

Beijing Needs the Dalai Lama for Peace and Stability in Tibet

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Beijing Must Consider the Dalai Lama a Partner on the Road to Stability

From July 20 to 23, 1994, Beijing convened the Third Forum on Work in Tibet which recommended the total destruction of an entire civilization flourishing on the Tibetan Plateau for thousands of years. Six years later—from June 25 to 27, 2001—Beijing held the Fourth Forum on Work in Tibet and called for concerted implementation of the Third Forum's recommendations to attack Tibetan culture and religion.

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

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

Losing hearts and minds

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

Beijing concluded it was losing the ideological war because, despite the unrelenting assault on Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetans were as devoted to their traditional beliefs as ever. Beijing has succeeded in physically enslaving the country but it has not won over the hearts, minds and loyalty of the Tibetan populace.

Communist ideology, enforced by the military might of China, had failed to dent the heart of Buddhism. Added to this was the communist authorities' total bafflement at the non-violent policy underpinning the Middle Way Approach advocated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to resolve the issue of Tibet's future status.

For a regime which is based on Mao's dictum that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun, this supposedly eccentric philosophy which says victory lies in capturing the hearts and minds of people by the power of ideas rather than killing by the power of the guns comes as a bolt from the blue. Much of Beijing's knee-jerk reaction to, and its bafflement at, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's new policy of rapprochement lies at the heart of its new hardline policy.

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

In order to address these weaknesses the Third Forum concentrated on two issues. One was to focus on Tibet's economic development in the hope that this would keep Tibetan demonstrations off the streets. This was tantamount to bribing the Tibetans with promises of riches to come if they toed the party line. The other concern was to win the coming and new generations of Tibetans over to the Chinese viewpoint.

Beijing has given up on the present generation of Tibetans as a lost cause. If the coming generations of Tibetans were also lost to the “Dalai Clique”, this, the Chinese concluded, would have dangerous consequences for Chinese rule in Tibet. Gyalwa Karmapa's dramatic escape from Tibet in January 2000 was a warning to the Beijing authorities of the erosion of loyalty to China. The Karmapa's flight, and the earlier escape of Agya Rinpoche, the abbot of Kumbum Monastery, came as a huge embarrassment to China, because retaining these high lamas gave China a degree of legitimacy for its rule in Tibet.

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

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

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

The Third Work Forum on Tibet was convened by the top Chinese leadership and was presided over by President Jiang Zemin. The authorities have now enshrined this Work Forum as the most “important strategic policy to rejuvenate Tibet” and have hailed its directives as the new manifestos for party work on the plateau.

The significance of the Third Work Forum lies in the fact that it overturned the more liberal policies laid out for Tibet's “development” by the First and Second Work Forums held in 1980 and 1984. The first two work forums were initiated by the late Hu Yaobang, then Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party. This liberal and somewhat maverick leader is credited with masterminding a series of measures to improve the social, economic and political conditions in Tibet. The brief spell of liberalization

markedly improved the living conditions of the majority of Tibetans and contributed to a more relaxed intellectual and social climate.

The Third Work Forum reversed these policies and reinstated hardline measures under which Tibet is still reeling today. The Tibetans in Tibet perceive the current repressive policies as a second Cultural Revolution.

The question is why did China choose to jettison its earlier more liberal policies and adopt a manifesto which is leading to the systematic destruction of Tibet's distinct culture.

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

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

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

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

For these reasons the Chinese leadership then reverted to its earlier view that traditional beliefs were its real enemy. In competing with Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, Christianity, and other isms, communism was losing out in terms of its ability to retain the loyalty and allegiance of the masses. The leadership revived the old aphorisms once served up to the Tibetan people to justify their policies to destroy Tibetan Buddhism during the Cultural Revolution. Bewildered Tibetans were then told that just as there cannot be two suns in the sky, so there cannot be both Buddhism and socialism in Tibet. Inevitably Buddhism then had to give way to socialism. And again, today, religion is being blatantly sublimated to Chinese state power.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tackling Tibetan nationalism

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

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

Beijing remains convinced that these key components of its current policy will stabilize Chinese rule over Tibet and solve, once and for all, the vexed problem of its negative image over the way Tibet has been handled.

One main target of the current policy of repression is Tibetan Buddhism. Chinese leaders are increasingly alarmed by the proliferation of monasteries and temples which the period of liberalization spawned throughout Tibet: they are seen as the bastions of Tibetan nationalism. The authorities have set up “Democratic Management Committees” to control monasteries and nunneries and created “Work Inspection Teams” to supervise the “education” of monks and nuns.

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

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

In fact, at a secret meeting held in December 1999 in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, Chen Kuiyuan, the hardline Party Secretary of “TAR”, recommended to the Central Chinese Government that an all-out effort must be made to eradicate Tibetan

Buddhism and culture from the face of the earth so that no memory of them will be left in the minds of coming generations of Tibetans—except as museum pieces.

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

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

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

The September 3, 2000 edition of *People’s Daily* carried a story headlined “Tibet Welcomes Foreign Journalists for Objective Reporting”. It stated that “A senior Tibetan official said Sunday that Tibet welcomes foreign journalists to come for objective and just reporting, but not those who take distorted views. Raidi, Deputy Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of the Communist Party of China and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Autonomous Regional People’s Congress, made the remarks at a meeting here with a press delegation of Thailand.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beijing's flawed perceptions

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

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

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

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

This assumption, if not reviewed, revised and abandoned, will prove catastrophic for the Chinese leadership and for those who choose to turn their whimsical personal analysis into state policy. The reason is simple. The Chinese Communist Party was founded in the 1920s and came to power in 1949. Within this short span of time the masses have lost faith in communist ideology, and members of the party these days pay mere lip service to the ideological justifications of the party. Conversely, the institution of the Dalai Lama as a political force is more than 300 years old. These days the Dalai Lama is recognized by Tibetans throughout the world as the heart of Tibetan nationalism. How can a party which has lost its soul outlast an institution which symbolizes the very soul of a people?

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

NOTES:

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

The Dalai Lama is the Key to the Tibet Issue

By Wang Lixiong

Wang Lixiong is China's foremost Tibet researcher and author of a bestseller, Yellow Peril. In this article, Wang argues that as long as Beijing regards the Dalai Lama as an enemy, it will never be able to solve the problem of Tibet. Wang's original article in Chinese follows this translation. Wang wrote this article in Lhasa and Beijing in 2000.

Wang's other works on Tibet include The Sky Burial: The Fate of Tibet, a voluminous book that draws extensively on his first-hand experience in Tibet as well as on the Chinese government and exile Tibetans sources. Wang also wrote a lengthy article on China's Tibet problem. This article, Tibet: An Underbelly of China in the 21st Century, was printed in the January-1999 issue of Zhan Lue Yu Guan Li, a journal published in Mainland China.

On the surface, the issue of Tibet appears to be a historical one, resulting from the flight of the Dalai Lama and over 10,000 of his followers to India in 1959. In reality, the issue is inside the area of Tibet, not outside. If the problem were the Tibetans in exile only, it would not be a threat to China. Outsiders often advise Beijing that if it did not resolve the Tibetan issue soon, the Tibetans in exile would ultimately resort to violence. To China, which has the largest army in the world this threat is insignificant.

