It stretches from Ladakh in the West to Dartsedo (Tachienlu) in the East. The great regional variety in climate and vegetation accounts for the variety in occupation of the inhabitants – nomads and semi-nomads in the higher, more sparsely inhabited regions, agriculturalists in the river valleys, and forest dwellers and traders.

The Tibetans are usually considered to be descendants of the nomadic, non-Chinese, Chiang tribes of eastern Central Asia. Their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group, and their written script is derived from an Indian script of the seventh century.

Tibet has now been divided into six regions by the Chinese. Central Tibet, or U-Tsang, has become the Tibet Autonomous Region. Amdo and Kham have been portioned off into: Qinghai Province, Gansu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province, Ngapa Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, Kanze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, and Dechen Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province.

The population of Tibet is about six million.⁴ It should be noted that Chinese figures and references to Tibet always refer to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) only.

The period of empire and the Mongols

From the earliest written records, Tibet appears to have been ruled by a number of independent, rival chieftains, who later unified under the leadership of a series of kings or 'emperors' known to history as the 'Yarlung Dynasty'. During this period, Tibetan armies overran a vast area and pressed China itself. The king Songtsen Gampo was able to demand a Chinese princess in 640 AD, who brought with her an image of Buddha that became the most sacred in the land, as it was reputed to have been made in India in the presence of Buddha himself. It was, however, during the reign of Trisong Detsen that Buddhism was firmly implanted in Tibet

¹ For notes to Part II see page 23

with the invitation of Indian scholars and masters, the translation of Indian Buddhist scriptures and the founding of the first Tibetan monastery at Samye.

Expansion continued, until Tibetans dominated Hunza, Swat, Nepal, the Himalayas, Upper Burma, and even penetrated India. They made their presence felt in Turkestan, and were in contact with the Arab rulers in western Central Asia. In China, Tibetans controlled Gansu and much of Sichuan and northern Yunnan, and in 763 sacked the Chinese capital of Chang'an. Tang dynasty documents and the 'war-weary' poets Po Chu-i, Li Po and Tu Fu bear witness to the protracted stretches of warfare.⁵ It is clear that during this era Tibet and China were on an equal footing, as is demonstrated in the inscription of the peace treaty concluded between them in 821-2, carved on a stone pillar in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital.

Over the next few centuries, Tibet never enjoyed any political unity, and it was probably her total lack of any united resistance that saved her from the ravages of the Mongols. In return for peace and religious freedom, the Lama of the great monastery of Sakya submitted to the Mongols on behalf of Tibet in 1244. Kublai Khan adopted his successor, Pakpa, as his spiritual teacher. Through this relationship, reinforced when Kublai became emperor of China in 1260, the predominant Lama of Tibet became the spiritual advisor of the Emperor, who protected and ensured his rule. 'Patron' and 'priest' were made to appear as the worldly counterparts of the Indian ideal of the 'Universal Ruler' and the Buddha, by virtue of which the Mongol emperors were given a Buddhist seal of approval.

It was an elastic and flexible connection, which the Tibetans used to their advantage to remain, as they had always been, independent: '... Tibet was a part of the Mongol Empire in a very peculiar way. It was definitely not a part of China, nor one of its provinces'.⁶ The political relationship withered away with the end of the Yuan dynasty in 1368, and was never renewed during the Ming dynasty, although the Emperors continued to show favours to Tibetan monks and Lamas. A number of lay rulers followed the religious ascendancy of Sakya.

The Dalai Lamas

In 1578, the abbot of the great monastery of Drepung, Sonam Gyatso, visited Altan Khan, one of the most powerful of the Mongol chiefs, who bestowed on him the title of 'Tale' (Dalai), meaning 'Ocean [of Wisdom]'. He was counted as the Third Dalai Lama.

Through the intervention of yet another section of the Mongols, the Fifth Dalai Lama and their leader, Gushri Khan, became masters of Tibet in 1640, acting out once again the 'patron and priest' relationship. This Dalai Lama, the 'Great Fifth', unified the whole of Tibet under his own authority, and ushered in a great age for Tibet. Meanwhile the Manchus ousted the Ming dynasty, and in 1652 the Dalai Lama made a state visit, as an independent and equal ruler, to the Manchu Emperor.

After the death of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Tibet was plunged into chaos on account of different Mongol factions, and the wily Manchu Emperor Kang Hsi was able to engineer a situation whereby he emerged as the liberator of Tibet, installing the Seventh Dalai Lama in Lhasa in 1720. However, Tibetan independence was maintained with the protection of the Chinese but without their interference.

From 1720, there were in Lhasa two representatives of the Emperor—the Ambans. Some of the later Chinese claims that Tibet was part of China have been based upon the institution of the Ambans. On the official Tibetan government protocol list, they only ranked with the foreign dignitaries. Three times within twenty years in the early nineteenth century these persons had to be discharged, and Manning observed in 1811: 'It is very bad policy, thus perpetually to send men of bad character...'.⁷ When Yutai, the Amban in Lhasa at the time of the Younghusband expedition in 1904 was, inevitably, impeached, it was pointed out that China was represented in Tibet by 'officials with bad marks against their names who have been cashiered or reduced in rank and who owe their reinstatement to skilful intrigue... Since to them their reputation is a matter of no consequence, they hesitate at no enormity, batten on the Tibetans and embezzle Treasury Funds'.⁸ By 1904, in fact, the office of Amban was reduced to such straights that Yutai was obliged to borrow money from Younghusband, and one chronicler of the period writes: 'he might as well have been in Liverpool for all the influence he was exerting on Tibetan policy'.⁹

Huc and Gabet, two Lazarist missionaries who were amongst the very few to penetrate Tibet's isolation in the nineteenth century, observed: 'the government of Tibet resembles that of the Pope and the position occupied by the Chinese ambassadors is the same as that of the Austrian ambassador in Rome'.

The British connection

The transparency of Chinese authority in Tibet was demonstrated by the fact that although Britain signed several treaties with China over trade missions and border issues in Tibet towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Chinese had no power whatsoever to implement them against the Tibetans' will.

Fears began to grow amongst British authorities that Tibet might fall into the hands of the expanding power of Russia, with unfortunate consequences for British interests in India and the Himalayan states. 'Unless we secure the reversion of Lhasa', wrote their Director of Military Intelligence in 1898, 'we may find the Russians there before us'.¹⁰ The question of the enigmatic figure of the Buriyat Mongol Dorjiev and his proximity to the thirteenth Dalai Lama, along with rumours of a secret treaty between Russia and Tibet, aggravated suspicions. Finally Britain despatched the Younghusband expedition in 1904, which led to the signing with the Tibetans of an Anglo-Tibetan Convention. This acknowledged Tibet's ability to enter independently into internal obligations.

Chao Erh Feng,¹¹ nicknamed 'the Butcher', reduced to subjection the whole of Kham by 1910, and a Chinese army marched into Lhasa in February 1910, whereupon the thirteenth Dalai Lama fled to India. This was the first Chinese army that had ever been directed against the Tibetans, and this short period the only time that China tried to impose her authority with force.

With the Chinese revolution of 1911, whatever rights the Manchus thought they had in Tibet evaporated; Chinese troops mutinied and were subsequently repatriated. In 1912, the Dalai Lama, inspired with some awareness of international procedures from his stay in India, issued a proclamation of the independence of Tibet, and for the next thirty-eight years, Tibet did enjoy complete independence. In the following year, Tibet concluded a treaty with Mongolia, each country recognizing the other's independence and sovereignty.

The conference at Simla of 1913-14 was convened with Britain, Tibet and China as equal partners. The treaty which emerged recognized China's suzerainty over Tibet and Tibet's autonomy. When China refused to sign, and therefore to acknowledge this, Britain and Tibet concluded the treaty alone. The Simla agreement is, incidentally, tacitly recognized by the Government of India by virtue of her recognition of the 'McMahon Line' as the frontier.

Tibet remained neutral in both the Sino-Japanese War and the Second World War. When the question of transporting Allied war materials through Tibet was raised, the Tibetan government demurred. The British Foreign Office observed in 1942, '... in fact the Tibetans not only claim to be, but actually are an independent people...'.¹² Anthony Eden advised China in 1943 that Britain 'had always been prepared to recognize Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, but only on the understanding that Tibet is regarded as autonomous'.¹³ For as long as China failed to acknowledge the Simla convention, in the eyes of Britain, Tibet remained *de facto* independent.

In 1947, Tibet sent an independent delegation to the Asian Relations Conference in India, where the Tibetan national flag was flown. The following year a Tibetan trade delegation under Finance Minister Shakabpa, travelled to several foreign countries, all of which recognized their Tibetan passports as valid for travel. In 1949, as if any further demonstration of Tibetan independence were needed, the whole of the Chinese official mission at Lhasa was ordered to leave.

As one authority has written: 'whether a territory is independent or not depends primarily on the facts of the situation on the ground. If a government is in effective control of its territory and is not in practice subject to control by another government, there is a powerful case for regarding it as independent'.¹⁴ For virtually the whole of its recorded history, Tibet has clearly enjoyed such independence. The most that any foreign power had recognized in terms of Chinese authority was suzerainty, of which Lord Curzon had already written in 1903: 'we regard the so-called suzerainty of China over Tibet as a constitutional fiction—a political affectation which has only been maintained because of convenience to both parties'.¹⁴ The notion of suzerainty was derived from the vocabulary

of the European feudal system, and it was never clear how it applied to an Asian situation. The Chinese had never accepted it, and when they invaded Tibet in 1950, claiming Tibet as an integral part of the 'Motherland', this action was rooted in a distortion of historical facts.

The character of Tibetan society

'The one aspect of the national character that has most influenced their past and present is the devotion to religion which dominates the thoughts and actions of every Tibetan.'¹⁵ It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of Buddhism for the Tibetans. They adopted the whole of the active Buddhist culture of India, and throughout their history devoted themselves to the development of the very special Tantric Buddhism to which they became the sole heirs when the Moslem invasion of India eliminated Buddhism there in the thirteenth century. 'The Tibetans, no matter to which class they belonged, were all united in their religious beliefs and supported the existing value system; they were more concerned with the latter than with economics.'¹⁶

Every town or village had a religious centre, with its monks and Lamas – priests – varying from the enormous monastic university towns like Drepung, Sera and Ganden, the monasteries of Lhasa which held thousands of monks each, to small temples and remote hermitages. The majority of these were well run by sincere religious practitioners, and catered for the needs of the local community.

