



Chinese Voices For Tibet

The Department of Information & International Relations

**Chinese Voices For
Tibet**

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Foreword

Chinese Voices in Tibet - a collection of 24 essays written by prominent Chinese intellectuals, lawyers and thinkers - answers on the Tibet question through Chinese eyes.

This fact-driven and poignant discourse on Tibet delivers an informed understanding of Tibet's history, its present situation under the Chinese Communist Party's rule, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's proposal for the peaceful reconciliation through Middle Way Policy and most importantly, these voices share the aspiration of Tibetan people inside Tibet.

Hence we sincerely hope that the English version of these essays on Tibet - written primarily in Chinese - will serve to inform our English readers and widen space for further discourse and dialogue on Tibet- its past, present and future directions.

China Desk

Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR)

WHAT I HEARD AND SAW TRAVELLING IN TIBET

Yu Congzhou¹

24 October 2012

It Is Hard to Get Anywhere Without an ID Card

Chinese travellers on the Qinghai-Tibet Railway often think that they have entered Tibet only after the train leaves Qinghai Province. But in reality, the train had at that point already been running through Tibetan lands for an entire night. The travellers' ID cards are repeatedly checked after the train leaves the city of Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province (which the Tibetans call Amdo), entering the territory that in fact corresponds to the historical lands of the Tibetan Tubo dynasty.

The hotel we stayed at in Lhasa was located in the middle section of the pedestrian street that runs in front of the Jokhang Temple. Parked in the short space of 50 metres between our hotel and the entrance to the Jokhang Square, there were an armoured personnel carrier bearing SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics Riot Police) insignia, a fire truck, and two buses belonging to the Ministry of Public Security. At midnight every night the buses would leave. Our tour guide had warned us not to take any photos of either the military or the police, or else... Doing so would cause consequences; we would be berated and our photos would be deleted at the very least. If we were not so lucky, we could suffer bodily harm.

I had known before that Barkhor Street was an important place in Tibetan religion, but witnessing in person the sheer scale of the procession of people burning good fortune cedarwood incense sticks and spinning prayer wheels filled me with awe. I quickly discovered that in every alley leading to the circular Barkhor Street [used for devotional circumambulation around the Jokhang Temple by pilgrims] there was a checkpoint, expressly there to check ID cards. The bigger ones were called '110 People's Police Convenience Stations' and, without exception, they all carried the standard sign. My friends noticed that they checked Tibetans much more rigorously than the Han Chinese, demanding more documents.

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Our guide said that only three hotels in Lhasa were allowed to receive Tibetans, and they were all located far away. He didn't know specifically what documents the out-of-town Tibetans needed in order to be allowed to pass through the checkpoint barriers. Hearing this was nevertheless rather astonishing.

Earlier, I had seen a group of young Chinese travellers born after 1995 fooling around with young Tibetan waitresses in our hotel's coffee shop. They were having a great time. It all seemed to me a scene of harmonious glee. It never occurred to me that although Tibetans could work in this hotel, they could never stay there along with Chinese guests. I can't help but be reminded of the experiences of Duke Ellington during the segregation era in the great Ken Burns documentary *Jazz*. And the same thing now here, in this day and age! How embarrassing!

No International Visitors in Lhasa

Although it was July - the peak tourist season in Tibet - I could count the foreigners that we met during our entire trip using the fingers of both hands. Besides a few Danes that we ran across on the train, there were some Japanese tourists at the hotel, but I walked around the Barkhor for half a day and did not see a single person who looked like a Western traveller.

Our guide said that permits to visit Tibet stopped being issued to foreigners after the self-immolation incident in Lhasa on 27 May 2012, and that the few foreigners we occasionally saw must have been using old documents that had been issued earlier. "Don't worry about the blockade on foreign visitors," I said. "You've already made up for the deficit by attracting more domestic customers." On the contrary, the guide explained. The number of trains [that run to Lhasa] was reduced, and so was the number of carriages hitched to each train. "That's why, of course, it's hard to get tickets."

The decline in revenue from the tourist industry is thus a foregone conclusion. Even Barkhor Street is no longer prospering. According to our guide, his own income is approximately one third of what it was in the same period the year before. He did not blame the Tibetans, nor did he criticize the government. He just kept saying, "We can't have any more self-immolations!"

Only after we discussed this issue in some depth did I discover that when the guide spoke of self-immolation, he was only referring to one incident

that occurred in Jokhang Square at the end of May. He had never heard of the previous 40-some incidents when Tibetans set themselves on fire. The official dispatch from the City of Lhasa regarding the Jokhang self-immolation incident claimed that the two Tibetans involved both came from Sichuan (actually, one was from Gansu, the other from Sichuan) and that they were both monks (neither one of them was, in fact.) Since an average person has no other news source to rely on, he or she would be inclined to believe that ‘none of this is Tibet’s business.’

Is it ‘Us’ or Is it ‘Them’?

Unlike most of the tour guides who came from the city of Chongqing in Sichuan Province, our guide, Little Yang, was from Hunan. “There are way too many Sichuanese people from Chongqing here,” he said. “My Hunanese dialect has been completely assimilated by theirs.” Little Yang was a professional tour guide by training, with a self-proclaimed interest in geography since high school. After he graduated from college, he first worked in Zhangjiajie, a prefectural town in Hunan, where he received tours from Taiwan. Later, he came to Tibet. “In 2008, there was a disturbance in Lhasa, right? Just as I got here, the situation outside got very tense, so I didn’t go out at all. I called my Tibetan friends on the phone and asked them to bring me food. Tibetans from Lhasa are very friendly. There was definitely no problem with them.”

You could see that Little Yang was very enthusiastic about his work. He couldn’t wait to dash off altitude figures and dates, as if keeping count of precious family jewels that you too had to remember. His zeal was even more extreme when it came to the scenic spots. In Potala Palace Square, he enthusiastically sent us off to look at the ‘Monument to the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet.’ I really didn’t want to go and blurted out from the side of my mouth, “Isn’t this a representation of a gun? What kind of peace is that?” Little Yang answered, “Yes, it is a gun. Without guns, there would be no peace. Political power grows from the barrel of a gun...” As his back was turned to me, I couldn’t tell if he was speaking in earnest or being sarcastic.