What Beijing cannot afford to overlook are the Tibetans inside Tibet. They outnumber the exile Tibetans by more than ten times and inhabit a landmass, constituting one fourth of the entire area of China. It is not known whether they desire to live under China's control or are resentful of it. It is also not known whether they will remain loyal subjects or engage in violence one day. This is the real Tibet issue for Beijing. Beijing is nervous about Tibetans in exile only because they enjoy the cooperation of Tibetans in Tibet.

Nationality issue hinges on the hearts and minds of people. If the Tibetans in Tibet, as Beijing claims, were really "loyal to the communist party" and if they really "loved the big socialist family", then Beijing would not be paying attention to the Tibetans in exile. By the same token, without the solidarity of the Tibetans in Tibet, the exile Tibetans would ultimately vanish and be forgotten by history.

This is the scenario Beijing is hoping to see. It is exactly the strategy it adopted against the Chinese who went into exile in the wake of the "Six Four" event (Tiananmen event, translator). Beijing's strategy of isolating the Chinese in exile from those inside China has been quite successful. Unfortunately for Beijing, one man makes the Tibetan issue different: the Dalai Lama. He can neither be easily tarnished, nor forgotten. He is the

essence of the Tibetan People's life; he is the Buddha of their life's pursuit. Compared to such a Buddha, mundane powers like military and political means are inconsequential.

What are the reasons for contradiction between human mind and development?

Since the time of Deng Xiaoping, Beijing has focussed on economic development as a means of keeping Tibet under control. Deng Xiaoping proposed a criteria for measuring efforts to manage Tibet by saying that "the fundamental thing is for us to find out what benefits the Tibetans people and what will lead Tibet quickly towards the path of development and put it among the forerunners of China's four modernization projects."¹

Chen Kuiyuan, who has been holding the position of First Secretary of the Chinese Communist party, the most powerful position in the Tibet Autonomous Region, for almost ten years, said, "The central committee of the Chinese Communist party and the State Council have been urging the Chinese people to fully support the rapid development of Tibet and to help the Tibetan people get out of poverty and become rich. This has been the most realistic and concrete nationality policy of the Party."²

The past 20 years have been the period when Tibetans were given the most favourable economic benefit from Beijing. For example, Beijing's financial appropriation for Tibet in 1997 was 324 times that in 1952 and seven times that in 1978.³ These days Beijing is the source of funding for almost all activities in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Without this economic connection with Beijing, it would be difficult to maintain the existing Tibetan society, at least in the urban areas, even for a few days.

In 1997 Beijing's outlay for the Tibet Autonomous Region was 3,300,009,776 Yuan. In that year, the TAR's revenue was only 200,009,537 Yuan while its expense was 3,800,001,952 Yuan.⁴ Without Beijing's financial aid, the TAR's deficit for that year would have been 13 times that of its revenue. If we consider this in terms of the population of the Tibet Autonomous Region, in 1997 Beijing gave every Tibetan an average of 1,410 Yuan.⁵ In the same year, the average rural income of at least five Chinese provinces (Gansu, Shanxi, Guizhou, Yunnan and Qinghai) was below that level.⁶ In other words, the annual income of people in Tibet, without having to do any work, was more than the income of millions of farmers living in the provinces mentioned above, who work throughout the year.

Beijing gave Tibet "43 construction projects" and "62 construction projects" respectively to coincide with the 20th (1985) and 30th (1995) anniversaries of the establishment of the TAR. The total cost of these projects was nearly 50 billion Yuan. In addition, provinces and cities in inner China have been assigned to assist Tibet's construction projects. Since 1994, Beijing has assigned 10 provinces and towns to render long-term assistance to Tibet; this assistance is rendered without any returns. In all China, it is only in the Tibet Autonomous Region where farmers and nomads are given tax exemptions. Although urban areas of Tibet are taxed, the entire tax revenue is recycled back into Tibet. This kind of preferential policy continues to be a cause of extreme jealousy in other parts of China. As a result of this preferential treatment, the average economic growth rate of Tibet in the 1990s was 10 percent, higher than the national average. The average

annual income of Tibet's urban resident increased by 19.6 percent and that of farmers and nomads by 9.3 percent (from 1991 to 1997).⁷ This is not just a number on paper; anybody who travels to Tibet will notice a significant improvement in living standards. Villages and towns are filled with new buildings. Lhasa and other towns have undergone surprising transformations. Regardless of whatever criticism may be made from the cultural point of view, the condition in Tibet from the facility and happiness point of view is similar to that of inner China. In terms of economic development and living standards, it can be said that Tibet enjoys a level higher than that in any period of its history. Most Tibetans in Tibet agree with this observation.

However, economic development and improvement of living standards have not fulfilled Beijing's hope of gaining the Tibetan people's loyalty. On the contrary, the Tibetan people's alignment with the Dalai Lama, who has not given them even a penny, is increasing. If one stays briefly with the people on the Lingkor (sacred circumambulation route in Lhasa) or with those receiving blessings in Buddhist temples, one will hear constant prayers to the Dalai Lama. If Beijing and the Dalai Lama take opposite stands on any issues whatsoever, it is certain that the majority of the Tibetan people will support the Dalai Lama. Concerning the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, most of the Tibetans do not accept the one recognized by Beijing; they accept the one recognized by the Dalai Lama. The popularity of the Karmapa, a senior Kagyu Lama, among the Tibetans when he was seen as part of Beijing's united front is nowhere compared to the popularity he has now gained after fleeing to the Dalai Lama's camp. In the past, prayers to the Karmapa could be heard only in Kagyu monasteries. But after his flight into exile, prayers to him have spread all over Tibet. After the falling out between the Karmapa and Beijing, he has transformed from the leader of one lineage to a leader accepted by all lineages. Tibetans now recognize him as someone who will continue the work of the Dalai Lama after he passes away.

Just as the Karmapa renounced the splendid career charted out for him by Beijing and went into exile, so did quite a few other Tibetans. Secretary Chen Kuiyuan said, "In recent years there have been several reports of officials, journalists, famous actors, businessmen, etc... turning against the nation and fleeing to foreign countries. Some of them have directly joined the Dalai clique; others have joined Western powers that regard China as an enemy. Some of them had been trained to be the elites of our society, but they have now turned into core members of the separatist group, which actively opposes the unity of China, the Communist Party and the Chinese people."⁸

In addition, several thousand Tibetans risk their lives to journey across the Himalayas and flee to India to follow the Dalai Lama. There are several instances of Tibetan Communist Party officials (even including senior military officers) who take up Buddhist practices and rituals immediately upon their retirement. Furthermore, Tibetans sent during their youth to China for communist education are becoming even more loyal to Tibetan nationalism and taking the side of opposition.