Tibetan government is unique in its dual character of secular and spiritual function. The early kings or emperors called themselves Dharma-Kings (Buddhist kings), a role that was inherited by the Sakya Lamas. Under the fifth Dalai Lama, the term 'Cho Si Nyi Den' – 'Dual government of Religion and Politics' – was used to describe the twin aspects of Tibetan government, for the first time. The system is based on the ten principles of Buddhism and the sixteen Tibetan civil laws, and is dedicated to both the temporal welfare of the people as well as their spiritual welfare in the next life. It is epitomized in the secular and spiritual authority vested in the institution of the Dalai Lama, which 'has been the most important feature of the Tibetan state in recent times'.¹⁷

A comparatively large number of people in Tibet were involved in spiritual practice, which meant they were physically unproductive. Some estimates, probably too high, put the number of monks at one-sixth of the male population. In a material sense, society was static in comparison to a modern western society. Tibet's complete ignorance of material well-being and comfort, her isolation and lack of awareness of international political procedures all combined to project the picture of Tibet as a remote mediaeval land existing anomalously in the twentieth century. Yet it would, of course, be unwise to make cultural parallels with a modern western democracy, many of the evils of which had no chance of existing in Tibet.

Tibetan society before 1950 was a flourishing and functioning social system. Requirements were simple. Tibet had enormous resources of raw materials, its people enjoyed ample leisure time, and it was completely self-sufficient. Tibetan society was unique, and wholly different from the Chinese. This underlies the Tibetan claim for independence:

'Tibet's right to a genuine state of autonomy rests upon an historical cultural background which has developed certainly over the last thousand years very differently from that of China, based as it is upon a separate language and literature, a separate form of Buddhism, a separate economy and form of government, and distinct forms of art and architecture.'¹⁸

THE CHINESE INVASION

From the Chinese point of view, the Tibetans, not being of 'Han' or Chinese origin, fall into the 6.6% of the population of the 'Motherland' described as 'Minority Nationalities'. In 1931, Mao Tse-tung had accepted the right of self-determination, complete separation, and the formation of an independent state for each nationality.¹⁹ In 1945, he argued that Communists should help the nationalities, 'to fight for their political, economic and cultural liberation and development... Their language written as well as spoken, their customs, traditions and religious beliefs should be respected'.²⁰ Yet Mao Tse-tung was quite aware of the unique situation the Chinese faced in Tibet. When the Communists had passed through Eastern Tibet during the Long March in 1935, they had met with hostility from the Tibetans. 'In contrast to the Russian

Revolution in which peoples other than Great Russians played a significant role, the revolution in China was a purely Han Chinese affair.'²¹

Mao observed in 1952 in his 'On the Policies for our work in Tibet' that '... conditions in Tibet are different from those in Sinkiang' and 'that... neither rent reduction nor agrarian reform can start for at least two or three years. While several thousand Han people live in Sinkiang, there are hardly any in Tibet... we must do our best and take proper steps to win over the Dalai and the majority of his top echelon and to isolate the handful of bad elements in order to achieve a gradual, bloodless transformation of the Tibetan economic and political system over a number of years.'²² After all, he advocated a gradual approach to reform.

In 1950, the People's Liberation Army entered Tibet and routed the Tibetan army at Chamdo. At this point, Tibet appealed to the United Nations; Britain and India moved that the subject be deferred, and it was adjourned. Negotiations in Tibet were conducted through Ngabo, the captured governor of Chamdo, still the leading Chinese puppet in Tibet, and currently Chairman of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region. As a result, Tibet was obliged to take part in talks in Peking which led to the notorious 'Seventeen Point Agreement' – 'for the peaceful liberation of Tibet'. The conditions under which this treaty was signed were shameful. The Tibetan delegates were given a blunt choice – to sign the document or face war.²³ They were prevented from seeking the Dalai Lama's advice, and even their official seals were facsimiles, made in Peking.²⁴ Mao Tse-tung was to write: 'apparently not only the two Prime Ministers but also the Dalai and most of his clique were reluctant to accept the agreement.'²⁵

The Agreement pledged 'national regional autonomy', and clauses that are worthy of note are: No.4 – 'The central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet, ... will not alter the established status, function, and powers of the Dalai Lama'; No.7 – 'The policy of freedom of religious belief laid down in the common programme of the CPPCC shall be carried out. The religious beliefs, customs and habits of the Tibetan people shall be respected, and Lama monasteries shall be protected'; and No.9 – 'the spoken and written language and school education of the Tibetan nationality shall be developed...'²⁶

In 1956 the Dalai Lama travelled to India, where he met Nehru and Chou-En-lai, who assured him that Tibetan autonomy would be respected and 'reforms' would not be forced on Tibet. The following year, Mao in 'On Correct Handling of Contradictions amongst the People' announced the decision to postpone 'reforms' in Tibet 'during the Second Five Year Period'.²⁷

The national uprising

'Democratic reforms', however, had already started in some parts of Kham and Amdo – the East of Tibet – as early as 1952-53. The Chinese there tried, as elsewhere, to orchestrate a class struggle. More roads were built, with the aid of large numbers of Chinese workers. In order to feed them, the Chinese started to 'borrow' and then to buy stocks of food, causing severe inflation. Taxes were imposed, and confiscations and executions followed. The guerilla movement that started in 1953 became widespread, although it had no organization. Vast numbers of Chinese settlers started to be brought into the Chamdo area, and the Chinese made the fatal move of trying to disarm the Khampas. By 1954, a number of atrocities had been perpetrated by the Chinese. In places, those who resisted the Chinese were rounded up, labelled as 'reactionaries and serf-owners' and were publicly executed. For example, in the small town of Doi in Amdo, out of five hundred so-called 'serf-owners', three hundred persons were shot in the back of the head in 1953 before a horrified crowd, who were then told that such would be their fate if they opposed socialism.²⁸ In August and September 1954, the *New York Times* and the *Guardian* reported that 40,000 'farmers' had taken part in an uprising in south-east Tibet.²⁹

Meanwhile, as early as 1952, the 'People's Movement', 'Mimang Tsongdu', an underground organization was active in Lhasa and the first Tibetan National Party appeared, which spearheaded massive demonstrations. Poster campaigns were carried out, demanding that the Chinese leave Tibet. The 'Mimang Tsongdu' was officially dissolved and its ringleaders imprisoned.

Since 1957, the Chinese had been taking Tibetan children to study in the 'Minority Nationalities' Institutes in such places as Peking

and Chengdu. More than 30,000 children were sent to China between 1952 and 1969. The rigorous programme of indoctrination in communist doctrine and the Chinese version of Tibetan history provoked the Tibetan students in Peking into an intense awareness of their national identity.³⁰ Between 1956 and 1957, they openly revolted, but were subdued with an 'anti-local nationalism' campaign. This coincided with the notorious 'Hundred Flowers' era in China. The end result was that the Chinese feared to expose their 'educated' Tibetan youths to positions of authority, and upon their return to Tibet they were given harmless jobs, such as interpreters in the villages.

The 'Kanting Rebellion' of 1955-56 started a major guerilla offensive in Kham, which spread to Amdo in 1958. Fighting was fiercest around Lithang, Bathang, Derge, Chamdo and Kanze. A full-scale war was being waged, about which the world never really knew anything at all.³¹ Chinese reprisals were bitter; Lithang monastery was bombed flat, and monasteries, villages and Tibetan encampments were bombed and machine-gunned from the air. It is not known how many lost their lives in Kham during these years; many more were to die in the famines of 1960 and 1961, and by 1961, refugees reported a staggering drop in the male population. The members of the 1980 delegations saw hardly any Tibetan men in Kham over the age of thirty-five. It was as if two whole generations had been annihilated. The Khampa rebellion linked up with the Uighur anti-Chinese revolt in Xinjiang, and may have been a factor in causing the Sino-Soviet split of 1960.

It was at this time that the Nationalist Chinese and the CIA began to take an interest in what was happening in Tibet. It is one more tragic irony of the Tibetan struggle, that though the Tibetans appealed to the whole world for help, it was only from these quarters that it came – simply in order to exploit the Tibetans as an anti-communist force. Much was made of exposing this 'CIA connection' at a time when it was fashionable, but it was quite insignificant and had absolutely no effect on the course of events.³² CIA aid was at its height during the years 1964-74, when it enabled guerillas to operate from Mustang in Nepal.

Khamba guerillas began to move westwards, and, in the preparations for a large religious ceremony on behalf of the Dalai Lama in 1957, took the opportunity to meet and confer over the future. Chinese soldiers began to defect to the Tibetan side, notably the PLA artillery commander in Lhasa, Colonel Cheng Ho-Ching. He recounted how he had simply become disgusted with the killings and manipulation of what he felt were simple, Tibetan people.³³ By 1958, fifteen thousand Khampa families had drifted into Lhasa, who then moved south to Lhoka. It was in south Tibet that the famous 'Four Rivers and Six Ranges' Resistance group, which took its name from an ancient name of Kham, was formed, under the leadership of Gonpo Tashi Andru-tsang. But by now fighters from all over Tibet had joined the Khampa movement. The Chinese reported one of their slogans: 'We would rather live for one day and die under the Buddha than live for a hundred years . . . under atheist rule.'³⁴ Leaders of the 'Mimang Tsongdu' and Khampas saw force as the only solution; the Dalai Lama and the monastic community condemned the use of force, whilst the Tibetan government dithered, holding out empty hopes of appeasement.

It was in this highly-charged atmosphere that an invitation for the Dalai Lama to attend a theatrical performance in the PLA headquarters at Lhasa early in 1959 sparked off a mass spontaneous uprising in the capital. This was later to be remembered as 'The 10th of March'. On 20 March, the Chinese shelled the Potala Palace in Lhasa, and the next day the *Times* carried the headline 'Fighting in Lhasa – Revolt against Chinese'. Tibetan casualties at the Norbulingka, the Dalai Lama's summer palace, were heaped into mass graves or burned. In an interview in an East German weekly magazine of 20 April 1959, the Chinese representative to the Democratic Republic of Germany stated, 'in the fighting in Lhasa about 40,000 have been killed . . .'³⁵

The Chinese at once abandoned their 'gradual' approach to liberation, and dissolved the Tibetan Government. Reprisals and executions were carried out and large numbers of monks and laymen were herded into prisons or labour schemes. Lhasa was described as a 'city of frightened women'. Property was redistributed, and the population was categorized into various classes – generally, into rich, middle-class and poor; otherwise, into various other categories such as landlords, their representatives, rich, middle-class, poor and reactionary. This division in society created an atmosphere in which one Tibetan could not trust another, and mutual suspicion reigned.