When he talked about the kings of the Tibetan Yarlung dynasty, Little Yang often referred to them as ‘ours,’ as in our Songtsen Gampo.’ One day I told him that I wanted to see the Dazha Road Monument (a stone stele that commemorates the Tibetan Tubo Empire’s capture of the city of Chang’an in 763 CE as punishment for the betrayal by the Tang Dynasty), but I didn’t

know where it was. To this, Little Yang answered that, obviously, the stone inscription commemorating the Tubo capture of the Tang capital Chang'an was humiliating for our country and was fenced in. Nobody was allowed to see it and the guides were not allowed to talk about it with visitors.

I was thinking to myself, haven't they been 'us' all this time you were praising and patronizing them? We were all one family. How did they turn into them' all of a sudden? Apparently, Little Yang, who was quite friendly with Tibetans, was a bit confused when it came to the question of 'us' and 'them.'

As for some other Chinese, such confusion does not exist. The boundary between 'us' and 'them' is very clear and must never be blurred. I once heard a tourist with a northern Chinese accent say loudly, "... If it doesn't work, just clamp down! What are we afraid of?" Whom was he talking about clamping down on? 'Them,' I'm afraid.

A taxi driver from Henan, on the other hand, turned us into 'us' the moment he saw us. "Tibetans get the best welfare in the world to spin their prayer wheels and drink sweet tea, and they still want to go in for independence! If I don't work for a single day, I'm broke. Is that justice?"

Little Yang once mentioned in passing that the issuance of passports in Tibet had been suspended. Furthermore, the restriction that made it difficult for Tibetans to obtain passports had been extended to include everyone. Our Chongqing-born driver interrupted to say that he knew a high school graduate from Chongqing who had immigrated to Lhasa many years ago, settled down and had a child, but who now, because he couldn't get a passport, was trying to get his Chongqing residence permit reinstated. As this was proving nearly impossible, he was complaining and bellowing to high heaven.

It seems that, when it comes to the present passport issuance suspension in Tibet, there is no distinction between 'us' and them' after all. Everyone gets to sample the bitter taste together.

The Checkpoints Are Brewing Disasters

The only time I heard an Armed Police officer say thank you during my trip was at a checkpoint in Tolung Dechen County, on the western outskirts of Lhasa. A baby-faced ethnic Tibetan armed policeman was politely

inspecting identity cards, smiling from ear to ear, but all the while his other hand was resting on the trigger sheath of his submachine gun. An even younger Han Chinese Armed Police officer stood behind him, unarmed and looking bewildered, apparently being trained on the job.

More than one driver and tourist guide had mentioned ‘the big checkpoint incident.’ A month earlier, a herdsman from Damshung County (on the northern outskirts of Lhasa) anxiously drove his father, who had fallen ill, south to get medical treatment in Lhasa and forgot to bring his identity card. He did not manage to get the rules bent at the checkpoint, squandering three hours while waiting, and by the time they got to the hospital it was too late to save his father’s life.

Grieved and indignant, the herdsman lost control of his senses and later returned to the checkpoint where he stabbed the Armed Police officer to death. This type of checkpoint almost immediately calls to mind the Israeli documentary *Checkpoint*. From the West Bank of the Jordan River to Tibet, there is no end to similar human tragedies.

The Eternal Tsangyang Gyatso

Even Little Yang admitted that the majority of the people who live in the western part of Lhasa’s main Chengguan district are Han Chinese and that the buildings there are no different from those found in the cities and towns of China’s hinterland, lacking any distinguishing features. Lhasa’s Old Town, the only thing of distinction that survives within traditional parameters surrounding Lingkhor Road, is the favourite of tourists because of its Tibetan architecture, the everyday life of its alleys and lanes, and its flowers in full bloom.

Gangchenpa Bookstore is located in an unremarkable corner of the Old Town. Its owner is a Tibetan woman of few words, but a young man at the shop is rather talkative, and when he finds out that a reader is looking for the poems of the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso, he sidles up to explain which of the works are actually later fakes by Han Chinese. I was disappointed that the bookstore did not have a CD section, but the female owner told me that she could copy for me some music from her MP3 player onto a U-disk. Having had songs about ‘emancipation of slaves in praise of the party’ incessantly ring in my ears for several days, I suddenly realized: The songs she was letting me sample were composed to Tsangyang Gyatso’s poetry.

I remembered that there was a Tibetan song I had been looking for over several years and boldly hummed a few lines for the shop-owner to identify. As soon as she heard it, she said, “I don’t have that. That singer is called Phurbu T. Namgyal. He is from abroad.” “Abroad? You mean India?” “Yes.”

So, were the songs she had recorded for me domestic or from abroad? I asked her. She didn’t answer me directly. Softly, she just said, “The songs I gave you are hard to find.”

The Beauty of the Earth

Before the end of the trip, I left the guidebook Lonely Planet Tibet, which had been my companion throughout the entire journey, with a Tibetan friend because the preface in this book - banned in China - was written by his spiritual leader and root guru [His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama]. The preface ends with the words: ‘I trust that the readers will agree with me that Tibet, despite all the disturbances that have happened, remains one of the most beautiful places on earth.’ It is my heartfelt conviction that my present trip has confirmed those words.

(Names of people and the bookstore have been changed in this text.)

1. Translator’s note: Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun, is a famous statement by Mao Zedong, delivered in August 1927 at the CCCP meeting, to suggest that in order to take political control, the communists would have to engage in armed struggle. It is used by CCP cadres today to justify military suppression.

2. Translator’s note: The actual English text in the Lonely Planet Tibet preface says: ‘I trust that those who rely on it as a companion to the travels in Tibet will enjoy themselves in what, despite all that has happened, remains for me one of the most beautiful places on earth.’

TIBETAN SELF-IMMOLATIONS: WHY ISN'T THE WORLD LISTENING?

Mo Li²

1 May 2012

I first saw this question on Woesser's blog.¹ Originally written in English, it read, 'Tibetan self-immolations: Why isn't the world listening?' The author was Vijay Kranti, and Fu Chuyu translated it into Chinese. The reason why I borrowed this title without changing it is that after 36 Tibetans self-immolated the question posed by the author left me feeling distressed and pained. I want to attempt to find an answer, in the hope that my humble remarks will elicit valuable reactions.