There is a Tibetan official who, in early 1950s, loved the Chinese Communist Party and became its staunch follower. Even while ploughing his fields, he hung the five-star red flag across the horns of his oxen. He also invited serfs to his home and talked about the revolution. For these actions, he got the nickname "Gyami" (Chinese in the Tibetan language). Now the government puts even this person in the category of those harbouring

nationality sentiment, and criticizes him. What does this drama-like change indicate? Certainly, it has nothing to do with this person's material life. He has a very comfortable life: a big house with modern facilities. His children have successful careers in Tibet. However, when he speaks about political matters, he is unable to control his emotion. He gave me this advice:

It is a mistake to believe that there is more stability now than during the period of disturbances in the late 1980s. In those years, peoples involved in disturbances were mainly monks and a few misguided youths. But today officials, intellectuals and workers have all turned into the opposition. The stability that we see now is just superficial. If the machinery of repression fails one day, it is certain that many more people than in the 1980s will participate in disturbances.

Anti-Dalai Lama Campaign

Why is it that despite spending so much money in Tibet, Beijing fails to win the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people? The fundamental reason, I believe, is Beijing's action to regard the Dalai Lama as an enemy. The Dalai Lama is not just any other person. He represents the 500-year-old lineage and institution of the Dalai Lamas. According to the Tibetan perspective on the system of reincarnation, if you hold just one incarnation of the Dalai Lama as an enemy, it is the same as holding all the incarnations as enemies. And, by extension, it is regarded as treating the Tibetan religion and people as enemies. Therefore, what result can one expect, no matter how much the amount of money spent?

During the 1980s, Beijing made efforts to bring the Dalai Lama to her side. At that time a special working committee was established to secure the return of the Dalai clique and the Tibetans abroad to the motherland. Even a department was set up for this purpose. At that time there was no concrete outcome because of the vast differences between the two sides. Beijing had promised that it would restore the Dalai Lama's titular titles as "Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress" and "Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee". He, however, would not be permitted to return to Tibet or to hold a concurrent position in Tibet, Beijing said.⁹ The Dalai Lama, on the other hand, had asked for a high degree of autonomy and democracy for the whole of greater Tibet. Therefore, there was absolutely no basis for dialogues.

The Dalai Lama's strategy to break the stalemate was to enlist the support of western countries to bring pressure to bear on Beijing. He successfully made a drive to internationalize the Tibetan issue. In the process, he ended up becoming one of the most influential men in the international arena. At the same time, in the late 1980s, there were many demonstrations in the streets of Lhasa. The Administration reacted to the demonstrations with bloody repression, ultimately imposing martial law for as long as 419 days. These events resulted in the western communities standing on the Dalai Lama's side as one entity. Similarly, the Tibetan issue became a vehicle for western countries' regular criticism against China. However, such pressures didn't force Beijing to step back. On the contrary, Beijing lost the patience to win over the Dalai Lama, and adopted a harder

position. Beijing now regarded the Dalai Lama's every activity in the international arena as hostile and blamed him for every event that took place inside Tibet.

It reached a point when Beijing found itself trapped in a strange cycle created by its own policy of "Overcoming Chaos and Rectifying Mistakes". Tibetans are a religious-minded people; and as religious believers, they show unconditional veneration to their religious leader. The Dalai Lama is the leader of Tibetan religion and, at the same time, political leader of Tibetans in exile. According to the logic of the strange cycle, as mentioned earlier, if Tibet were given religious freedom, Tibetans would use this to show the highest devotion to the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama, in turn, can easily transform his spiritual influence as a religious leader into a political force against Beijing. In other words, it is the Dalai Lama's ability to transform Tibetan religion into a political weapon, which has put Beijing in a dilemma.

Obviously, it is not possible to ban religion in Tibet once again. Therefore, the only way to break this strange cycle is to work on the Dalai Lama. In 1994 the Third Work Forum to discuss Tibet related issues was held in Beijing. From then on, China's Tibet policy has taken a hardline direction. The forum decided that to kill a serpent, first, its head must be chopped off and the Dalai Lama was identified as the serpent's head.¹⁰ In 1995, when the Dalai Lama recognized the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama before Beijing, he came to be regarded as an outright enemy. Li Ruihuan, standing committee member of the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo and head of nationalities affairs, described the Dalai Lama in the following words:

"Dalai is the head of the separatist political group that conspires for Tibetan independence. He is a weapon of the international anti-China movement. He is not only the root cause and source of disturbances in the Tibetan society, but also the biggest obstacle for establishing order amongst Tibetans Buddhists."¹¹

However, the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism cannot be separated. The campaign against the Dalai Lama cannot be restricted to him personally or to politics alone. Inevitably it will extend to the entire Tibetan religion. If you "expose and criticize" the Dalai Lama, you will immediately face the fact that all Tibetan temples and families display portraits of the Dalai Lama and worship him daily. Under such circumstances, how can you possibly "expose and criticize" him? Well, Beijing ordered the confiscation and destruction of the Dalai Lama's photos. Although such an action is conceivable only in ancient societies, it was begun throughout Tibet in 1996 with great fanfare. The first resistance to this came from Gaden monastery, one of the three largest Gelukpa monasteries. More than four hundred monks shouted "Independence for Tibet", and destroyed the police station inside the monastery. As a symbol of their protest, Sera and Drepung monasteries and the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa halted their religious activities, closed down the schools administered by them, and even closed the main gates of the institutions.

Observing the attitude of the protestors, Secretary Chen Kuiyuan commented: "The monasteries are the most critical places penetrated by the Dalai clique. These are their conspiring and hiding places. These are also the places where most of their followers reside. If we do not effectively control the monasteries, we cannot stop the Dalai clique's plot to create disturbance in Tibet and destroy the nation. Tibet, too, will not see a happy period."¹²

Therefore, he decided to “pull the monasteries out of the Dalai Lama’s control”.¹³ This was implemented through “cleaning up and rectification” campaign against the monasteries. Party and government officials and policemen were posted inside monasteries. Monks were screened and those failing to gain the trust of the authorities were expelled¹⁴ and sent back to their places of origin. Others were put in prisons. Those monks who were allowed to remain in the monasteries were asked to publicly make anti-Dalai Lama gestures. New rules were promulgated to control monastic activities. For example, renovation of monasteries is not permitted and limitations are set on the number of monks in monasteries. Monasteries are forbidden to interact with each other and no religious preaching is permitted outside the monasteries. Even the recognition of reincarnated lamas is decided by the Communist Party. Private ownership of monasteries is only in name, for in reality the monasteries cannot make any decision without the approval of government officials appointed to monastic management committees.

This campaign is not restricted to monasteries alone. Clear-cut announcements were made forbidding Party members, Party officials, and government employees from believing in religion. They were ordered to regard the Dalai Lama as an enemy, and prohibited from displaying his portraits at home. Moreover, they are forbidden from building or possessing shrines or religious altars and from performing religious ceremonies. Religious practice or display of religious symbols is forbidden. Parents are not allowed to send their children to study in schools run by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. Expulsion from the Communist Party membership, loss of government jobs and pensions, and non-promotion of students to higher classes are the measures prescribed for the violation of these rules. The Tibet Autonomous Region currently has 60,000 officials, 90,000 party members, and 150,000 government workers, of whom 80 percent are Tibetans. It is estimated that the new law has affected more than 10 percent of the entire Tibetan population, if their family members were also taken into account. Some offices often undertake surprise search raids on the workers’ homes. During this year’s observance of Sakadawa (the fourth Tibetan month which is considered holy, translator), government authorities even asked every department to specifically assign people to monitor the religious activities of their employees. Furthermore, instructions were issued not to show Tibetan prayer flags on the TV. It became a laughing matter that reporters from other provinces focussed their cameras on prayer flags in order to show the characteristics of Tibet, while Tibetan reporters had to desperately look for an angle that did not capture the prayer flags.