Endless meetings for criticism, 'struggle sessions' and political indoctrination lessons punctuated the working lives of the people. Monasteries were dissolved at the outset, and the monks were put to work. In 1959, only thirty-six aged monks remained out of five hundred in the great Sakya monastery.³⁶ Monasteries, castles and historic buildings began to be destroyed, and national festivals and celebrations were banned. 'The main aim', one author writes, 'was to destroy the basis of Tibetan civilization, or anything that gave the Tibetans a distinct identity of their own'.³⁷

In theory, the standard of living of the poorer persons should have risen dramatically, but on account of an unequal distribution of property – in favour of the Chinese themselves, and the extremely heavy Chinese taxes, they found that they actually had much less than before.³⁸

The Cultural Revolution

Experimental communes are said to have begun as early as 1962, but generally they were set up around 1965, and in some places as late as 1973-74. In July 1966, over 8,000 Red Guards³⁹ stormed into Tibet, and impatiently began to put the Party's policy into effect with increased vigour and speed. Their targets were the 'Four Olds' – old traditions, old thoughts, old culture and old customs. Once unleashed, the Cultural Revolution in Tibet soared into an Orwellian extravaganza of oppression. The destruction of religious institutions and monuments was completed.

The Red Guard movement split into two factions. Young Tibetans joined these groups, as it provided an opportunity of some kind of fighting the Chinese, and on account of the promises they held out, but as one refugee observed: 'there were Tibetans on both sides, but nobody had the slightest idea what the differences between the two factions were'.⁴⁰ Fighting broke out and both Tibetans and Chinese died.

'Liberalization'

The 'Great Turning Point' of 1976, the end of the Cultural Revolution and the downfall of the 'Gang of Four', had little effect on Tibet, which continued on its gradual, downhill path. In 1979, Chairman Hua Guofeng announced a new lenient and liberal policy and Ren Rong, who had been responsible for Tibet for the previous ten years, was removed. The findings of the Dalai Lama's first delegation stirred Hu Yao-bang, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, into visiting Tibet in May 1980. He, too, was shocked, declared local officials had been deceiving Peking, and is said to have shouted angrily that all the millions the Chinese had been spending might as well have been thrown in the river at Lhasa. He then made the following, highly-revealing promise – to restore the economy of Tibet to its 'pre-1959 level'.⁴¹ Other such promises are couched in the form of grandiose statements such as the Thirty-One Point Plan, Six Point Plan or Eight Point Plan,⁴² which pledged, as always, greater respect for local conditions, culture and so on, but only for the Tibet Autonomous Region.

China's policy towards Tibet can be seen as having evolved through various stages: the 'gradual' policy of 1950-59, with its disastrous attempts at 'peaceful' reform in Kham; the post-1959 reprisals and democratic reforms in Central Tibet; the nightmare of the Cultural Revolution, and the 'new dawn' heralded by Hua Guofeng's 1979 pledge for a new 'leniency'. But it would be a mistake to see any fundamental change or softening of China's attitude towards her most troublesome minority region. As one writer has pointed out: 'the only essential philosophical difference between the seemingly benign policy of the present government and the "catastrophic havoc wreaked by the Gang of Four" was the time plan and degree of control . . . The "catastrophic errors" of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four simply constituted the same policy as today, but administered with bludgeon and sledgehammer.'⁴³

THE AFTERMATHS

In 1982, a Chinese government spokesman in the Netherlands summed up the advances made in Tibet since 1959:

'There have also been great successes in the fields of industry, agriculture, education, public health – and in the field of management-policy with reference to nationality and religion.'⁴⁴

Industry

Great advances have been made in industry, and by 1976 there were said to be 252 industries in Tibet. For example, in Ngapa there is a dairy plant that produces tinned dried milk, the leather factories in Kanze and Ngapa produce shoes, bags and leather jackets; and woollen mills at Dartsedo and Nyintri produce good quality woollen fabric. However, they all have three elements in common, which they share with other industries in Tibet. Firstly, all their products are sent to China, and even as far as Hong Kong and Nepal for sale. In official language, they are 'offered to the State'. Secondly, the majority of Tibetans would not be able to afford to buy what they produce. Thirdly, practically the whole workforce, 75-80% or more, is Chinese. Chinese immigrants hold all the vital posts, with only the heavy jobs, like porters and labourers, being reserved for Tibetans.⁴⁵

Another industry that has made great steps forward is the lumber industry. In 1950, the estimated total of forest timber resources in Kham was more than 3.5 million cubic feet; the Pome area alone contained 17,300 square miles of virgin forest.⁴⁶ Now, in the Ngapa and Dechen areas, over 65,000 people are employed in the lumber industry, and the rivers are thick with wood, day and night, being exported to China. Vast areas have been deforested, and another of the world's natural forests is fast disappearing. During December 1977, the output of coal in the Tibet Autonomous Region was 87,440 tonnes. Radio Lhasa reported in 1981 a major geological conference in Lhasa which reviewed the thirty-six different kinds of minerals that have been found in the Tibetan plateau, some of them very rare, and including uranium and plutonium.⁴⁷ Refugees report large-scale mineral exports to China, and the employment of Tibetans in chrome mines.

Agriculture and health

In agriculture there has been progress, in that uncultivated areas have been opened up, irrigation has been made more widespread, and fields have been made more regular. Produce has definitely increased on account of the more intensive working of the land.

However, all produce goes to the commune, and the people are given ration cards indicating the amount of grain they can earn by working, through a points system. The official Chinese statement is that people receive a ration of between 550 and 900 lb. (gyama) of grain each per annum. Enquiries in hundreds of households in the second delegation's visit proved that this was not the case.

Once grain is harvested, the ration for food, seed and animal fodder is subtracted, then the 6% 'Love the Nation' tax. Then 50% is withdrawn as 'Surplus Grain Sales' by the State, and bought at 3.08 yuan per 28 lb. Of the remaining 50%, famine prevention, war preparation and 'production brigades development' account for a great deal. The remainder is distributed according to workpoints amongst commune members. The price given by the state for 28 lb. of wheat, i.e. one whole month's food ration, is less than the cost of thirty cigarettes in the Chinese-controlled commune shop.⁴⁸ Wheat is grown instead of the traditional barley, as Chinese eat wheat in preference to barley. For centuries, barley had been the traditional crop of the Tibetan people, and, when ground and roasted to produce a thick flour called 'tsampa', or fermented into a wine known as 'chang', it formed the basis of the Tibetans' staple diet. Depriving the Tibetans of barley would be the equivalent in a western country of making people go without bread, wine or beer. Whatever is bought, a card is needed; there are 'grain' cards for all foodstuffs, and 'cotton' cards for all clothing. According to their physical stamina as workers, different grades are recognized. This system is particularly hard on the aged and infirm. In the summer and autumn people have had to resort to living on wild vegetables, and there have been many cases of starvation.⁴⁹ The second delegation met a number of children roaming the countryside who had been asked to leave home as their parents could not afford to keep them. Another pathetic case was reported where children were reduced to stealing food from Chinese soldiers' pigs.⁵⁰

As with the fruits of the great industrial advances in Tibet, all the produce of agriculture and the nomads is appropriated by the Chinese, along classic colonial lines. A pound of butter, for example, is bought from the nomads for 0.40 yuan; Tibetans buy it back from the state shop for 1.5 yuan. The Chinese give 1 yuan for a sheepskin; to buy a sheepskin jacket from them, made from one-and-a-half skins, costs 45 yuan.

The close control of food severely restricts the mobility of the Tibetans, as they are tied to their ration cards in order to survive. People attempting to go on pilgrimages, for instance, have their cards confiscated, and upon their return, if they can get their card back, will be penalized, and may only receive half rations. In 1980, Losang Tsetin, one of the thirteen Vice-Chairmen of the Tibet Autonomous Region, admitted that Tibet, once a country that was totally self-sufficient, now had to import more than 30,000 tons of food a year.⁵¹

Hospitals have been built in larger towns in Tibet, which in general cater for Chinese or Tibetan officials. Ordinary Tibetans have to pay for medical treatment if they can get it. 'Barefoot doctors' are very common. Armed with syringes and pills, they have hardly any training and have been responsible for a number of deaths and hair-raising incidents. One of these was witnessed by the Dalai Lama's second delegation, when their interpreter had to be hospitalized as a result of a series of wrong treatments.

Education

Chinese official figures in 1980 put the number of schools and students in Tibet as: 430 primary schools with 17,000 students, 55 middle schools with 10,000 students, 6,000 schools started by the people with 200,000 students, 22 high schools with 2,000 students, and 4 colleges with more than 560 students.⁵²

The Dalai Lama's third delegation to Tibet was composed of specialists in the field of education. They were able to visit eighty-five schools. In many places they were informed that the schools were 'closed for the summer', elsewhere a fake nomad school was staged just for their benefit, and another school was 'closed for lunch' at 10.00 a.m. with all its classrooms stacked with timber. Even from the official figures, of the schools visited, out of a total of 39,844 students, only 17,660 were Tibetans - 44%. Of the 2,979 teachers, 1,955 were Chinese - almost 70%.

In Kham, no Tibetan is taught at all; in Central Tibet it is taught for up to three years in primary schools only, and then only as a vehicle for communist ideology. This latter forms the main subject at all levels, along with Chinese and some maths and science. Primary schools exist in towns, but the striking number of children between the ages of seven and fifteen working in fields or on the roads would argue against there being any in rural areas.⁵³ For higher education, there are the 'Minorities' Institutes', all in China. Dawa Tsering is a Tibetan who studied Marxist-Leninist thought in exile and went voluntarily to Tibet and China, where he studied in the Landou Minorities' Institute.⁵⁴ He found that the majority of the Tibetans there were simply cadres studying Chinese language, the science faculty was restricted entirely to Chinese, and that the Minorities' Institute could not 'compare with schools of higher learning in the outside world, of even with those in China proper'. When the second delegation asked to meet Tibetans who had been given university education, the Chinese were unable to produce any. In 1979, China sent 55,000 Chinese abroad for further education, but not a single Tibetan.