The Questions and Truth about Self-Immolations

Vijay Kranti starts by retelling the life of the 27-year-old self-immolator, Jamphel Yeshe, looking back on his birth and how he grew up in Tibet, receiving the 'red' education that teaches hatred toward the Dalai Lama. As an adolescent, Jamphel Yeshe became aware of his own ethnic identity, and he began to feel that he was suffocating under the repression by the numerous ethnic Han Chinese who had entered Tibet. As a result, he fled to India. He had been taking a computer course when, on the eve of Hu Jintao's² visit to India on 26 March 2012, he set himself on fire without the slightest hesitation at a Tibetan protest rally near the Indian Parliament. Vijay Kranti points out several issues that self-immolations brought to light. One after another self-immolator shouted as they were dying, "Free Tibet," and, "Let the Dalai Lama return to Tibet." They exposed another face of the Tibetan state of affairs to the millions of YouTube viewers across the world, facts that were completely the opposite of what the Chinese government claims.

Filled with extreme grief and indignation, Vijay Kranti asks the world in the name of the 33rd self-immolators, Jamphel Yeshe: One, why is it that the self-immolation of one Tunisian street pedlar can arouse the support of the entire world, while the same world ignores currently occurring waves

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of self-immolations that are sweeping across Tibet, one after another: Two, are democracy and non-violent appeals truly effective in conflict resolution?

I believe that the questions raised by Vijay Kranti don't only speak in the name of the 39 Tibetan self-immolators who have already sacrificed their lives, or have been wounded. They also speak in the name of all Tibetan people who are seeking freedom for Tibet, and many people in the world who are concerned about Tibet. Obviously, the above-raised questions do not have easy answers, but if we face the times we live in with honesty and fairness, we could gradually arrive at explanations.

First of all, I want to say that the world is not entirely deaf-and-dumb. For a period of time now, the biggest European and Western news media outlets, be it newspapers or television stations, have given prominent coverage to incidents of Tibetan self-immolation. On 7 March 2012, when Tsering Woesser and two other Tibetans issued an open letter, 'A Plea to Tibetans to Stop Self-Immolating: nationalities and ethnic backgrounds signed it in support.

On 2 April 2012, a group of 12 Nobel Peace Laureates, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Lech Walesa, released an open letter to Chinese President Hu Jintao calling for a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflict with Tibet. They demanded that Hu Jintao engage in a 'meaningful dialogue' with the Tibetan exiled spiritual leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and other Tibetan leaders, and stated their deep concern with the drastic expressions of resentment by the people of Tibet.³ In addition, the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations passed a resolution calling on China to relax its various restrictions placed on the region of Tibet.⁴ The European Parliament held a conference about self-immolations in Tibet, to discuss how to help Tibetan people find a way out of their predicament.⁵ In Japan, Japanese Parliament members issued a 'Resolution of Protest Against the Repression of Tibetans.'⁶ Although the expressions of support by the international community have not been strong enough, they nevertheless reflect people's concern.

Tunisian 'Martyr' Triggers Street Protests

It is worth noting that when the 26-year-old Tunisian college student Mohamed Bouazizi poured gasoline over himself at the local municipal government building and set himself on fire, his self-immolation first

awakened the wrath of his countrymen that led to fierce street protests, and only later drew international attention and support.

Western countries, such as France, were originally rather subdued in their response to the people's revolutions in Arab countries, because Arab dictators, like the one in Tunisia, were Western allies against Islamic extremism. But as soon as the people of Tunisia and Egypt, relying on their own strength, made their collective choice, the Western nations were sure to back them up in accordance with their own principles of democratic freedom.

So why have the self-immolations of 39 Tibetans not triggered a street protest movement within Tibet? In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Hannah Arendt has argued that in violent totalitarian regimes 'martyrdom' becomes impossible. We think that the Tunisian street vendor is a martyr who had dignity. The dozens of Tibetans who have self-immolated are also martyrs who possessed ethnic dignity and valour. But as they were martyrs in different countries, the outcomes of their martyrdom have been so different.

This is because the Tunisian government, on the surface at least, permitted the existence of opposition parties. Because of universal education and the widespread use of Internet, the video of the street vendor's self-immolation was able to rapidly spread across the worldwide web and set off wide-ranging social shock waves. But within China, the news about Tibetan self-immolations is under strict censorship. After an incident, it vanishes without trace, and there is no way that the heroic commitment of the martyrs can gain the support of domestic public opinion.

Besides, even if the ethnic Han Chinese knew the truth, they might react in all sorts of ways. Although they are equally repressed by the autocratic regime, some Han Chinese view the Tibetan issue through the prism of their own selfish nationalistic mindset based on China's Statist and nationalist position of Great Unity, and one can consequently hardly hope that they would take a principled stand when talking about self-immolations.

The Time - and Adversaries - is Different

The Tunisian street-vendor's self-immolation had a huge international impact and it resulted in the toppling of a dictatorial regime. There is another similar case in world history. On 11 June 1963, a 66-year-old

Mahayana Buddhist monk protesting the South Vietnamese Ngo Dinh Diem government's persecution of Buddhists publicly set himself on fire in the middle of a Saigon intersection. An American journalist took pictures at the scene, and when they were published the following day in newspapers around the world, they set off strong reverberations. This self-immolation incident later came to be viewed as the turning point in the Buddhist Crisis, which indirectly led to the demise of South Vietnam's President, Ngo Dinh Diem.

In this writer's opinion, the adversary that the Vietnamese monk confronted in his protest, and the international situation of the time, were very different from what the Tibetans face today. The monk's success can thus not be reproduced.

First, the protest adversary is different. President Ngo Dinh Diem, whom the Master of the Mahayana Buddhist Law [monk] confronted, was a Catholic. The Catholic ethic of life teaches that human existence was created and bestowed by the grace of God, and it therefore opposes suicide. Consequently, when the monk set himself on fire, bravely disregarding his own life, the Catholics were in great shock. The authorities had no choice but to moderate their policies that persecuted Buddhists.