The authorities, of course, have no means of preventing non-government employees from participating in religious activities. However, it must be kept in mind that in the past, the observance of a religious holiday was followed by picnics, meeting of friends, drinking of beer, playing of cards, etc., and women showed off their clothes and jewellery. Ironically, under the current policy of “religious freedom”, checkpoints, police, and informers are seen in all places wherever religious activities take place. Fearing the curtailment of their festivity, people hurry home immediately after the religious celebration, because even a minor scuffle after drinking leads to detention.

The authorities have decided to conduct an experiment for as long as they are unable to ban religious activities completely. The experiment involves, first, categorizing the Tibetan religion into two parts, one part that can be tolerated and another that has to be prohibited. Secondly, it involves categorizing the Tibetan people into two groups, one whose religious

beliefs can be tolerated and the other whose religious beliefs has to be prohibited. The authorities ask the former to conform religion to the socialist society,¹⁵ and if a conflict develops between religion and socialism, it is religion that must give way. The group whose religious belief is regarded as intolerable consists of Tibetans on the payroll of the Communist Party; salaried Tibetans are not allowed to have religious belief at all. The truth of the matter is that a religion is an organic whole, which has evolved over thousands of years. If we pluck even one hair, the effect will be felt in the whole body. Moreover, how can religion hope to conform to socialism, which is itself insecure? In this age of the rise of ethnic nationalism, how is it possible to divide one ethnic group into two and make them engage in internecine fights? The authorities may be able to secure temporary compliance from some Tibetans by threatening their livelihood. But livelihood is not the hearts and minds of people. The use of such threats will succeed only in alienating their hearts and minds further.²

Even more temporary in nature is the attempt at division. In their meetings, the Chinese Communist Party officials responsible for Tibet affairs have announced the following views: “*Deism and atheism, and spiritualism and materialism are incompatible.*” “*Religion is the opium of people’s mind.*” “*Religion is not a correct philosophical view of the world.*” “*In the spiritual arena, we must seize the leadership position from the religious spiritualism.*” “*Religious tenets and doctrines that do not conform to the socialist society must be reformed.*”¹⁶ From the religious believer’s point of view, this amounts to nothing less than an all-out war cry against religion. Religious believers see the authorities’ ongoing attempt to undermine religion as an organized and systematic campaign to annihilate it. Tourists will not see this. From the outside, normal religious activities seem to be taking place in Tibet. However, in reality, there are prohibitions on devotion to the Three Refuges—the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Community of Monks—the practice of which is the life-blood of Buddhism. Apart from the aforesaid “cleaning and rectification campaign”, the greatest concern for Tibetan religion is the prohibition on religious education. Without scientific knowledge of religion, people’s faith will be reduced to ritualistic superstition, and there will be no way for them to understand the meaning of religion. This will undermine religion and pave the way for a culture of decadent and immoral life styles, which will ultimately lead to the degeneration of traditional moral standards. Similarly, the study and analysis of religious thoughts and the continuation of the religious heritage will become impossible. Religious rituals have been prohibited or restricted for about a decade now. During this period, examinations for the religious degree of *Geshe Lharampa* have not taken place. Currently the scholarship of monks in Tibet is far behind that of those abroad. Disgruntled people in the religious circle point out that the seemingly beautiful religious institutes are mere museum pieces. The religious freedom that only allows people to offer butter lamps and perform prostrations serves only to fool foreign visitors.¹⁷ It is better not to have such religious freedom, they say.

Beijing’s current Tibet policy is becoming more hardline as the days go by. Beijing’s direction is to “nip the source of instability in its bud”. Since it is hard to determine what exactly is the “bud”, the authorities can carry out the act of “nipping” at their whim. This inevitably becomes a basis for brutal repression. Tibet presently enjoys stability on the surface. People do not even bother to express their resentment. But this doesn’t mean that there is no problem. Deng Xiaoping once gave this well-known advice: “The scariest thing is when the masses remain silent.” If people complain, it means they still have hope that the

problem can be resolved in a reasonable way. However, if they don't bother to say anything, it means they have lost hope and are waiting to explode some day.

The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people's mind

The atheistic Beijing perceives the Dalai Lama as inconsequential since he has neither an army; nor a territory under his control. However, other than the mundane power, there is another force in this world. Religion is the base of the Dalai Lama. Mundane power is ineffective against abstract religion. From the historical point of view, power vacillates swiftly whereas religion stands tall amidst the storms of thousands of years. The question that Beijing needs to ask itself is that although the 14th Dalai Lama has not been to Tibet over the past 40 years, why is it that millions of Tibetans, who have not even seen the Dalai Lama, are almost intoxicated with reverence for him? This is not merely due to the charisma of one individual; rather it is because of the nature of his position in the religious system. The Dalai Lama, to the minds of the Tibetans, is the human manifestation of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. He is the life-blood of Tibetan Buddhism. Moreover, he is the foundation of the Tibetan tradition that blends politics and religion. Without the institution of the Dalai Lama, the 500-year-old framework of Tibetan Buddhism would collapse. Similarly, the Tibetan culture sustained by the Buddhist way of thinking would become meaningless. Therefore, from the Tibetan perspective, this institution is sacrosanct.

The target of Beijing's opposition may only be the current Dalai Lama, living in exile in India. However, from the perspective of the Tibetan Buddhist system of reincarnation, the 14 successive Dalai Lamas have not been 14 different individuals. Rather, they have been different human bodies taken by the consciousness of Avalokitesvara. Therefore, one cannot differentiate between this incarnation and the previous ones. If Beijing insists that its opposition is only against Tenzin Gyatso, the one presently trying to split the motherland, and not against the previous Dalai Lamas, it is tantamount to rejecting the Buddhist concept of reincarnation. It amounts to the rejection of the basic Tibetan Buddhist belief. It makes no sense to proclaim respect for Tibetan Buddhism on the one hand, and oppose the 14th Dalai Lama on the other.

Buddhism is a system of belief in the truth of suffering in the cyclic existence. The only means of deliverance from this suffering is to strive for the attainment of Buddhahood. It is only by attaining Buddhahood that one can liberate oneself from the suffering of cyclic existence and enjoy the perpetual happiness in the Pure Land. This is the ultimate meaning and goal of life for Tibetans. They believe that the most important condition for enlightenment is taking recourse in a spiritual teacher. The spiritual teacher is a bridge between the believers and the realm of Buddhahood. According to a Tibetan saying, if one does not take the help of a spiritual teacher, even if all the Buddha's smile, one will not be able to see them. Therefore, in their daily prayers Tibetans seek refuge first in the guru (spiritual teacher). Then they seek refuge in the Buddha, the Teachings and the Monastic Community successively. The position of the spiritual teacher in Tibetan Buddhism is unsurpassable. Apart from the Buddha Sakyamuni, the second object of devotion for Tibetans is the spiritual teacher.