The main aim of education in Tibet is quite clearly to sinicize the population and make them familiar with political dogma. The result is that the disappearance of the written language is almost accomplished, and in many places correct, spoken Tibetan cannot be understood. There are newspapers, carrying articles on Chinese current affairs and a commentary on life in Tibet, but they are only available to Tibetan officers. Most books in Tibetan are direct translations of Chinese propaganda, and in school libraries, Tibetan magazines, newspapers or books are virtually non-existent. For example, when the Dalai Lama's second delegation visited the library of the Nomadic and Agricultural School in Kongpo Nyintri in 1980, they saw thirty-two newspapers, only one of which was in Tibetan. Of the 120 magazines, none were in Tibetan. This is a school for Tibetans, yet out of the thousands of books in the library, the only ones the delegates saw in Tibetan were a few dictionaries and the *Thoughts of Chairman Mao*.

Recently a number of Tibetan classics have been printed, such as *The Epic of Gesar*, *The Elegant Sayings of Sakya Pandita* and *The Life of Milarepa*. China's leading Tibetologist, Wang Yao, introducing the life-story of Tibet's greatest poet and saint, Milarepa, rises to the occasion by describing the Buddhist references it contains as 'baseless nonsense' and contesting that the aim behind the whole work is to expose the evils of the Old Society.⁵⁵ In 1982, a completely new periodical, *Young Sun*, was announced, which

would contain '... Marxist-Leninist-Mao thought teachings, the Four basic principles, the Party's nationalities policy, general knowledge on science, basic political theory ...'⁵⁶

Following this trend, all place names in Tibet have been replaced by Chinese names, and parents are obliged not to give their children Tibetan names. The delegation came across many children named after their weight or their father's age at birth, e.g., '7½' or '42'.

It is difficult to find any evidence that the thrust of education in Tibet is intended to benefit the Tibetans. Even Radio Lhasa announces the dismal quality of teaching in Tibetan schools.⁵⁷ When recently a number of Tibetan exile teachers volunteered to return to Tibet to work in the schools, the project was rebuffed by the Chinese.

Religion

Between 3,000 and 4,000 monasteries and religious monuments existed in Tibet, of which parts of only thirteen remain. The Chinese explain that their destruction was carried out during the Cultural Revolution and was the work of the Tibetan people. However, exhaustive enquiries by the delegations to Tibet, and independent refugee evidence, demonstrate conclusively that most monasteries were destroyed between 1959 and 1961, and only the larger, more famous ones remained to be torn down during the Cultural Revolution. For example, in 1959 itself, five out of the six monasteries in the Rungpatsa area of Kham, my own birthplace, had been demolished.

This destruction was carried out systematically: First of all, special teams of mineralogists were sent to religious buildings to locate and extract all the precious stones. Next, metallurgists arrived and marked all metal objects which were subsequently removed. Then, trucks were sent from local army headquarters, the walls were dynamited, and all the wooden beams and pillars were taken away. Clay images were destroyed in the hope of finding precious objects inside them. Finally, whatever remained – bits of wood and stone – were removed by local people.

In Lhasa, Shigatse and Gyantse, temples do remain. The Jokhang (Central Cathedral) in Lhasa, used for years as a pigsty and PLA barracks, has been partially renovated. These three sites are showpieces on the official Chinese tour for journalists and visitors to Tibet. Just as in mediaeval Europe, the monasteries were treasure-houses of culture, preserving the works of art and scriptures that were the cultural heritage of the thousand-year-old history of Buddhism in Tibet. The bonfire made out of ancient books in the temple at Lhasa lasted for four days. But many of the more portable objects found their way to the antique markets of Hong Kong and Nepal.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China states that: 'Citizens enjoy freedom to believe in religion and freedom not to believe in religion and to propagate atheism' (Article 46).⁵⁸ By not permitting citizens to propagate religion, the Constitution has legitimized the suppression of any activity which can be construed as furthering religion. Yet it is evident that Tibetans will not abandon their Buddhist faith. Journalists report in 1983 how Tibetans flock to the Jokhang in Lhasa, which is now open to the public.⁵⁹ At Ganden, against much opposition and with penalties imposed by the Chinese, groups of persons have started to reconstruct a temple in the great monastic university. Young Tibetans have repaired a temple at Bara Luphu, now known as 'the Youth Temple'. Both these projects have now been adopted by the Chinese as shining examples of their policy of freedom of religion.

In 1980, the *Basic Study Guide No.55* produced for the Communist Party, Youth League and officers, plainly set out the official view on religion: 'We have to stop religion in that it is blind faith, against the law, and counter-revolutionary ...' It adds: 'although our constitution allows people to have the right to religion, it should be abundantly clear that Communist Party and Youth Organization members do *not* have the right to practise religion'. In February 1982 another booklet for party members underlined a number of destructive or unconstitutional acts incompatible with modern revolutionary socialism, such as public religious gatherings and 'poisoning' the younger generation with 'religious and superstitious beliefs'.⁶⁰ Radio Lhasa in March 1982 was to add: 'Communists never conceal their political viewpoints and openly declare their belief in materialism and atheism and not in any god or saviour'; therefore, 'they must all become ardent atheists', and 'partymen have the responsibility to propagate materialism and atheism by all means possible'.⁶¹

Underlying the need for the Chinese to reiterate such statements at such a date is the plain fact that the Tibetan people, and this includes even Communist Party members, will not give up their faith, whatever the cost. A thirty-point Social and Security Law passed in Lhasa in July 1981 made a punishable offence the keeping of photos of Lamas, the making and selling of small religious statues or pills blessed by Lamas, and 'unproductive movement of people'.⁶²

Today, it seems that the Chinese are uncertain how to proceed. On the one hand, photographs of the Dalai Lama are confiscated whenever possible, and religious activity is discouraged, whilst on the other the Chinese promise religious freedom.

Racial equality?

The two most important bodies in the 'government of Tibet' are the Communist Party Committee and the People's Government, in which the top figures and most important functionaries are all Chinese. Administrative authority is entirely in the hands of the Chinese; as one Tibetan comments: 'In 1965 the Tibet Autonomous Region was established. The extent of autonomy enjoyed by the Tibetans could be measured by the absence of Tibetans in positions of power.'⁶³ In 1980 seven of the Vice-Chairmen were Chinese and only 40% of all cadres were Tibetan, mostly holding lower positions.

The only body that is Tibetan is the curious Political Consultative Committee. Consisting of former aristocrats, Lamas and local leaders, they are brought out to meet and exchange pleasantries with visiting dignitaries, and serve to demonstrate how people of any class background have a role to play in the New Tibet. A person's class has to be entered on his ration card, along with his name, date and place of birth. That means that a child of eight has to be categorized into one class or another. The qualifications for making progress in life and becoming an officer are 'right class' and 'right attitude'. Neither administrative ability nor education are taken into account. 'Right class' means proletariat, and 'right attitude' means an unflinching devotion to Communist Party dogma and the central government line.

From the age of seven, Tibetan children will face the experience of the institutionalized discrimination that the Tibetans suffer at the hands of the Chinese. Young people will see that in whatever job they get, they are subordinate to a Chinese, and that Chinese are given priority in any competition for employment. Unskilled labour in agriculture or on the roads is always provided by Tibetans, who are made to work under gruelling conditions, while Chinese dominate the workforce in offices and factories, and hold all the better jobs. The Chinese eat different food from the Tibetans and earn higher wages. New housing that is constructed in Tibet is reserved for Chinese and Tibetan officers.

Tibetans are discouraged from learning their own languages as it is a positive handicap in getting work, only Chinese being of any use. Tibetan words for 'Tibet' and 'China', 'Tibetan' and 'Chinese', 'king' and 'history', have been suppressed and replaced by words that play down Tibet's separation from China and cultural integrity, and which belittle historical traditions. Music and dance have been largely sinicized. Alongside their disrespect for the Tibetans, the Chinese have manifested a cynical lack of concern for Tibet; one ecological blunder follows another. Visiting Tibetans notice particularly the complete absence of any of the wild animals that used to thrive in Tibet, from herds of deer to pigeons: this is the result of the Chinese campaign against 'useless' animals.

In short, anything Tibetan – ways of thinking, habits, dress and so on, or anything that smacks of a Tibetan way of life, is stigmatized, and anything Chinese is lauded as progressive. Discriminated against at every turn, Tibetans are condemned to be second-class citizens, living in shame in their own country, and it is very difficult for them to see the Chinese policy towards them as anything but one of *apartheid* and out-and-out racism.

The ultimate origin of this discrimination is the so-called 'Great Han Chauvinism'. In 1953, Mao had remarked: '... in some places the relations between nationalities are far from normal. ... we must go to the root and criticize Han chauvinist ideas. ... what has come to light in the last two or three years shows that Han chauvinism exists almost everywhere.'⁶⁴ 'The key to good relations', he was still writing in 1957, 'lies in overcoming Han chauvinism'.⁶⁵

This is, of course, not a new phenomenon. 'Confucian' China refused to deal with non-Chinese on the basis of equality. It had no 'foreign relations' as such, for it continued to view all countries and

nations as being inferior and intrinsically subordinate to China.⁶⁶ 'From time immemorial, the Chinese have considered themselves as superior to all other peoples and have called all others "barbarians".'⁶⁷ This attitude reached its absurd conclusion when the Emperor Chien Lung wrote to George II addressing him as a 'humble and devout suppliant', encouraging him to obey imperial instructions. The Papacy, Holland, Portugal and Russia were all considered 'tributaries' by the Ch'ing dynasty.⁶⁸

One outstanding characteristic of this assumption of superiority is that it is very deeply embedded in the Chinese mind, and therefore largely unconscious and not susceptible to reform.⁶⁹ Today the Chinese make no secret of their cultural superiority, and African students in China frequently complain of the crudest racial abuse.⁷⁰

The Chinese presence – civilian and military

From the mid-1950s, China announced her intention to settle 40,000 farmers in Tibet, and after 1959, the size of the Chinese population spiralled rapidly. Administrators, technicians and PLA troops arrived in constant stream. Radio Lhasa was continually announcing the arrival of new settlers between 1975 and 1976. In 1979, figures given to journalists visiting Tibet put the number of Chinese civilians in Tibet at just 120,000.⁷¹ In 1980, the population of Lhasa was given as 120,000 – 50,000 Tibetans and 70,000 Chinese.⁷²

Generally Chinese are settled in the warmer and more salubrious parts of Tibet, and in some areas they outnumber the Tibetans. They make no attempt to learn Tibetan: the Dalai Lama's second delegation met only two Chinese who could speak Tibetan during the three and a half months they spent in Tibet. Chinese administrative officials clearly see Tibet as a 'hardship post'. The enormous number of Chinese immigrants has been a major contribution towards the shortages of food in Tibet.