In contrast, the communist regime claims that, 'Communist Party members are people made of special material.' Every person familiar with the history of communism's cruel struggle can understand that this 'special material' is the ability to sacrifice people. Since they have sacrificed people, they have turned it into a basic human instinct. In 1989, the regime made of this 'special material' went so far as to use tanks to suppress China's college students - children of their own nation - for which they have not repented to this day. Being as cold-hearted as they are, how could they possibly have sympathy for Tibetans.

Who are self-immolating?

Second, the international situation and international relations are different. Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem regime was established in the 1950s relying on American support. As it put in play its policies of religious discrimination, it faced not only pressure from the United States but also the threat of Ho Chi Minh's communist regime in North Vietnam.

In contrast, under the present Chinese communist regime, despite its

enormous debts in blood that are crying for retribution, droves of Western capitalists have gone to China to invest and profit from China's cheap land and cheap labour. And it is precisely because it has been fattened by the capital from Western nations that the Chinese communist regime-this regime that violates human rights has grown powerful in an unprecedented way. At the same time, Western democratic nations have been weakened in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Given this state of affairs, although European and American democratic nations all sympathize with Tibet, and although the Western media continues to uphold moral principles and issue appeals on behalf of Tibet, the governments of each and every Western country have to first consider their own country's interests.

Third, the Vietnamese monk's demand was pretty clear and simple. He only requested that Ngo Dinh Diem stop discriminating against and suppressing Buddhism, while the cries for 'Free Tibet' and "Tibetan Independence" shouted by Tibetan self-immolators are considered to be goals hard to achieve in a short span of time. Even China's 1.3 billion ethnic Han people have not been able to win their own freedom, so how could Tibetans? Even though many Western NGO's and public figures endorse 'Tibetan Independence,' not a single Western government at present dares to openly support independence for Tibet.

Non-Violent Struggling the Gandhian Way

For many years now people have been praising the Indian sage-hero Mahatma Gandhi's ideology of non-violent resistance, which has opened the way for movements of peaceful transformation around the world.

But the adversary to Gandhi's resistance was the British empire, which professed democracy and, furthermore, held Christian beliefs. The British calculated the costs of their rule. The costs in maintaining colonies were excessive. In addition, Gandhi's resistance, although non-violent, wasn't particularly moderate either. As a result, the British empire had no option but to terminate its colonial rule. Similarly, Martin Luther King, who carried forward Gandhi's ideas, took a stand against the white government of the United States of America - a country founded in the spirit of democracy and constitutionalism, with a tradition of liberating black slaves.

On the other hand, the Chinese communist regime embraces neither the spirit of democracy nor constitutionalism. It has no religious beliefs, nor does it care about the costs of ruling over Tibet. In the past, the Chinese

Communist Party ‘supported Tibet’ for political and territorial reasons, but it now wantonly exploits and plunders Tibet’s minerals and natural resources, and its investment has already resulted in huge benefits and returns. Thus, at present, regardless of how one looks at it there is no way that the Communist regime will easily let Tibetans be free. Gandhi’s philosophy on non-violent resistance has not yet produced any notable results in China.

So what should Tibetans who are longing for freedom do? It is just as a Tibetan who left a comment on Woesser’s blog said, ‘Peaceful demonstrations - cruel suppression! Sit-in hunger strikes-cruel sup-pression! Terrorist attacks - our values don’t allow it! Petitioning and defending rights by legal means-not allowed even in the ethnic Han lands, let alone in Tibetan lands!’

In the past, Jews also faced an impasse like the Tibetans do today. Somebody asked Gandhi in 1938, “What should German Jews do?” Gandhi’s suggestion left everyone dumbstruck. He said that German Jews ought to commit collective suicide, which “will arouse the world and the people of Germany to Hitler’s violence.”⁷ After the war, Gandhi explained: The Jews would have been killed anyway, so why not die a bit more heroically?⁸

Even if a number of Jews had committed suicide and died, it would not have brought the Nazis around to showing mercy and kindness. In the end it was the Allied Forces’ artillery that rescued the Jews.

In his book *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, American Professor Gene Sharp sums up 198 methods of non-violent action, but self-immolation is not among them. This is not only because self-immolation is an act of violence directed at oneself, it is also a road of no return - once dead, a person cannot be reborn. Martin Luther King once called out to his black compatriots to “fill up the jails!” Those who go to jail can be released. Those who go on hunger strike can start eating again. But those who self-immolate do not have a second chance.

So, if the Tibetans stop self-immolating, what can they do to save their own nation? I think that there is a lot they can do. For instance, they can think of every possible way to protect Tibetan culture and language, they can keep on fighting despite all the setbacks to establish a civic society, they can safeguard Tibet’s geographic and human environment, they can defend

the rights of Tibetan people. They can push for village autonomy, launch grass-roots elections, etc. At the same time, they can continue to adopt other feasible ways of resistance and struggle together with the ethnic Han Chinese who are fighting for democracy and freedom. In short, only if all the Tibetans bravely remain alive is there a hope for Tibet.

1 Translator's note: Tsering Woesser; born in 1966, is a famous Tibetan activist, blogger, poet and essayist. She lives in Beijing, effectively under house arrest, and writes in Chinese.

2 Translator's note: Hu Jintao was the paramount leader of China between 2002 and 2012. He held the offices of General Secretary of the Communist Party, President of the People's Republic, and Chairman of the Central Military Commission. But he is reviled by Tibetan people as the 'Butcher of Lhasa'. Appointed the Party Regional Committee Secretary of the Tibetan Autonomous Region and the Political Commissar of the People's Liberation Army stationed in Tibet in 1988, he used tanks and armoured vehicles to crush the Tibetan Uprising in Lhasa in March 1989. Three months later, the same 'Lhasa Model' was used to crush protests on Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

3 Translator's note: I am quoting directly from the English language letter. The Chinese language quote in this text is slightly different. It does not mention 'resentment.' It appears that the Chinese translation of the letter available to Chinese public is not entirely true to the original.

4 Translator's note: This is a reference to the Resolution S. Res. 356, Agreed to at the 112 Congress, 2d Session, on 29 March, 2012.

5 Translator's note: The second annual seminar on Tibet, held by the European Parliament on 30 March 2012, entitled Tibet in Flames: the unfolding personal and collective tragedy of the Tibetan people.'