The Dalai Lama holds the highest position in the hierarchy of Tibetan Buddhism. He is the supreme teacher of all teachers. Every denomination of Tibetan Buddhists shows

devotion to him. The Dalai Lama is the root teacher or root guru of all Tibetan Buddhists (virtually all Tibetans). According to Tibetan Buddhism, if a person is separated from the guidance of his spiritual teacher, there is no way he can attain Buddhahood; he will never achieve liberation from the suffering from cyclic existence. From this, one can gauge how precious the spiritual teacher is for Tibetans. Moreover, in their daily life, Tibetans believe that the biggest sin is to lose any kind of faith—either of the mind or the body or the speech—in the spiritual teacher. Such a loss of faith, they believe, will undo all the past efforts of spiritual practice. One can then very well imagine how difficult it is to persuade the Tibetan people to compromise on this matter. If you know this, you will understand why it is impossible to purge the Dalai Lama from the hearts of the Tibetan people. Similarly, it will not be difficult to understand the Tibetan people's emotion against the use of coercion to get them to denounce the Dalai Lama.

The abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, Chadrel Jampa Thinley, is a former standing committee member of the National People's Political Consultative Conference and vice-chairman of the TAR People's Political Consultative Conference. Normally, he obeyed all directions from Beijing. Therefore, when the 10th Panchen Lama passed away, Beijing confidently entrusted in him the responsibility of searching for the reincarnation. On this important issue relating to the fundamental principle of Tibetan Buddhism, he demonstrated where his loyalty lay. He secretly reported every detail of the search process to the Dalai Lama, which eventually enabled the Dalai Lama to recognize the Panchen Lama's reincarnation before Beijing. The Chinese authorities reacted by sentencing Chadrel Rinpoche to eight years of imprisonment. But Chadrel Rinpoche maintained that he did not have even the slightest regret for his action. He said, "I have taken the Gelong vow and have also received empowerment from the Dalai Lama. I have to respect the wishes of the lama who bestowed me empowerment. Otherwise, I will not be able to go to the Buddhist Pure Land."¹⁸ Since religious practitioners are believers, they will offer their lives for their religion. It is completely against the basic precepts of religion to ask a believer to place the worldly Communist Party and government above his religion. A believer considers it a matter of honour to sacrifice himself to fulfill a religious goal.

During the "cleaning and rectification" movement, many monks did not have the desire to follow the diktat of the management committee to attack the Dalai Lama, even though it meant expulsion from the monasteries. Government officials, because of their reliance on the government for their livelihood, are generally more susceptible than monks. Among them, there is a widespread saying, "For this life, we have to rely on the Chinese Communist Party. But for the next life, we have to rely on the Dalai Lama." They find it impossible to balance this conflict. Buddhists believe that harmful speech in this life will bring harmful consequences in the next life. This means their salary is like a fare to the hell realm. This causes them anguish, which turns into anger with the passage of time.

The leaders of the Chinese Communist Party are not able to comprehend this matter. Secretary Chen Kuiyuan said, "During these years our expenses for renovating the monasteries have been more than that for the administration of the Communist Party and the Government. In some parts of our land, there are more monasteries than in the early period of peaceful liberation. Religious institutions and leaders should be grateful for this. They should not connive with the separatists and allow illegal activities."¹⁹ The real identity of a person is inside his heart. Material assistance alone cannot satisfy him. Beijing makes the

mistake of equating human rights with the rights to livelihood. In the same vein, it is a mistake to regard economic development as a nationality policy. The key to nationality policy is to work on the hearts and minds of people. Material riches are not hearts and minds. Neither can they buy hearts and minds. It is not a matter of surprise to see a child using abusive words against the mother after eating the meat she has given. There is a Tibetan saying, "They (the Chinese) may have done 99 good deeds for us, but the final one deed is to kill us."²⁰ What they mean by "kill us" is that their religion will be exterminated. This is because to Tibetans, to have no religion is like having no life.

No matter how big the current anti-Dalai Lama campaign, it cannot be compared to the development during the Cultural Revolution period. Let's think about the systematic destruction of Tibetan religion at that period and let's look at the revival of Tibetan religion now. It is quite obvious that even such a violent revolution has failed to kill the Tibetan people's sense of reverence for the Dalai Lama. Therefore, how much hope is there for the current cleaning up and rectification campaign or the threat to expel people from government jobs?

The Tibetan issue should not be dragged on any longer

Beijing now probably wants to resolve the Tibetan problem by playing for time. With Tibet under its control, Beijing seems to think that the Dalai Lama doesn't have power to bring a big storm. Furthermore, it believes that the international community, needing the favour of China's large market, will not engage in acts of hostility over the Tibetan issue. In the light of this thinking, Beijing's current strategy is to wait for the Dalai Lama to pass away. It thinks that when the Dalai Lama dies, his Tibetan followers will disintegrate and the western society will lose its super star. Beijing can then recognize a reincarnation and win the hearts and minds of Tibetans.

For the time being, let us not think about the problems that may be caused by this rationale. Let us only consider the assumption that the problem will go away as time goes by. Even if this assumption were right, it means that the current political system and leadership in China must remain unchanged for several decades, starting from the 14th Dalai Lama's death to the time when the new reincarnation of the Dalai Lama comes of age. Only then can one possibly see any outcome. However, if the Chinese political system or leadership changes before that, it will possibly undo the whole waiting game. Therefore, this strategy is weak. Nobody believes that the current Chinese political system will last for several decades. The Chinese Communist Party's resistance to change will not make change impossible; it will only delay it. Political changes in modern society are often the result of ethnic strife. In China also, this type of strife will be a major challenge for political change.

If we put China's Tibetan areas together (One Tibet Autonomous Region, 10 Tibet Autonomous Prefectures, two Tibet Autonomous counties), it is 2,250,000 square kilometres. This is almost one fourth the entire Chinese territory. The "Greater Tibet", as the Tibetan government-in-exile claims, is 2.5 million square km,²¹ more than one fourth of China. There is no definite historical verdict on the question of whether Tibet is part of China or not. It is fair to say that the Tibetan issue is the most highly internationalized of all nationality issues. Western countries almost unanimously stand on the side of Dalai Lama.