There are now reckoned to be half a million PLA troops in Tibet, with a sizeable garrison in each district and concentrations in the border areas like Pemako and Metok Dzong. There are nine military airfields, eleven radar stations and three nuclear bases.⁷³ Motorable dirt and gravel roads have been made all over Tibet, the only tarmac stretch by 1980 being that between Yangpachen and Lhasa. These roads are used almost exclusively by the military, and have indeed been dubbed by the local Tibetans 'maklam' – 'military roads'. During their three and a half month stay, the Dalai Lama's second delegation saw only fifteen vehicles carrying Tibetans, whereas every day they saw Chinese trucks, mostly military, sometimes a hundred in the space of one hour.

The Chinese have always used Tibetans in the PLA, both in the Indian border dispute of 1962 and in the Sino-Vietnamese war. In the latter war, many hundreds of Tibetans perished, especially from the Kham area. Their families are awarded a placard 'Honoured by the State' to hang above their door.

Tibet has become China's largest Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Base, with the major centres of population and industry in India, as well as the area of the Indian Ocean, within range of the missiles sited in Tibet. In 1982, it was reported that nuclear tests had been carried out in several areas, as a result of which large numbers of Tibetans had to be evacuated at short notice. For instance, after a test in March 1982 at Lop Nor, Tibetans were taken to Peking and Chinese officials admitted severe atmospheric pollution following the test.⁷⁴

Political oppression

Everyday life in Tibet is still conditioned by a constant fear of accidentally giving cause to accusations of reviving reactionary behaviour or of speaking too freely to the wrong person, who might turn out to be an informer. No description of political oppression in Tibet would be complete without special mention of the *thamzing* or 'struggle session', a form of torture that is applied along with interrogation and has been one of the most ubiquitous features of the new Tibet. Anyone in an 'unfavourable' category – that can mean anyone at all – is beaten and tortured by his fellows, relatives or peers, who are forced to participate on pain of undergoing *thamzing*, and a large proportion of victims have in the past died from them, although wherever possible, a slow death is ensured by reviving them after each session. The aims of *thamzing* are two: the creation of a 'class' system between victims and aggressors, and the spreading of widespread intimidation, mutual guilt and a general

atmosphere of fear amongst the ordinary people. *Thamzing* is a particularly sophisticated and efficient fashion of inspiring terror, and fear of it has been one of the principal factors behind the enormous number of well-documented suicides amongst Tibetans – sometimes numbering whole families.⁷⁵

Prisons and labour camps are another familiar feature of Tibet today. Untold numbers of Tibetans have 'disappeared' by being worked to death in such camps, particularly in the 1960s. Sentence to a labour camp is accorded without trial or vestige of human rights, and is, more often than not, tantamount to a death sentence. Violent political indoctrination sessions are a constant element of prison life. Over 10,000 persons died between 1960 and 1965, in the notorious Drapchi prison in Lhasa.

Dr. Tenzin Chodak, classed as a dangerous prisoner as he had been physician to the Dalai Lama, was incarcerated in a prison at Chiujiu, near the border of Inner Mongolia, in 1959. When he arrived at the prison, mostly populated by Chinese, he found that of the 300 Tibetan prisoners there in 1957, only two remained alive. 'Hard work coupled with meagre rations and subhuman conditions of work soon caused physical deterioration', he wrote. Amidst famine, 'we lost our sense of shame and dignity, . . . we ate ropes, leather bags, and anything we could lay our hands on. . . the men in our prison ate rats, frogs and some prisoners ate even the worms that were found in excreta . . . A seventeen-year-old Chinese youth killed his mother in order to get the four kilos of barley she had in her safe-keeping. . . Another Chinese killed an eight-year-old boy and ate him . . .' Within three years, two-thirds of the Tibetans imprisoned there were dead.⁷⁶

In 1979, *Time* magazine reported on a 'vast prison system' existing in Qinghai, formerly Amdo. An American imprisoned there for two-and-a-half years believed that half the province's estimated four million inhabitants are either prisoners or 'forced employees' there. Three large 'labour reform camps', along with scores, even hundreds, of smaller prison camps, make up what the former prisoner maintains is only one of a number of Chinese prison systems.⁷⁷

A 1979 estimate puts the number of Tibetans still in prison at 80,000,⁷⁸ which may be conservative. No western journalists or missions have been allowed to visit any of them, and, with the paucity of detailed information available, little has been done by any Western human rights organizations. This is in vivid contrast to the situation which prevails for Russian 'prisoners of conscience'; one British authority in 1983 claimed to have one thousand 'very well-documented cases'. Amnesty International, for example, have only recognized two cases, in Ngari and Sangyip prisons.⁷⁹ Recently, however, they were able to secure the release, for the time being, of a woman called Tsering Lhamo. She had been imprisoned in 1979 for shouting, 'Tibet is independent', during the visit of the Dalai Lama's first delegation to Tibet. Subjected to electric shock treatment, she was reduced to the state of a vegetable, and her son, imprisoned with her, was tortured and maimed.⁸⁰

There are a number of vigorous underground resistance movements in Tibet, composed largely of younger people, and including members from all strata of society. A number of their posters and handbooks have passed out of Tibet. Their target is not political communism, but the Chinese themselves, and they demand the restoration of independence, under the leadership of the Dalai Lama.

Unrest continued in Tibet all through the 1960s, and the demonstration of young people that led to 61 persons being shot, bayoneted and clubbed in the main temple in Lhasa in 1968, was not untypical.⁸¹ In 1969 a refusal by nomads to pay taxes sparked off a violent incident at Nyemo.⁸² By 1972, the *Times* of India carried the headline: 'Chinese facing Vietnam in Tibet'.⁸³ In July 1977, 20,000 Tibetans rose against the Chinese in Tsolho, south of Kokonor, and many were killed and injured.⁸⁴ Yin Fatang, the First Secretary of the Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in the Tibet Autonomous Region, reported to the Party Representatives' Conference in Lhasa in 1981 that 'widespread serious unrest, including sabotage, along with popular resistance', had broken out in Tibet.⁸⁵ In May 1982, 115 people were arrested in Shigatse, not on political charges, but ostensibly for indulging in decadent Western ways.⁸⁶

It would be difficult to overestimate the immense psychological damage done during the destruction of Tibetan society, and by the atmosphere of suspicion that still pervades life in Tibet. Even when

visiting India from Tibet, Tibetans perpetuate their old habit of looking right and left to check if they are being watched, before engaging in conversation.

A Tibetan genocide

In the wake of the events of 1959, two reports were issued by the International Commission of Jurists, which first raised the charge of genocide and specified that human rights had been violated in sixteen ways, including murder, rape, torture, destruction of family life, and deportation. These atrocities and sufferings fill the accounts of refugees, and no Tibetan family is free of the memory of this tragedy.

'Parents had to witness their sons being murdered, and if they failed to smile and clap and thank the Chinese for killing their own children they too would be condemned. In the same way, even young innocent children were made to see their parents dragged through the streets, beaten and stoned and finally executed for having served the former government or for having been the descendants of age-old landowners . . .'⁸⁷

The Dalai Lama himself stated that between 1955 and 1959, 65,000 Tibetans were killed and at least 10,000 children were deported.⁸⁸ The Chinese-controlled Radio Lhasa announced on 1 October 1960 that in the first year following the 1959 uprising, 87,000 Tibetans were executed in Central Tibet alone. A pooled eye-witness report confirms that, within a period of 17 days in 1966, in and around Lhasa, 69,000 were executed. (In 17 days, the Chinese thus killed more than the Nazis killed in the whole of their four-and-a-half year occupation of France.) Five hundred Tibetan youths demonstrating in the name of Tibet freedom were executed in Kongpo Tramo, Central Tibet, in 1972.⁸⁹ The Gansu railway construction and Qinghai borax mines had accounted for the lives of at least 23,419 Tibetans before 1980.⁹⁰

Precise figures do exist for the six districts of Golok in Kham, East Tibet.⁹¹ In 1957, the population of Golok was 120,000. Between 1958 and 1962, 21,000 local Tibetans were killed fighting the PLA, 20,000 more were executed in local prisons, and a further 20,000 died of starvation as a result of famine. In 1962, 53,000 persons were deported and simply 'disappeared'. Of the original population, only 6,000 remained, and between 1963 and 1979 these were reduced to 4,700. New settlers were brought in to increase the population in 1979 to 10,000, these persons being composed of 2,500 Chinese and 2,500 'non-Chinese'.

For as long as the Tibetans prove resistant to sinicization and yearn for freedom of religious belief and for true autonomy, they will have to be controlled and policed by the Chinese. This gives much cause for concern. China has already demonstrated her capacity to take lives – the quality of totalitarianism that is at the heart of the genocide. The Tibetans' stubborn determination to cling on to their Buddhist faith and their hopes for freedom must inevitably continue to provoke confrontation and create grounds for this process to be perpetuated.

Who is to blame?