6 Translator's note: 60 Japanese Parliamentarians from five political parties passed the resolution on 4 April 2012, expressing their grave concern over tragic self-immolations of Tibetans and urging the Chinese government to end its repressive policies against Tibetans.

7 Translator's note: This quote is taken from George Orwell's Reflections on Gandhi, 'which misquotes an interview Gandhi gave after the war to his biographer, Louis Fischer; reported in his The Life of Mahatma Gandhi (1950).

8 Translator's note: The quote in Orwell reads: According to Mr. Fischer, Gandhi's view was that the German Jews ought to commit collective suicide, which... "would have aroused the world and the people of Germany to Hitler's violence." After the war he justified himself: the Jews had been killed anyway, and might as well have died significantly.

ZHO WEIQUN'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELF-IMMOLATIONS

Chen Pokong³

10 January 2012

The high frequency of protest self-immolations occurring among the Tibetans who barely number a few million is mind-blowing! It immediately blows into the open the bitter experiences of Tibetan regions that saw the 'emancipation of serfs and liberation.' In order to cover up the disgrace, the communist propaganda machine has pulled out the same old stuff: Shifting the blame onto the Dalai Lama, 'condemning the Dalai Lama clique for deliberately inciting Tibetan monks to self-immolate.' The real instigators, the real culprits, however, are the very communist authorities themselves.

Simply put, the biggest number of self-immolations have occurred at the Ngaba Kirti Gompa monastery,¹ which is one of the most famous monasteries in Tibetan history and suffered malicious destruction at the hands of Chinese communists around 1958. Its 1,500 monks were defrocked and forced to return to secular life, its temples and shrines were smashed and turned to wasteland. It was only restored and rebuilt in 1980.

In recent years, Chinese communist authorities have been tightly controlling Tibetan monasteries, and their grip on the Kirti Gompa has been particularly severe; they have forbidden the study of Buddhist teachings, forbidden the holding of religious assembly, forbidden the establishment of a library. If their rules were not followed, they have besieged it with massive military force at the slightest pre-text, cutting off its supply of food, water and electricity. They have dispatched work teams to conduct the so-called 'patriotic education' of the monks, which in reality is forced brainwashing. And all the while, the monks have been going 'missing' in the middle of the night, their whereabouts unknown ever since.

This tyrannical abuse by the Chinese communist authorities has, step-by-step, made the monks sink into despair, giving rise to a quick succession of self-immolations. Not only has Zhongnanhai² not reflected on its own

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shortcomings, it falsely points a finger, accusing that ‘the Dalai Lama encourages self-immolations, which is tantamount to encouraging covert violence and terrorism.’ And yet it is blatantly clear that it is the conduct of the Chinese communist authorities that amounts to State violence and State terrorism, pure and simple, and not just in name!

The spokesperson of the Chinese Communist Party falsely claims that, “self-immolations violate the fundamental Buddhist precept to be compassionate to all and not destroy life.” That the tyrannical Chinese Communist Party would go so far as to prattle about compassion’ makes me want to both laugh and cry, because I can categorically assert that even if many more Tibetans self-immolate, the hard-hearted Chinese communist clique will remain aloof and indifferent. Or, as the ringleader of the ultra-left faction of the Chinese Communist Party, the Vice-Director of its United Front Work Department, Zhu Weiqun, put it: “The principles and policies of Chinese government’s work in Tibet will not change in any way.” Also, we must “...abandon our fantasy about the Dalai Lama and prepare for a long battle.”

What fantasy? Could it be the fantasy that the Dalai Lama will bow before the corrupt regime, that he will speak in the defence of the Chinese Communist Party’s history of murder, that he will turn a blind eye to the suffering of both the Han Chinese and the Tibetan people? If this is the kind of fantasy people like Zhu Weiqun have in mind, of course they should abandon it. They should have completely abandoned it a long time ago. If Zhu Weiqun and Communist Party members are dead-set on going to hell, do they really want others, too, to go along?

Not long ago, in Europe, this same excessive left-winger Zhu Weiqun also preposterously declared that the Dalai Lama “...wants to turn Tibetan Buddhism into a religion of suicide, religion of self-immolation.” Though, of course, this fabricated accusation merits no refute, its ignorance and arrogance were a massive international blunder.

Namely, rather conveniently, in the world of the Han Chinese there is both a secular belief in ‘dying for a just cause’ and a Buddhist precedent of ‘burning the body as the offering to the Buddha.’ So long as they stem from good intentions and serve noble convictions, such actions are seen as righteous acts. During the Cultural Revolution, the Famen Temple in Xian was attacked and destroyed by Mao Zedong’s Red Guards. Its 71-year-old abbot, Master Liangqing, who bravely blocked them, was

brutally beaten. As he set himself on fire soon after to sacrifice himself for his faith, the frightened Red Guards fled in a stampede, leaving Famen Temple's underground palace unexcavated. As a result, the Buddha's finger-bone relic was saved from damage. In 1997, on the 30th anniversary of Master Liangqing's self-immolation, Famen Temple erected a pagoda in his memory. This pagoda was constructed, and Master Liangqing commemorated, with at least the tacit consent of the Chinese communist authorities. So where is this bullshit regarding Tibetan self-immolations coming from? It is a double standard made worse the more they try to hide it.

When it comes to dying and killing, those have always been 'glorious achievements' of the Communist Party. Not to mention how many Han Chinese and Tibetans were massacred by the Chinese Communist Party in 1962 (under Chinese Communist rule) or in 1990 (as published by the Chinese Communist Party)? Let's just say that in the handling of protest self-immolations, not only has the priority of the Chinese Communist Party not been to save lives, but rather in fact to destroy them. In February 2009, when a young Tibetan monk by the name of Tapey set himself on fire in the middle of a street, the Chinese communist armed police fired three shots at him. After he fell to the ground wounded, then only the police tried to put out the flames.

In March 2011, after a young Tibetan monk by the name of Phuntsog self-immolated, Chinese communist authorities imprisoned three of his paternal uncles and aunts and condemned them to heavy sentences of 13, 11, and 10 years respectively. The Chinese Communist Party, with its blind faith in massacre and suppression, thinks that it can frighten the Tibetans by opening fire on them and throwing them in prison, and that it can prevent them from self-immolating. But it has in fact triggered wave-upon-wave of ever more Tibetan self-immolations.