Almost all westerners believe that Beijing oppresses Tibetans. Between 1959 and 1965 the United Nations passed three resolutions, recognizing the Tibetan people's right to self-determination. If one understands these factors, it will not be difficult to recognize that the current seemingly firm status of China's sovereignty in Tibet is not free from future risks. Changes in time can shift the balance of power. The division of Yugoslavia—as a result of the change in time, plus the western value system of putting human rights above national sovereignty—is a reminder of the possibility that western countries may help Tibet's separation from China by supporting the Tibetan people's right to self-determination. Since the international community views the Dalai Lama as the most qualified person to represent Tibet, his demands can become a legal basis under any circumstance. On many occasions, the Dalai Lama has maintained that Tibet could remain a part of China. China, however, has failed to translate this into a legally binding fact. Therefore, the Dalai Lama can revert to his independence stand any time. If he blames Beijing's intransigence for the change in his position, he is sure to receive widespread support from the western public opinion.²²

As long as China remains strong and stable, the situation described above will not happen. However, if the society's political order descends into turmoil, the country will become very weak. Look at Russia. Even now, it is not completely out of trouble, despite the fact that it did not suffer a big social turmoil. Given the fact that China still resists political reforms, the future shock will be stronger and the difficult time longer than that of Russia. If the economy suffers significant recession, inner China will lose interest to take care of Tibet. Similarly, the army and government in Tibet will not receive supplies from inner China. Under such a circumstance, the officials and army personnel stationed in Tibet will become demoralized and the Chinese will be separated from Tibet just as wild animals and birds become scattered. The development in Tibet during the time of the Iron Pig Year Revolution (Nationalist revolution in 1911, translator) should serve as a lesson. The scenario described above was played out then, resulting in the "Expel the Chinese" movement and independence of Tibet for 40 years.

China need not undergo many years of turmoil for this to happen. Even if there were a few months of turmoil, they (the Tibetan government and people in exile, translator) have prepared for such an opportunity for forty years. With a publicly recognized leader and a full-fledged government, Tibetans during this period of turmoil may move into the end zone of independence and impose a *fait accompli* before China is able to restore order and do anything about it. Even if a time comes when China is able to restore her power and deal with Tibet, she may then find herself confronting not only Tibet, but also the entire western world. At that time the newly-stabilized China will not have enough military power to deal with the western allied forces. Instead, China's ability to maintain its own stability and survival may well be dependent on the will of western countries. The more the globalization, the more likely this scenario is. Once western countries control the economic lifeline of China, they can dictate terms by using economic leverage, without having to resort to military power.²³ Given the western world's fascination with Tibet and its lopsided alignment with Dalai Lama, the prospect of them uniting to sanction China on the Tibet issue, in my opinion, is not at all an illusion.

From China's point of view, these reasons make the Tibetan issue far more sensitive than the Xinjiang issue. The characteristics of the Tibetan issue are: historical uncertainty regarding China's sovereignty, internationalized issue, support from the western society, an

effective exile government and a spiritual leader who is revered by Tibetans and is influential worldwide. Besides, the number of Chinese settlers in Tibet is small, and the maintenance of sovereignty and stability there is dependent on the resources of inner China. The Xinjiang issue, on the other hand, doesn't have all these characteristics, and is also less serious. If all the aforesaid characteristics of the Tibetan issue are combined, the realization of Tibetan independence will then be only a matter of waiting for just one opportunity, which is internal strife in China. By resisting political reforms, as Beijing does, it is actually preparing this very opportunity for Tibetans.

Xinjiang has caught public attention by its tendency towards violence. During the time of internal strife in China, there will probably be very violent ethnic strife and bloodshed in Xinjiang. However, Xinjiang's separation from China is possible only under the direction of Tibet. Thus, the Tibet issue is the key to China's nationality issue. If the Tibet issue is resolved, the issue of other nationalities will also be resolved. On the contrary, if the issue of Tibet is not resolved, the issue of other nationalities will arise.

The Dalai Lama is 65 years old. Considering the life expectancy and health care facilities of today, it will not be difficult for him to live for another 10 or 20 years. During this long time, political change in China is almost inevitable. It is the attitude of the Dalai Lama that will wholly determine the direction of the Tibetan issue. The hearts and minds of Tibetans are with him. His wish is the Tibetan people's command; monks and nuns will jump into fire for him; the Government-in-Exile follows his advice; the international community respects his opinions and strongly supports him. If China treats him like an enemy and disappoints him by denying him avenues for negotiations and cooperation, it will be difficult to guarantee that he will not find himself pressured to take the course of Tibetan independence as soon as the opportunity is presented by the unpredictable time of social transformation. When such a time comes, various elements favouring Tibetan independence will remobilize under his leadership in the greatest strength and become a consolidated power. These factors will significantly increase the possibility of Tibet's separation from China. In this respect, this single individual is more powerful than tens of thousands military personnel. This elderly monk may possibly have influence to direct the course of western world's inexhaustible economic wealth.²⁴ Whoever underestimates his influence is making a big mistake, and will pay dearly for it.

On the contrary, if Beijing seizes the present opportunity to respond to the Dalai Lama with serious negotiations on equal footing and translates his offer that Tibet can remain within China into a legal document, China's claim of sovereignty in Tibet will be legalized and the long-standing problem of Tibet will be resolved once and for all. The absence of such an internationally-recognized legal document is one reason that makes China's claim of sovereignty in Tibet a matter of dispute.²⁵ The Dalai Lama is an internationally-recognized representative of the Tibetan people. If he signs such a legal document, it will be recognized as the will of the Tibetan people. This legal document will serve as the best guarantee against the claim of Tibetan independence. From then on, there will be no basis for Tibetans or the western society to raise the issue of Tibetan independence. This historically intractable dispute will then become merely a topic for academic discussion; in the political circle, it will become a non-issue. If the 14th Dalai Lama signs such a legal document, it will be recognized by the world and honoured by most of the Tibetan people.

How can one say this with such certainty? Regardless of the other factors, the 14th Dalai Lama went to exile when he still had political authority in Tibet. He has since then served as the highest political and spiritual leader of Tibetans. Therefore, he is the highest legitimate authority to sign such an agreement. Secondly, the status of the 14th Dalai Lama is undisputed. All Tibetans recognize him as their common root guru. Tibetans accept his opinions unconditionally. No one else possesses these two qualifications. Even his reincarnation will not have the same qualifications simply by virtue of not having exercised political authority in Tibet. Assuming that the 14th Dalai Lama passes away and the Tibet issue remains unresolved, we can almost certainly guarantee that there will be two Dalai Lamas. The Dalai Lama appointed by Beijing will be viewed as a puppet by the Tibetan people and, thus, not enjoy mandate as their root guru. The international community will not accept him either. The Dalai Lama recognized in exile will also become an object of dispute, and will not easily gain universal mandate. If any Dalai Lama, who does not enjoy clear mandate as root guru, signs such a document, many people will oppose it. For any one else, it will be all the more impossible to make this kind of decision.

Currently, there are various opinions regarding the future status of Tibet among the Tibetans themselves. Particularly, in the exile community, there are even more people who insist on the independence of Tibet and reject the idea of Tibet's association with China. There is a saying that "Out of the 130,000 Tibetans in exile, only one person does not advocate the independence of Tibet, and that person is the Dalai Lama." However, a survey indicated that 64.4 percent of exile Tibetans follow the wish of Dalai Lama.²⁶ In 1997, the Tibetan Parliament in exile passed a resolution, empowering the Dalai Lama to decide the future of Tibet without having to take recourse to referendum.²⁷ I personally asked this question to Tibetans at different levels in the Tibetan areas of China. Most of them said that they would follow the Dalai Lama's wish. Therefore, even if the Dalai Lama seeks the opinions of all Tibetans on the issue of Tibet's future, the majority of them, I believe, will subscribe to any proposal put forward by him.