Reviewing its history since its founding, the Chinese Communist Party made the following admission in 1981:

'In the past, particularly during the "Cultural Revolution", we made a grave mistake on the question of nationalities, the mistake of widening the class struggle, and we wronged a large number of cadres and masses of the minority nationalities. In our work among them, we did not show due respect for their right to autonomy. We must never forget this lesson . . . It is imperative to continue to implement the policy of freedom of religious belief.'⁹²

China is no stranger to the art of admitting failure, blaming the past on a scapegoat, and sidestepping the whole issue. During the 1950s, Communist propaganda made the Manchus and Kuomintang responsible for the poor relations between the nationalities. During the Cultural Revolution, blame was firmly laid upon Deng Xiao Ping for the 1959 Lhasa Uprising. In due course, Lin Biao and the Gang of Four were themselves held to blame for the orgy of destruction in Tibet. But, as we have seen, the destructions of the monasteries, for example, began well before the Cultural Revolution.

Tibetans in Tibet have no good reason to suppose that there will not always be a ready supply of scapegoats to burden with the Chinese Communist Party's failure. There is universal suspicion every time party policy turns a new corner, and never so much as with the much-vaunted policy of liberalization announced by Hua Guofeng. The second delegation to Tibet encountered widespread doubt even amongst Communist Party officers as to whether this is a serious

long-term policy at all, and no-one likes to appear enthusiastic in putting it into practice for fear of being denounced if the tide should turn again. Lack of initiative itself is then blamed on '... the residual poisonous influence of the Gang of Four'.

Deng Xiaoping's own yo-yo like career itself mirrors the endemic instability of China's ruling regime, plagued by the 'insatiable appetite for revenge' which has been described as 'China's greatest weakness'.⁹³ The ancient fear of sedition and disunity in China has always made heterodox ideas seem like treason and subversion. Some see China's continual turnover of persons and policies as having hampered any real progress in her development.

TIBETANS IN EXILE

The Dalai Lama

As the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people, His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama has been the key figure both in the renaissance of Tibetan civilization in exile in India and in keeping alive, in a wider context, the whole question of Tibet.

In 1963, he drew up a Draft Constitution for Tibet, in which is embodied a democratic form of government, and upon the basis of which his government-in-exile has been functioning, with elected representatives taking the major role in the government. The Dalai Lama takes no conventional ideological standpoint, but considers that 'original Marxism and Mahayana Buddhism, despite many differences, also have many points in common. The foremost is the emphasis on the common good of society . . . Buddhist theory is not sufficient by itself for full socio-economic policy in this or the next century; it can take many points from Marxist, socialist and democratic systems. Similarly, those systems can benefit from many points in Buddhist theory, especially in terms of the development of socially beneficial attitudes. Such a partnership would help millions of people.'⁹⁴

Although his government-in-exile is not recognized by any world government, the presence of the Dalai Lama and the 100,000 Tibetan refugees in exile is of acute embarrassment to the Chinese. Whilst he was at first denounced by the Communist regime, the Dalai Lama has over recent years been invited back to Tibet. Yin Fatang, First Secretary of the Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in the Tibet Autonomous Region, has publicly appealed to the Dalai Lama and Tibetans in exile to return to visit or settle in Tibet.⁹⁵ The presence of the Dalai Lama would both legitimize the existence of Chinese rule in Tibet, and defuse activity outside Tibet and hopes inside Tibet for autonomy. But it is questionable whether, in view of the almost fanatical dedication shown towards him by the Tibetans, the Chinese could take the risk that his presence would fan Tibetan nationalism, and it is unlikely that they could do anything other than keep him as a powerless figurehead in Peking. In fact, the Tibetans in Tibet send messages urging him not to return, for this very reason.

In this regard, it is interesting to observe the Chinese reactions to the Dalai Lama's activities abroad. They have always tried to intervene when they have feared that he might have made a political statement on foreign tours. But when he visited Mongolia and Europe in 1982, the Chinese tried to obstruct his freedom of movement and speech even on what was avowedly a cultural and religious visit. As well as applying pressure at an official, governmental level, they indulged in a series of desperate and undignified attempts to intimidate airport officials and Buddhist organizations. This apparently earnest desire to limit his activity in any sphere does not augur particularly well for the Dalai Lama's freedom or position were he to accept the equally enthusiastic invitation of the Chinese to return to Tibet.

The Dalai Lama is adamant that his own future is not the main point. His stand all along has been that:

'If those six million Tibetans there are really happy and contented, we would be prepared to return and accept whatever status the majority of them are prepared to grant us. But first it should be established to the total satisfaction of all Tibetans in exile that the Tibetans in Tibet are completely satisfied with their lot. This is the only prerequisite.'⁹⁶

The Tibetan community in exile

The Tibetan Community in exile is administered by the *Kashag* – the Council of Ministers – and the Assembly of Tibetan People's

Deputies, the democratically-elected body introduced by the Dalai Lama. Located in Dharamsala, North India, the Tibetan government supervises a number of departments and councils, amongst which are a Council for Religious and Cultural Affairs, a Council for Home Affairs, a Council for Tibetan Education and an 'Information Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama'. There are a number of offices that represent the Dalai Lama and his government: one in New Delhi, and others in New York, London, Switzerland, Japan and Nepal.

The majority of the estimated 100,000 Tibetans in exile live in India, and in settlements placed at their disposal by the Indian government. There are 38 settlements in India, Nepal and Sikkim, and other refugees have settled in Bhutan. The Central Tibetan Schools Administration looks after a number of schools ranging from the Tibetan Children's Village to the Tibetan Central Residential and Day Schools. These provide a modern education in a Tibetan educational environment.

Several institutions for education and culture have been founded. The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala has a museum and archive collection, offers seminars and publishes translations. Tibet House in New Delhi has a museum, library and emporium. The Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath teaches both Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and modern subjects. The Tibetan Medical Centre at Dharamsala trains medical students in traditional medicine and has hospital and research facilities. The Tibetan Welfare Delek Hospital at Dharamsala is a medical hospital with a special programme for eliminating tuberculosis, to which Tibetans are particularly susceptible. The Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts, a training institute of professional standard in Tibetan drama, opera and dance, has a troupe that tours throughout the world.

The largest Tibetan community outside India and the Himalayas is in Switzerland, where, with the aid of the Swiss Red Cross, 1,500 Tibetans have settled. Canada has the next largest community, 400 persons. In contrast with the refugees in India, who are employed largely in agriculture, the majority of the Tibetans in these large groups in the west work in various industries. Otherwise, smaller groups of Tibetans are scattered around the world in nineteen different countries. Tibetan community organizations have been formed in Switzerland, Canada, Britain, France, Sweden, Germany, Holland and the United States. They attempt to bring the plight of the Tibetan people to the attention of the public, and to remember their national culture by celebrating the major Tibetan festivals during the year. Many Tibetans have now received university education in India, Japan or in the West, and are consequently trained as doctors, teachers, accountants and the like. Several of them hold senior posts in university departments.

Some recent impressions

In 1980, the second and third fact-finding delegations visited Tibet. When foreign journalists witnessed a spontaneous outcry from a crowd, such as the delegations experienced all over Tibet, shouting their familiar slogans, 'Tibet is independent', and 'Long live the Dalai Lama', the Chinese abruptly curtailed the second delegation's visit. The projected fourth and fifth delegations have not, as yet, taken place.

By the end of 1981, taxes had been re-imposed, at a lower rate, where they had been lifted. Apparently in some areas 'mass enthusiasm' for paying taxes such as the 'Love the nation' tax had led to their being collected throughout the period of exemption! Tibetans allowed to visit relatives in India were prohibited from taking their children out of Tibet. This was in direct response to the fact that 200 Tibetan children had been left by their parents in India, when they could attend Tibetan schools.

As for freedom of religion, volunteers who are working on the renovation of the temple at Ganden monastery are kept under close surveillance and interrogated. An attempt to celebrate a traditional festival there in 1981 was obstructed; 60 lorry-loads of Tibetans were turned back, and the drivers of six lorries which had reached Ganden lost their driving licences. The Chinese figures for the monastic communities at Ganden, Sera and Drepung are 150, 100 and 120, respectively, although of course Ganden does not even have housing to accommodate monks, nor do any of the monks in all three monasteries lead a monastic life.

A visitor to Lhasa reported that 'meditation by the monks', a vital element in Tibetan Buddhism, is actively sabotaged by party cadres

who live permanently at the monasteries to keep an eye on things.⁹⁸ The few remaining Buddhist monuments and their caretaker monks are displayed to visiting foreigners as evidence of Tibet's freedom, but acts such as divinations, incense-burning and making offerings to monks are punishable, and any teaching is prohibited.

April 1982 saw the announcement on Radio Lhasa of a major change of policy: the commune system was to be dissolved, and the communes were to be closed temporarily for three years, and land and livestock were to be redistributed.⁹⁹

There has been no improvement in freedom of movement. In September 1982, travel permits were still hard to obtain; the maximum granted by a brigade was five days, and by a commune or subdistrict ten days. Fines are imposed or rations withdrawn if the person does not return on time. In August 1982, the *Times of India* reported that Tibet had recently been witnessing 'more opposition than before' to the Chinese.¹⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

'The holocaust that happened in Tibet revealed Communist China as a cruel and inhuman executioner—more brutal and inhuman than any other communist regime in the world.'¹⁰¹ Coming as they do from Alexander Solzhenitsyn, these words are perhaps the most damning verdict on China and her rule in Tibet. Conditions in Tibet exist as both a terrible and glaring example of China's appalling record on human rights as well as 'a shocking indictment of a country that professes antipathy toward both colonialism and racism'.¹⁰² It comes as no great consolation to the Tibetans to hear Western apologists pleading that Tibet is the worst example of a national minority area in China, especially as 'there is no doubt whatsoever that the desired result, however long it takes, is total assimilation of all minority races into the Chinese mainstream.'¹⁰³ The gap between China's declared policy and its practice in Tibet exposes her hypocrisy to an ever more embarrassing degree. In the face of this, the urgent question, for the Chinese and for the Tibetans, is how far they are from reaching some kind of settlement or solution.

The change in Chinese leadership and the announcement of a new policy for Tibet in 1979 was particularly encouraging for the Tibetans, after twenty years in which any kind of dialogue with the Chinese had been unthinkable, let alone the concept of Tibetan fact-finding missions travelling freely within Tibet. A newly-found optimism prevailed on both sides, with the Dalai Lama expressing his confidence in a positive stand by the new authorities in Peking and his hopes for a real breakthrough in understanding with the Chinese. Yet when both parties faced each other at the conference table, this 'honeymoon period' came to a sudden end as they discovered that to reach an agreement was not going to be that straightforward. The Tibetans and Chinese had markedly different views, aims and demands.