The slogans that self-immolating Tibetans shout include "Tibetan Independence," "Free Tibet," and "Let the Dalai Lama Return Home." But the Chinese communist media only report the first two slogans, and conceal the third one. What is Zhongnanhai afraid of, after all? Is it really that difficult for the Chinese Communist authorities of the self-described 'towering,' 'formidable,' 'magnificent power' to 'let the Dalai Lama return home'?

Since Zhongnanhai claims that 'Tibet is part of China,' let me ask: Are

Tibetans our compatriots or not? Would it be possible to treat them like our countrymen? And let me also ask: Are the Dalai Lama and the exiled Tibetans our compatriots or not, and would it be possible to welcome them back as our countrymen?

If they aren't and if it is not possible, what is the basis for Zhongnanhai, which alienates the people of Tibet and China, to claim that 'Tibet is an inalienable part of China?' Could it be that they use the vast territory of Tibet, which on the map makes up one quarter of the domain of the People's Republic of China, to prop up their 'major power' façade?

Zhongnanhai's anxieties viz-à-viz the Dalai Lama are many and heavy. One of them has been the long-lasting demonization of Tibetan history by the Chinese communists, who call it 'backward' and 'barbarous' in order to cover up the backwardness and barbarity of Chinese communist rule itself. Faced with deepening democratic reforms that the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan community in exile have sustained for several decades, Zhongnanhai is at a loss, unable to respond.

In their hearts, Chinese communists in power wish that the present Central Tibetan Administration were a bit more backward, that it were at least a bit more backward than the Chinese communists, so that Zhongnanhai could save face and occupy the high ground. Chinese communist authorities refuse to negotiate with the Dalai Lama because they lack the confidence to confront his spirituality with their own atheism, and to confront his great virtue with their own loss of moral principles. They refuse dialogue with the Central Tibetan Administration because they cannot deal with the embarrassment of confronting democracy with their own dictatorship and its civility with their own barbarism.

Translator's note: Ngaba Kirti Gompa (sometimes referred to as Gerdeng Monastery), properly known as Kirti Kalari Gon Tashi Lhundrub, is located on the Tibetan Plateau, on the northwestern edge of Ngaba City, within the Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province in China.

Translator's note: Zhongnanhai is an imperial garden adjacent to the Forbidden City in central Beijing, which serves as headquarters for the Communist Party of China and the State Council of the People's Republic of China. The term Zhongnanhai is closely linked with the central government and senior Communist Party officials, and is often used as a metonym for the Chinese leadership.

Translator's note: Zhu Weiqun is a politician in the People's Republic of China. He currently serves as the executive vice director of the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and is a current member of its 17th Central Committee.

BLOODRED FIRE OF FREEDOM IN THE LAND OF SNOW

Xia Ming⁴

4 February 2012

During the past three years (from February 2009 to 4 February 2012) there have already been more than 20 cases of Tibetan self-immolation within China's borders. Seven cases were clustered just within the first five weeks of 2012. All of them involved Tibetan Buddhist monks, nuns, or former monks. Reportedly, there was also a herdsman among the three people who recently self-immolated in Sertar County, in the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

I am afraid that we cannot find another comparable example in our memory, in any country or any religious denomination, when so many incidents of self-immolation were concentrated in such a short period of time. Furthermore, there has been no indication whatsoever that the appeals behind these self-immolation events have received a timely response and satisfactory solution from the Chinese government. Nor is there any reason to believe that their ultimate root-cause has been eliminated. As a result, as we face such vital events that touch upon the sanctity of life, it is urgent that we show concern and strive to find a way to resolve it.

What is unfortunate is that all the principal Western nations have fallen into a deep global economic crisis and so the Tibetan self-immolations have failed to receive sufficient attention. This negligence has allowed the Chinese government to completely escape the scrutiny of international public opinion, and to thus ignore the appeals of those who self-immolate, of those who die, and of the community they speak for while still alive.

The current Prime Minister of the Central Tibetan Administration, Dr. Lobsang Sangay, told this writer 12 years ago, "Our Tibetan region has no gasoline. Even our air is thin. All we have are the Lamas.

That's why the Western world is completely indifferent to us." Today, as one after another monk and nun burn on the snow-covered plateau, they should be giving us shocks. And on a basic human level, this kind of shock-

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-induced attention should by far surpass that which gasoline - so tensely eyeballed by mankind worldwide - attracts, because the burning of gasoline drives our motor vehicles and our economy, while the burning of life, especially the burning of monks and nuns who are 'in life calm and beautiful like autumn leaves, in death dazzling like summer flowers,' sings our conscience. This ought to be driving the progress of human society.

To that end, I want to discuss and elucidate the few following topics: What is the larger international and domestic background of Tibetan self-immolations? What are the pleas and messages conveyed by Tibetan self-immolators? What complex reasons are causing Tibetans, particularly monks, to so frequently self-immolate? How do violence, suicide, and self-immolation relate to the teachings of Buddha-Dharma in Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism? Finally, where is the key to solving the self-immolation problem?

A Crisis for Tibet and Tibetans

On the snow-covered Tibetan Plateau, the blood of Tibetans is burning! Tibetans are resisting with their lives! This is happening because the people nurtured by Tibetan land and the culture, religion, national character, and lifestyle they rely on for existence are facing extinction.

The Tibetan Plateau's harsh and unique geography, climate, and its farming and herding environment have fostered a uniquely Tibetan way of life. Because of their unique way of life, and because of their devout Buddhist beliefs in particular, the Tibetans are the best guardians of the roof of the world. But when, after World War II, the majority of nations and nationalities in the world got new opportunities for historical development, the Tibetans, who had long been converts to Buddhism and had forsaken military achievements, were forced to confront the political party that was the greatest destroyer of Buddhism in the world, and the violent military machinery that grew from its atheist armed forces.