Considering this factor, it is even more meaningful for China to reach an agreement with the 14th Dalai Lama. Not only will this become an agreement signed by the supreme leader of Tibet, it can also be guaranteed that this will be accepted by referendum. And, since the decision of a referendum enjoys supreme legal sanction, all the voices of opposition will then become baseless. On the other hand, if anyone other than the 14th Dalai Lama came forward with any plan, even if it was the same as the one proposed by the Dalai Lama, and if a hand vote were called on this, the outcome would possibly be completely different. A proposal put forward by any one without authority as root guru is certain to engender controversy since every Tibetan, whoever he may be, has the right to express individual opinions and criticism. Under such circumstances, ultimately there would have to be a referendum to settle the dispute. Will China, particularly after becoming a democracy, dare agree to hold a referendum among Tibetans? Without the Dalai Lama's leadership, the referendum may either go the way of ultra nationalists, or be influenced by politicians taking advantage of democracy. What will China do if this development leads to the majority opting for independence?

Therefore, if one considers the long-term interests of China, it is not wise to forestall the issue. And, it is an even bigger mistake to wait for the Dalai Lama to die. This policy is

misguided. China must seize the present opportunity and start the process of finding a solution to the Tibetan issue while the 14th Dalai Lama is alive and in good health. An early initiative is necessary to achieve permanent stability with one single effort. Playing for time is neither in the interest of the Dalai Lama, nor of China. In fact, it is China that will come out far worse. China should not regard the Dalai Lama as an obstacle to resolving the issue of Tibet, but as the key to a lasting solution. However, if the issue is not resolved well, the key that can open the big door can also lock it.

"There is no ground for reconciliation": Not true

In the recent years, Beijing officials responsible for Tibet affairs have opposed the Dalai Lama completely and stressed that there is no room for reconciliation with him.²⁸ Guided by this fighting philosophy, the officials have continued to intensify the anti-Dalai movement, thus, hurting the Tibetan people's sentiment. The fact is that as long as the Dalai Lama doesn't return to Tibet or as long as the people in Tibet are separated from their root guru, the Tibetan issue will remain unresolved. Beijing's plan to appoint the next Dalai Lama will not work as expected. The 14th Dalai Lama has already announced that should he die while in exile, his reincarnation would not be born in an area under China's control. This is because the mission of the reincarnation, he said, is to continue the previous body's work and not to undo it.²⁹ It is possible that Beijing will ignore this statement and insist on appointing the reincarnation. According to the Tibetan tradition of tulku (reincarnated beings), the previous body's advice and will are considered the most important basis for determining his reincarnation. Since the Dalai Lama has stated his intention so categorically, there is no way the Tibetan people will ever accept a reincarnation appointed by Beijing. Therefore, Beijing's action to appoint the next Dalai Lama, far from having the desired result, will only serve to spark off serious confrontations.

As the saying goes, "If you win the people's hearts and minds, you will win everything under the sky." The crucial factor for resolving the Tibetan issue is not economic development. Rather, it is the ability to win the Tibetan people's hearts and minds. From the point of view of statesmanship alone, Beijing needs to review her current policy and ask itself if it is wise to treat the Dalai Lama as an enemy and, thus, hurt the sentiment of millions of Tibetans?

The atheistic communist may regard the Dalai Lama as an ordinary moral and politician. However, from the point of view of statesmanship, Beijing will do well to understand the Tibetan people's religious sentiment. Even the ancient Chinese emperors knew that "winning people's hearts and minds is the best policy". It is deplorable if the Communist Government—which mouths the slogan "for the people"—knows only how to wield power. It should also learn to win the hearts and minds of five million Tibetans. The best way to do this is to cooperate with the Dalai Lama instead of fighting him. Communications and dialogues with the Dalai Lama must seek a mutually-beneficial solution. This will give Tibetans more freedom to develop their religion, which will benefit not only Tibet, but even more so China, where a spiritual vacuum has been created for a long time.

Beijing may argue that although it opened the door for negotiation, the Dalai Lama took an inflexible stand and missed the opportunity. I believe it is wrong to blame the Dalai Lama for the failure of dialogues in the 1980s. The conditions put forward by Hu Yaobang addressed by the Dalai Lama's personal privileges and not the issue of Tibet. If the Dalai Lama had accepted Beijing's offer of the titular post of vice-chairman, this would be construed as an act of surrender rather than cooperation. For several decades, he has lived in exile and worked for the cause of Tibet. As the soul and leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama cannot regard this offer as an opportunity unless he has lost his mind.

Cooperation with the Dalai Lama does not mean addressing his personal wellbeing. It means responding to his proposals and satisfying his demands for the wellbeing of Tibet. Unfortunately, people seem to have lost hope on this issue. They do not seem to find a common ground between Beijing on one side and the Dalai Lama and his followers on the other. There exist completely opposite stands with an unbridgeable gap. Therefore, dead end is almost certain.

If we carefully analyze the aspirations articulated by the two sides, we will find that there is no contradiction on the fundamental issue. Beijing wants to protect China's sovereignty in Tibet. Deng Xiaoping said, "Except for independence, anything else can be discussed." The Dalai Lama expressed his goal as follows:

"I am not seeking independence. As I have said many times before, what I am seeking is for the Tibetan people to be given the opportunity to have genuine self-rule in order to preserve their civilization and for the unique Tibetan culture, religion, language and way of life to grow and thrive. My main concern is to ensure the survival of the Tibetan people with their own unique Buddhist cultural heritage."³⁰

One side wants to protect its sovereignty and the other its religion and culture. There is no reason why the two sides cannot satisfy each other's needs. The Dalai Lama has repeatedly announced that he does not seek Tibetan independence. Similarly, Beijing has repeatedly promised to protect Tibetan religion and culture. In spite of this, the two sides do not seem to see eye to eye. If anything, their hostility is mounting with the passage of each day. Why?

The problem is in reassuring the two sides. The Dalai Lama's proposal addresses China's worries about Tibetan independence as well as the Tibetan people's concerns over the destruction of their monasteries. He seeks to reassure both the sides.³¹ But, reassurance cannot be built upon mere "talks". It requires a reliable guarantee. The Dalai Lama said that the Tibetans should "be able to handle all their domestic affairs and to freely determine their social, economic and cultural development."³² In other words, Tibet must have genuine autonomy with a democratic system within the scope of Greater Tibet. And, it must have the freedom to preserve its religion and culture. Without this, there can be no reassurance for Tibetans.