For their part, the Tibetan leadership have not designed any rigid formula for the future status of Tibet, and they have demonstrated that they do not view the issue of Tibet as an ideological problem. They have maintained the one position they had all along, namely that the paramount and determining factor in any discussion must be the wishes of the majority of the Tibetans in Tibet. Appropriately, we find the Dalai Lama stating quite explicitly in 1983: 'Hence, the six million Tibetan people must have the right to preserve, and enhance their cultural identity and religious freedom, the right to determine their own destiny and manage their own affairs, and find fulfilment of their free self-expression, without interference from any quarter. This is reasonable and just.'¹⁰⁴

The Tibetan issue is taking on more and more the complexion of a racial question. The Chinese insist emphatically that the Chinese should continue to rule Tibet; the Tibetans, rather than dwelling on details of some greater or lesser autonomy, demand that the Tibetans must have the freedom to decide whether they prefer to rule themselves or not. Inevitably, as this racial element becomes more and more pronounced, the whole issue is hardening into a black and white stalemate, thwarting any hopes of a solution.

One comparatively recent phenomenon which will definitely take on a wider significance is that finally, after 20 years the world has become better informed and noticeably more sympathetic towards the Tibetan cause. Governments, whilst not actually recognizing the Tibetan government-in-exile, are clearly taking a softer and more favourable attitude. The Dalai Lama, for example, welcomed

in many different countries in both the west and east, is now able to travel with relative ease around the world, whereas previously he was refused entry by countries like the USA and France. Whilst the Communist bloc were steadfastly hostile to the question of Tibet at the time it was raised in the United Nations, now Tibetan students are invited to study in the USSR and Mongolia, and the Dalai Lama was very warmly received in both those countries and in Hungary on recent visits. This is both a credit to the strength of leadership of the Dalai Lama as much as a vote of confidence in what he is trying to achieve. As more and more people are acquainted at least with where the Tibetans stand and with the human rights problem in Tibet, sympathy and support for the Tibetan cause spreads – a change that is viewed by the Chinese with manifest irritation and alarm.

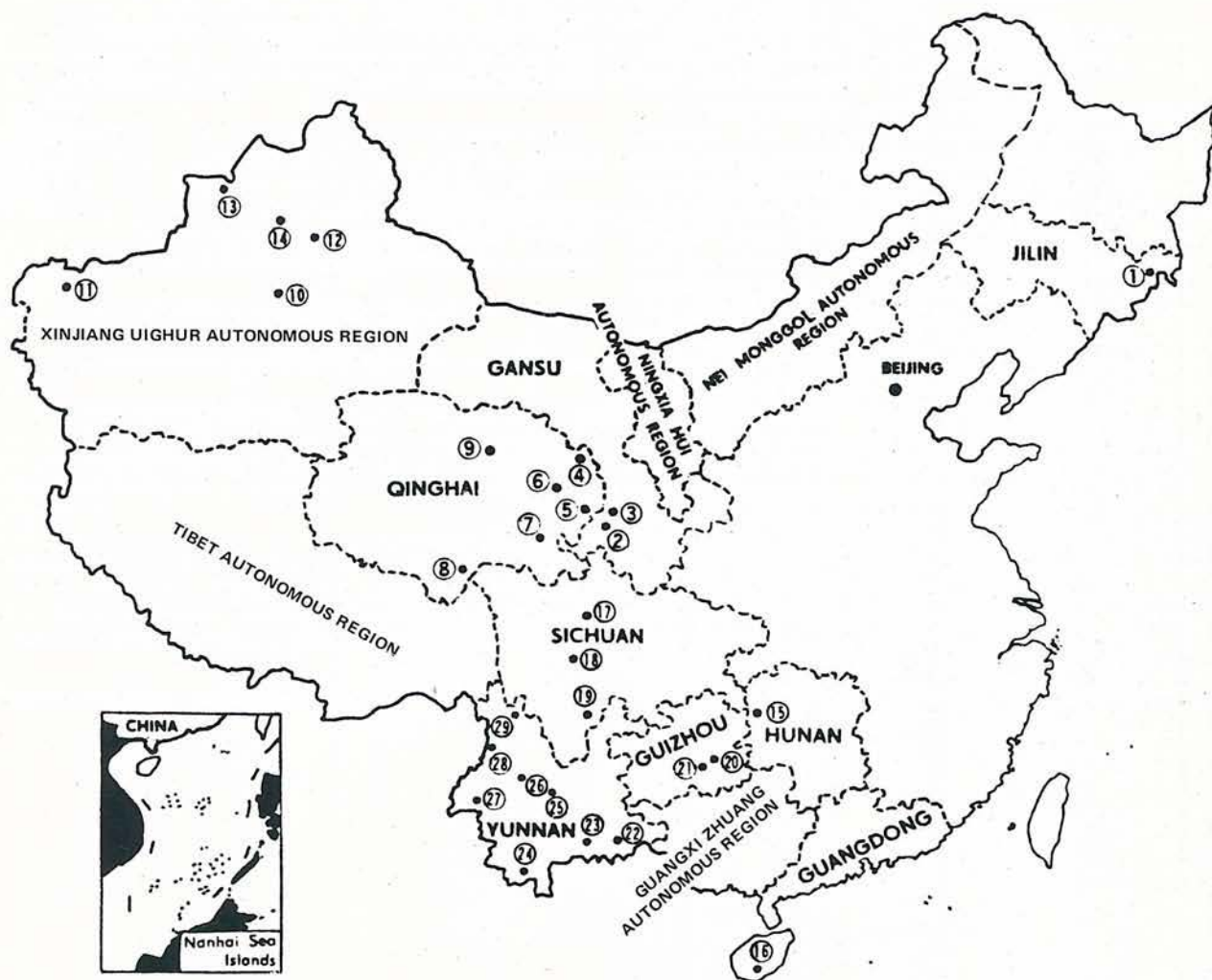
The longer that the Tibetan problem goes on unsolved, and that a settlement is delayed, the greater the likelihood that whatever small traces of their culture and identity the Tibetans in Tibet have managed to preserve will be shattered, and the harder it will be for the Tibetan leadership to maintain Tibetan determination to restore Tibet into the hands of the Tibetans. At the same time, the Chinese are aware that, the longer the delay, the more difficult it will be for them to prevent other nations from supporting the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan cause, and actively recognizing that Tibetan civilization is not only unique and important for the Tibetans, but as part of the cultural heritage of the whole of mankind.

NOTES

- ¹ H.E. Richardson in the BBC documentary 'Tibet: The Bamboo Curtain Falls', the second of two films in 'The World About Us' series, shown on BBC TV 1982, and produced by Simon Normanton.
- ² Simon Normanton, *ibid.*
- ³ Shen Zhihuan, First Secretary of the Office of the Charge d'Affaires of the People's Republic of China in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, speaking to Hans Van Hartevelt of K.R.O. Broadcasting Network, 8 December 1982.
- ⁴ *The Statesman's Yearbook 1972-1973*, gives the figure 6,350,000, based on a census in 1963.
- ⁵ E.g., E. Sperling, 'A Captivity in Ninth Century Tibet', *The Tibet Journal*, Vol.4, No.4, Winter 1979, p.17.
- ⁶ H. Franke, 'Tibetans in Yuan China', in *China under Mongol Rule*, Princeton, 1981, p.313.
- ⁷ Quoted in P. Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa*, Hart-Davis, London, 1961, p.232.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p.231.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p.162.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.30, Sir John Ardagh.
- ¹¹ For an account of his career, see E. Sperling, 'The Chinese Venture in Kham 1904-11, and the Role of Chao Erh-feng', *The Tibet Journal*, Vol.1, No.2, April/June 1976, p.10.
- ¹² Quoted in Sir Algernon Rumbold, 'The Status of Tibet', *Tibet News Review*, Vol.2, No.1/2, Summer 1981, p.6.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p.3.
- ¹⁴ Lord Curzon to the Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton, 8 January 1903.
- ¹⁵ H.E. Richardson, *Tibet and Its History*, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, p.11.
- ¹⁶ Dawa Norbu, 'The 1959 Tibetan Rebellion: An Interpretation', *Tibetan Review*, Vol.XVII, Nos.2-3, February-March 1982, p.11.
- ¹⁷ Ram Rahul, *The Government and Politics of Tibet*, Delhi, 1969, p.5.
- ¹⁸ D.L. Snellgrove and H.E. Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, George Weidenfeld and Nicholson Ltd., London, 1968, and Prajna, Boulder, 1980, p.273.
- ¹⁹ See J. Dreyer, 'China's Minority Nationalities and the Cultural Revolution', *China Quarterly*, No.35, July-September 1968, pp.96-108.
- ²⁰ *Selected Works of Mao-Tse-tung*, Vol.III, Peking, 1967, pp.255-56.
- ²¹ George Moseley, 'China's Fresh Approach to the National Minority Question', *The China Quarterly*, No.24, October-December 1965, pp.16-17.
- ²² *Selected Works of Mao-Tse-tung*, Vol.V, Peking, 1977, pp.73-74.
- ²³ The International Law Commission's draft articles on the Law of Treaties, adopted on 18 July 1966, Article 49, provides that a treaty is void if its conclusion has been procured by the threat or use of force. See P. Wangyal, 'Political Developments in Tibet 1951-1959', M. Phil. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1974, p.58.
- ²⁴ Confirmed by the written statement of Dzasak Khemey Sonam Wangdi, one of the signatories.
- ²⁵ *Op.cit.*, p.75.
- ²⁶ Quoted in Richardson, *op.cit.*, pp.275-78. A strikingly similar deal offered by China in 1982 to Taiwan met with a frosty reception: 'Tragedy of Tibet provides object lesson for ROC', *Free China Weekly*, 19 December 1982.
- ²⁷ *Op.cit.*, p.406.
- ²⁸ M. Peissel, 'Cavaliers of Kham', London, 1972, p.55.
- ²⁹ *New York Times*, 28 August 1954; *Guardian*, 2 September 1954.
- ³⁰ See T.D. Gashi, *New Tibet*, Dharamsala, 1980, *passim*.
- ³¹ There are a number of accounts of the guerilla war in Tibet, e.g.: G.N. Patterson, *Tibet in Revolt*, London, 1960; M. Peissel, *Cavaliers of Kham*, Heinemann, London, 1972; J. Norbu, *Horseman in the Snow*, Dharamsala, 1979; and the autobiographical work by the resistance leader, G.T. Andrugtsang, *Four Rivers, Six Ranges*, Dharamsala, 1973.
- ³² See C. Mullin, 'How the CIA went to war in Tibet', *Guardian*, 19 January 1976; and 'Tibetan conspiracy', *Far East Economic Review*, Vol.98, No.36, 5 September 1975.
- ³³ An interview with Chen Ho-Ching, now living as a Tibetan settler in India, appeared in the *Tibetan Review*, October 1979, p.21, entitled, 'Chinese Colonel who became a Tibetan refugee'.
- ³⁴ Quoted in *Tibet 1950-1967*, a collection of Chinese Communist Party documents, published by Union Research Institute, Hong Kong, 1968.
- ³⁵ Quoted in T.D. Gashi, *op.cit.*, p.66.
- ³⁶ D. Norbu, *Red Star over Tibet*, Collins, London, 1974, p.222.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.218.
- ³⁸ D. Choedon, *Life in the Red Flag People's Commune*, Dharamsala, 1978, p.1.
- ³⁹ Estimate in K. Paljor, *Tibet the Undying Flame*, Dharamsala, 1977, p.52.
- ⁴⁰ From the statement of Pema Lhundup, in *Tibet under Chinese Communist Rule*, a compilation of refugee statements, Dharamsala, 1976, p.161.
- ⁴¹ Reported by K. Gopalakrishnan, *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 23 March 1981.
- ⁴² The 'six' and 'eight' point plans are quoted in full in P. Wangyal, 'Tibetans in Tibet Today, Findings of the 2nd Delegation', *Tibet News Review*, London, Vol.1, Nos.3/4, Winter 1980/81, p.45.
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- ⁴⁴ Shen Zhihuan, see note 3.
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APPENDIX I