According to the Dalai Lama's description in his memoir, in 1955 Mao Zedong told him, "Religion is poison. Firstly, it reduces the population, because monks and nuns must stay celibate, and secondly it neglects material progress." Independent scholar Li Jianglin's research shows that from the 1950s to the beginning of the 1960s Chinese communist troops continuously conducted a 'secret war' against Tibetan regions (the Tibet

Autonomous Region, and the areas of Sichuan and Qinghai inhabited by Tibetans). After that, the senior military official who had been in charge of ‘putting down the rebellion’ in Tibet became its chief administrator. Thus, from the very beginning, Tibet’s governing structure was set up under the model of two labels – ‘military area’ and ‘working committee’ - for one and the same team. For the past 60 years, the Chinese government has been exercising ‘military government’ control over Tibetan regions.

Government officials intentionally cover up or downplay the calamities suffered by Tibetan regions during the Cultural Revolution. But contrary to the official history account, the photographs that Tibetan author Tsering Woesser’s father, Tsering Dorje, took and that were published with her commentary in her book entitled *Forbidden Memory*¹ reconstruct the catastrophe experienced by Tibetan culture and Tibetan people during the Cultural Revolution. Woesser writes, “In 1950, Mao Zedong dispatched military troops to enter Tibet, and ever since the army has been the only force used to control Tibet. Even during the period assessed as the ‘Ten-Year Catastrophe’ by the Chinese Communist Party, the army was still firmly in control of entire Tibet.” The ‘military control’ over Tibet ‘has never been relaxed’ and it exists to this very day. In the past five years the system of ‘military control’ has even been strengthened, to the extent that it has penetrated deeply into the Tibetan countryside, where it directly controls monasteries and arrests monks.

In March 1980, the year after the Chinese Communist Party implemented the new policy of Reform and Opening Up, the CCP Central Committee convened the First Work Forum on Tibet. In May, the General Secretary of the CCP Central Committee, Hu Yaobang, and Wan Li, Secretary of the CC Secretariat and Vice-Premier of the State Council, led the Central Committee Working Group to inspect and provide guidance to various regions of Tibet. Following the rehabilitation of numerous ‘unjust, sham, and fabricated cases’ and the adjustment of its ultra-leftist policies, the central government increased financial assistance to Tibet and investment in its economy, it rebuilt religious temples and monasteries and restored religious life, began contacts with the representatives of the exiled Dalai Lama, and allowed a number of exiled Tibetans to return home to visit their families.

At the beginning of the 1980s, Tibet entered a phase of relatively smooth and steady development. During this time, as it was in the process of seeking Western technology and capital in support of economic development,

the Chinese government made certain concessions to the international community and progressive improvements were thus the main trend. Circumstances in the Tibetan Region reflected this general major trend of China's reform. But at the end of the 1980s, especially from 1987 to 1989, the limitations of Chinese political liberalization became apparent and collided with the growing expectations (particularly in the area of human rights and liberties) of China's populace (including ethnic Tibetans). Peaceful protest marches took place everywhere, from China's hinterland and coastal areas (the student unrest in Hefei, Beijing, and Shanghai, for instance) to the snow-covered plateau.

As the internal struggle within the Chinese Communist Party intensified, the reformist faction (the liberals) gradually lost power to the hardliners (the conservative faction). The policies of the Chinese Communist Party gradually became more unyielding and conservative. Under the general policy of control and suppression of dissent, Beijing was relatively more patient and a bit more restrained when dealing with the Han Chinese, but the attitude 'different ethnic kind, different heart and mind,' the subjective idea of 'hostile foreign powers,' and the influence of Greater Han nationalism made it even easier for the Communist Party ruling class to elevate ethnic issues to the level of 'territorial integrity and sovereignty,' as well as national security,' and to readily deploy military troops and armed police against the Tibetans at the slightest pretext using violent repression.

The first instances of firing to put down peaceful protests - causing bloodshed in China's Reform and Opening Up era of the 1980s - thus occurred in Tibet in 1987 and 1989. The Martial Law declared in Lhasa in March 1989 (which lasted 14 months) was the direct implementation of the decision made by Hu Jintao, who was at the time the Party-Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Later, the Third Work Forum on Tibet held in 1994 continued to stress control and suppression in its work in Tibet. In 1996, the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party issued a public notice prohibiting the hanging of the Dalai Lama's portraits.

In 2008, large-scale protests once again erupted in Tibet. It has now been 25 years since Chinese communist authorities adopted military force and wide-ranging suppression to deal with protests emanating from Tibet. But the results of military suppression are evermore lacking, the costs of administering the Tibetan region are evermore growing, and Tibetans' resentment and resistance is accelerating at an increasing pace. Not only

have the protests in the Tibetan region during the past five years never stopped, they have even spread to the bordering Sino-Tibetan areas and cities in China's interior (such as Xian and Chengdu). Moreover, the crisis is escalating. From the Chinese government's point of view, it has been caught in a vicious cycle, 'by using force to maintain social stability, the more pressure it applies, the more unrest it creates.'

It should be pointed out that the source of the catastrophe faced by Tibetan people is centred on the management system of 'ruling technocrats well known for their vigilance.' Most representative among them are Hu Jintao, who was promoted to General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party after he returned to Beijing from Tibet, and Zhou Yongkang, who was promoted from Communist Party Secretary of Sichuan Province to membership in the Politburo Standing Committee, where he was in charge of political and legal work. Reports of Hu Jintao wearing a helmet and personally overseeing the streets of Lhasa, as well as taking part in the 1989 suppression, have been widely circulated abroad. There is no need to write more about his rigidity in religious and cultural matters, nor about his iron-fist control.

But I do have to say something about Zhou Yongkang. The author who goes by the name Moli writes, "Zhou Yongkang won 'universal acclaim' for his persecution of Tibetans in Sichuan's Tibetan regions. In the summer of 2001 several thousand Tibetan and Chinese monks and nuns at the Larung Gar Five Sciences Buddhist Academy in Sertar came under attack. Their dwellings were forcibly torn down, but before they were expelled the authorities demanded that the lamas sign a declaration denouncing the Dalai Lama. Forcing the tattered-robed lamas and nuns into vagrancy became one of Zhou Yon-gkang's 'political achievements.' " Moli also wrote that when Zhou Yongkang, who had just taken up his post two months earlier, met the peasant representatives from Sichuan to the National People's Congress in March 2000, he told them that "he had just inspected the Kardze Autonomous Tibetan Region, and he didn't understand why the Tibetans showed so little interest in this life, but were so preoccupied with the next life. He was opposed to Tibetan donations to monasteries." He said, "There are religious beliefs in the West too, but they don't give all their money to churches, do they?"