Similarly, Beijing is uncomfortable with the idea of allowing Tibetans a "high degree of autonomy" in one-fourth of its territory. This is partly because an authoritarian government is not inclined to share power, and partly because any ruler, whether of an authoritarian or democratic system, is bound to have misgivings over this type of

arrangement. As I see it, there is no need to worry about the idea of “Greater Tibet”. This is merely a geographical expression. Similarly, the idea of a “high degree of autonomy” should not be a cause for too much concern. To let Tibetans to manage their own affairs, as long as there is no threat of independence, will only reduce China’s burden. The only cause for concern is “democracy”. I say this not from the point of view of authoritarian power’s objection to democracy. Rather I am referring to the threat that democracy may pose to China’s sovereignty in Tibet. But this threat will exist even after China becomes a democratic country. In such a society, which has not had a democratic tradition and has, at the same time, engendered enough ethnic hatred, the advent of democracy can easily inflame ethnic nationalism. In such a suddenly-created democratic environment, the common people, the elite, and the media could interact with one another to generate the “Square effect”. There will then almost certainly be a race for extremism, which extremists superseding rationalists and ultra-extremists superseding extremists. We witnessed this kind of development during the Tiananmen Square movement of 1989. Assuming that Tibet becomes independent as a result of the “Square effect” generated by the democratic attributes (such as referendum, election, legislation, public opinion and freedom of speech), can any ruler in China accept responsibility for the separation of one-fourth of the Chinese territory in the form of “Greater Tibet”? This is something, which should be of concerns, not only to the current authoritarian government of Beijing, but even more so to the future democratic government. The current Beijing government can resort to violence to solve the problem. However, the future democratic government cannot justify the use of force to suppress democratic aspirations.

We can at least see that China and the Dalai Lama do not differ on the goal. The difference is in the means to achieve that goal. Obviously, there can be no reconciliation if they differ on the goal. But it is wrong to consider each other mutually-exclusive simply because they differ on the means. As long as the two sides can achieve their respective goals, there is no reason why they cannot compromise on the means. In the final analysis, is there a way to avoid the “Square effect” while ensuring democracy? What the Chinese people want is sovereignty in Tibet. Wouldn’t the Chinese people be reassured if they were to have this? What the Tibetan people want is a “high degree of autonomy for Greater Tibet”. Wouldn’t they be able to preserve and promote their unique culture if they were to have this? There are, of course, many other factors surrounding the Tibetan issue. However, finding such a solution, I believe, is the crucial point.

Notes

1. Sithar, “Leader Jiang Zemin touches the hearts of Tibetan people”, *China’s Tibet* 1998, Issue 3
2. Chen Kuiyuan’s address to the TAR People’s Congress and responsible Party leaders of the fifth session of the sixth TAR Political Consultative Conference
3. *Tibet Statistical Chronological Mirror*, 1998, Chinese Statistical Publishing House, page 99

4. *ibid*, Page 99
5. *ibid*, page 31, 99
6. *Statistical Chronological Mirror*, 1998, Website of Chinese Statistical Information
<<http://www.stats.gov.com>>
7. *Tibet Statistical Chronological Mirror*, 1998, Chinese Statistical Publishing House, page 16
8. Chen Kuiyan's address to the conference of officials of the Tibet Autonomous Region on September 16, 1996
9. "Hu Yaobang's statement during his meeting in Beijing with the Dalai Lama's elder brother Gyalo Thondup in July 1981". *The Summary of Tibet News*, compiled by the propaganda department of the TAR Communist Party, July 1985, page 32
10. Raidi's address to the sixth session of the fourth Congress of the TAR Communist Party Committee on September 5, 1994
11. Li Ruihuan's address to the third meeting of the leading committee for the search for the Panchen Lama on November 10, 1995
12. Chen Kuiyuan's address to the meeting of the TAR officials above the prefectural level, May 25 1996
13. *ibid*
14. According to the statistics provided by the Dalai Lama, from 1996 to now 11,409 monks and nuns have been expelled from monasteries or religious institutions. The Dalai Lama's statement on the 41st anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day on March 10, 2000
15. Chen Kuiyuan's address to the Lhasa city mobilization rally for the establishment of Spiritual Civilization, July 23, 1996
16. *Manual for TAR Communist Party Members of the New Era*, December 1998, published by the Propaganda Bureau of TAR Chinese Communist Party Committee
17. "Have the Tibetans religion and culture been exterminated?", an article in the United Weekly of Singapore on October 19, 1997 by its correspondent Zhu Ripeng, after his interview in Tibet. He writes, "Don't the Tibetans have religious Freedom? But the new palace of Norbulingkha is open and pilgrims come here freely. This has thrown the British and American mediapersons in deep doubts. Topgyal, a 44-year-old construction worker, seeks blessing in each and every shrine room of the new palace. I suspected that the officials here would feel uneasy about this. To my utter incomprehension, officials of the foreign office and tourism department seem to be used to the sight of such acts of religious devotion. Finally, towards the end of our

- visit here, we saw no evidence to back the criticism of some westerners that Chinese culture is assimilating the Tibetan Culture.”
18. *Tibet News*, 1996 Issue 6, page 26
 19. Chen Kuiyuan’s address to the meeting of TAR officials above the prefectural level, May 25, 1996
 20. Mo Lihua, “Discussions on Tibetans in exile and their return to their fatherland: Feelings of the people in Dharamsala”, Beijing Spring, November 1998
 21. Website of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile <<http://www.tibet.com>>
 22. Action plan proposed by the Third Tibet Support Group conference in Berlin this year. It says that if in three years’ time, there is no concrete outcome on the Tibet issue, the Tibetan Government-in-Exile should rethink its position on Tibetan independence. On July 5 this year, the European Parliament passed a resolution urging its member States to encourage negotiations between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama under the supervision of the UN Secretary-General and has given them a time limit of three years. It urged the member States to recognize the Tibetan Government-in-Exile as the legitimate representative of Tibet if negotiations do not take place within the time limit of three years.
 23. This scenario was already evoked by the unanimous resolution of Berkeley city in the United States on June 3, 1997, calling for economic sanctions against cities conducting business with Chinese-occupied Tibet.
 24. *New York Times*, December 9, 1997. In 1996 the amount of money given in charity by the American public was \$150.7 billion (far more than the foreign exchange reserves of Mainland China in that period). Out of this, half the amount was given for religious activities. [Quoted from Cao Changching’s article.]
 25. Although both the sides signed the 17-point Agreement in 1951, the international community does not accept it because of disputes over its legality. Secondly, on account of the Lhasa event and the flight of the Dalai Lama in 1959, both the sides have nullified it.
 26. From Cao Changching, “Why doesn’t Beijing accept the Dalai Lama’s initiatives?”
 27. Statement of the Dalai Lama on the 39th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising Day, March 10, 1998
 28. Chen Kuiyuan’s address to the fifth session of the TAR Chinese Communist Party Congress on July 29, 1995
 29. The Dalai Lama’s address to the Tibetan community in New York on May 25, 1997

30. Statement of the Dalai Lama on the 39th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day, March 10, 1998
31. Li Zaho Chen, correspondent of *China Times*, Taiwan, in his article “The path of independence is long and the most-thought about issue among Tibetan refugees is returning to the fatherland”, November 9, 1998
32. Statement of the Dalai Lama on the 39th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day, March 10, 1998