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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture 2. Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 3. Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture 4. Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 5. Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 6. Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 7. Guoluo Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 8. Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 9. Haixi Mongolian, Tibetan, Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture 10. Bayingolin Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture 11. Kizilsu Khalkhas Autonomous Prefecture 12. Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture 13. Bortala Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture 14. Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Xiangxi Tujia, Miao Autonomous Prefecture 16. Hainan Li, Miao Autonomous Prefecture 17. Aba (Ngawa) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 18. Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 19. Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture 20. Qiandongnan Miao, Dong Autonomous Prefecture 21. Qiannan Bouyei, Miao Autonomous Prefecture 22. Wenshan Zhuang, Miao Autonomous Prefecture 23. Honghe Hani, Yi Autonomous Prefecture 24. Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture 25. Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture 26. Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture 27. Dehong Dai, Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture 28. Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture 29. Degen Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture |
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Population and major areas of distribution of Chinese national minorities

National Minorities	Population*	Areas of Distribution
Zhuang	13,378,162	Guangxi, Yunnan, Guangdong, Guizhou
Hui (Moslems)	7,219,352	Ningxia, Gansu, Henan, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Yunnan, Hebei, Shandong, Anhui, Liaoning, Beijing, Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang, Tianjin, Jilin, Shaanxi
Uyur	5,957,112	Xinjiang, Hunan
Yi	5,453,448	Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi
Miao	5,030,897	Guizhou, Yunnan, Hunan, Guangxi, Sichuan, Guangdong, Hubei
Manchu	4,299,159	Liaoning, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Hebei, Beijing, Inner Mongolia
Tibetan	3,870,068	Tibet, Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan
Mongolian	3,411,657	Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Qinghai, Hebei, Henan, Gansu, Yunnan
Tujia	2,832,743	Hunan, Hubei, Sichuan
Bouyei	2,120,469	Guizhou
Korean	1,763,870	Jilin, Heilongjiang, Liaoning, Inner Mongolia
Dong	1,425,100	Guizhou, Hunan, Guangxi
Yao	1,402,676	Guangxi, Hunan, Yunnan, Guangdong, Guizhou
Bai	1,131,124	Yunnan
Hani	1,058,836	Yunnan
Kazak	907,582	Xinjiang, Gansu, Qinghai
Dai	839,797	Yunnan
Li	817,562	Guangdong
Lisu	480,960	Yunnan, Sichuan
She	368,832	Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Guangdong
Lahu	304,174	Yunnan
Va	298,591	Yunnan
Shui	286,487	Guizhou, Guangxi
Dongxiang	279,397	Gansu, Xinjiang
Naxi	245,154	Yunnan, Sichuan
Tu	159,426	Qinghai, Gansu
Kirgiz	113,999	Xinjiang, Heilongjiang
Qiang	102,768	Sichuan
Daur	94,014	Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang, Xinjiang
Jingpo	93,008	Yunnan
Mulao	90,426	Guangxi
Xibe	83,629	Xinjiang, Liaoning, Jilin
Salar	69,102	Qinghai, Gansu
Bulang	58,476	Yunnan
Gelao	53,802	Guizhou, Guangxi, Sichuan, Hunan
Maonan	38,135	Guangxi
Tajik	26,503	Xinjiang
Pumi	24,237	Yunnan
Nu	23,166	Yunnan
Achang	20,441	Yunnan
Ewenki	19,343	Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang
Uzbek	12,453	Xinjiang
Benglong	12,295	Yunnan
Jing	11,995	Guangxi
Jinuo	11,974	Yunnan
Yugur	10,569	Gansu
Baoan	9,027	Gansu
Monba	6,248	Tibet
Drung	4,682	Yunnan
Oroqen	4,132	Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang
Tartar	4,127	Xinjiang
Russian	2,935	Xinjiang
Loba	2,065	Tibet
Gaoshan**	1,549	Fujian
Hezhe	1,476	Heilongjiang
Other national minorities (to be specifically identified)	879,201	

According to the third national census of July 1, 1982, China's total population was 1,031,882,511 and that of the 29 mainland provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions was 1,003,937,078. The population of the Han nationality was 936,703,824, making up 93.3 per cent of the country's total; and that of the national minorities, 67,233,254, or 6.7 per cent of the total. Compared with statistics of the second national census in 1964, the population of the Han nationality increased 43.8 per cent and that of the national minorities increased 68.4 per cent.

** There are also 300,000-400,000 people of Gaoshan nationality in Taiwan Province.

Source: *Beijing Review*, 23-5-83

**APPENDIX II: Basic Study Guide No.55,
published by the Chamdo Information Office, 1980***

'Religion is a tranquilizing poison used by capitalists to oppress people. So why does the Communist Party have to tolerate freedom of religion? The existence of religion – its development and decline – is a fact. That the people who believe in religion come mainly from the ordinary people is also an undeniable fact. We have to stop religion in that it is blind faith, against the law, and counter-revolutionary:

Blind faith includes reciting things, doing circumambulation and asking Lamas for help when someone is sick and dying.

No one is allowed to take any money in the name of religion or to try to revive what has been destroyed. Anyone asking for blessings for sick people or doing prayers or divinations for money is acting against the law.

Under the guise of religious practice, anti-revolutionaries may pass messages, conduct espionage, and urge people to destroy communism and form themselves into organizations.

Anyone above 18 years of age has the right to have faith or not, and the right to propagate atheism. No one can induce a child under 18 to do anything religious or take them to a religious service.

Anyone wishing to practice religion must obey all the laws and regulations passed by the government.

No one can try to revive the power of religion that has already been destroyed.

Anyone interested in being a member of the Communist Party or Communist Youth Organization cannot practice religion. It is the duty of the Communist Party to try to persuade any members who have a slight faith in religion to give it up. If they refuse, the Party should expel them.

These days some individuals in the Communist Party and Youth Organizations and Officers too, practice religion, chant things and go to sacred places. Such activities are clearly indicated as being forbidden. Although our constitution allows people to have the right to religion, it should be abundantly clear

that Communist Party and Youth Organization members do not have the right to practice religion. Though they are part of the people, Communist Party and Youth Organization members are supposed to be more advanced and better educated people.

Under the constitution, Communist Party and Youth Organization members have the right to induce people not to believe in religion and to criticize religion. It is your duty to do this. When you first became a Party member, you pledged to hold tight the banner of Communism, so Communist Party and Youth Organization members and Officers should be people who propagate atheism and try to separate people from faith in religion.

Has policy on religion changed recently out of a desire to induce the Dalai Lama to return?

Our policy has never changed; the recent relaxation is not a new policy. Whether the Dalai Lama returns or not, we must carry on our policy on religion.

Nowadays in the name of religious freedom people create ugly rumours. They say that the Dalai Lama is being invited back to Tibet, which is a sign of the weakness of China and the victory of the Dalai Lama. They say that the Dalai Lama will come, the times will change, the people's communes will break up and the old Tibetan system of Chosi – "government according to religion" – will be restored. They say that the communists are trying to win people over by bribing the poor. They dig up old prophecies. Under this present freedom of religion people go on pilgrimages, practice religion, and collect money and grain in groups to try to make money. This is all wrong. Also people take youngsters to religious places and try to teach them religious ideas. Some schoolteachers even try to use their position to talk about religion. All these activities are contrary to rules laid down in the constitution.

From the commune's property no-one has the right to donate one cent, one grain, one ounce of butter towards the Dharma. Although collecting money in the name of religion is thus forbidden in the constitution, there are those who collect money through chanting prayers and the like. One incarnate lama collected 400 yuan in three short years in the name of religion. This is strictly against the constitution, and, as it says in Article 165: "If anyone collects money or commodities by spreading rumours in the name of God and in blind faith, he will incur a minimum punishment of two years' imprisonment, or in some cases up to seven years".'

*As translated by a member of a delegation of Tibetan exiles who recently visited Tibet.

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Phuntsog Wangyal was born and brought up in Tibet, and went into exile in India in 1959, where he continued his studies, gaining an M.Phil. in Political Science and International Relations, and later teaching at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. He was Assistant Director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, North India, in 1974, and taught Tibetan at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in 1976. In 1980, he spent three months in Tibet as a member of the Dalai Lama's second fact-finding delegation. He is the Director of the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in London.



Photographs by Chris Mullin



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