In a sense, since the satisfaction of spiritual needs is so important to Tibetans, cutting them off from the Three Treasures of Buddhism (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha) is tantamount to the cultural and

biological annihilation of Tibetan people. If the ethnic Han people, for whom 'Food is God' and who worship eating, could give it some thought, imagine that a descendent of Genghis Khan (most of them are probably Muslim) one day suddenly came back to China's central plains, and this new ruler deprived the Han Chinese of pork; what would be the cultural identifier of the Han Chinese? We have to understand that no delicacy can replace the spiritual value of the 'Three Treasures?' Obviously, to make the Tibetans forget the next life and only focus on this life means depriving them of their essence, and the modernization that is guided entirely by atheism and materialism can turn into a 'Tibetan tumour'

If the Tibetans lack autonomy and power of self-determination to control and decide their own national destiny, if Tibet continues to lack the endogenous, organic driving force in its development, it will be hard to break away from the 'sky burial' destiny. Hu Jintao and Zhou Yongkang have displayed a complete ignorance of religion and spiritual beliefs. It is because of this that their attempt to find a way out of the Tibetan crisis is hopeless. Moreover, if such a 'great modernization' is pursued by the violent military machine, what it leads to is not only the lack of religious freedom and disrespect for human rights, but to a total crisis for Tibet and the Tibetan nation.

Tibetans Divided by Soul and Land

The departure of the Dalai Lama in 1959 marked the failure of the first attempt at a 'one country, two systems' policy that the Chinese Communist Party tried to implement in Tibet. It was also a major root-cause of the later Tibetan problem. The reason for such an outcome was not merely that the Dalai Lama left with members of his own family; the senior monks and spiritual leaders of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and the Bon religion all escaped as well, and took with them the soul of Tibet. Ever since, the Tibetans who live in the foothills on the two sides of the Himalayas have been leading lives of divided 'soul' and 'land': Those who escaped from their homeland and found temporary residence on Buddhist soil have gained a home of spiritual freedom but lost their ancestral, native country; for those who stayed behind to take care of the homeland it is hard to be spiritually free at home.

Wang Lixiong has made the following observation: "Beijing equates human rights with 'rights of existence.' When it treats 'economic development' as its ethnic policy, although the standard of living indices

and economic indicators show considerable improvement, what it faces is still greater dissatisfaction. Material things are not the stuff of hearts and minds. And you can't necessarily buy the hearts and minds with material things." To Tibetans, the place where the hearts and minds are at home is outside Tibet; "the Dalai Lama is like a father or mother, but even more than the father and mother." This explains why the Tibetans have been self-immolating in Tibet, but also why some have self-immolated outside Tibet (for instance, in New Delhi and Nepal) - because for 60 years the Tibetans on both sides of the Himalayas have been longing to be restored as one family on Tibetan soil.

Not only the Dalai Lama, the highest spiritual leader of all Tibetan Buddhism, is in exile overseas. The 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, 2 who had been confirmed and nurtured by the Chinese communist authorities, escaped from Tibet on the eve of the third millennium and took up residence near Dharamshala.³ One could say that the real 'soft power' of the Tibetan nation today, except for the few hundred Tibetans who live outside the Tibetan regions controlled by Chinese communist authorities, lies abroad. First of all, the Dalai Lama is the trademark and calling card of Tibetan civilization. On the global international stage, the Dalai Lamas recognition quotient is probably on par with that of American President Obama, the leader of the world's militarily most powerful nation. And his popularity in the West exceeds even that of the Pope, the head of the West's own Catholic church. Wang Lixiong has once written: "Since the Dalai Lama is practically an unrivalled symbol of Tibetan exile, the extent to which the Tibetan Problem is internationalized is in fact the extent of the Dalai Lama's international reach."

Furthermore, in the wake of the extensive devastation and contamination of Buddhist doctrine in the Han Chinese lands, the exiled Tibetans and their monks who have been spreading across the globe have become the guardians and the purist upholders of the Nalanda⁴ Buddhist tradition. They have established centres for research, translation, and discussion of Buddhist scriptures in Dharamshala, the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile, and several locations in southern India, as well as centres that promote Buddhism in various parts of the world. Post-modernism and a return to mysticism in the West are in a mutual embrace and fusion with globalized Tibetan Buddhism.

When the Chinese communist authorities forced the Dalai Lama into exile, they never anticipated that through him, Buddhism would exert such

an extensive and profound influence on everyday life in the West. This turned out to be the fortunate thing amid misfortune. In the future, when the Han Chinese homeland returns to the orthodox teachings, breaks away from social moral bankruptcy, and gets rid of the present vulgar trends in domestic Buddhism, it will be uncontaminated Tibetan Buddhism - which has been continuously distilled in Buddha's homeland - that will yet become the fountainhead of China's moral revival.

Thirdly, the democratization and secularization of the government pursued by the Tibetan community in exile has already attained remarkable results. The Dalai Lama once attended the National People's Congress in Beijing as 'the youngest national leader' in the capacity of a vice-chairman of its Standing Committee. On a visit to India, Prime Minister Nehru accompanied him on a tour of the Indian Parliament. Comparing the two different legislative assemblies convinced the Dalai Lama of the superiority of democracy. After he started his life in exile in 1959, the Dalai Lama proposed to establish a 'democratic government that combines politics and religion.' The Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies (CTPD), with elected members, was established the following year.

One provision of the Draft Constitution promulgated by the Government-in-Exile in 1961, proposed that 'in accordance with the constitution and the statutes of the legislative assembly,' should the need arise, the Dalai Lama could be removed from his post.'

Although this clause met with resistance among the laymen and was never adopted, it shows that from the very beginning of establishing a government in India, the Dalai Lama consciously promoted 'democratization' and 'secularization.' Since 2001, the Kalon Tripa, the Prime Minister of the Central Tibetan Administration, is chosen, through direct elections by Tibetans in exile. The Dalai Lama gradually gave up his power to intervene in the affairs of the parliament and the government, and withdrew into semi-retirement. In 2011, he announced his complete retirement from politics.

Fourth, the new government cabinet is a complete reflection of the globalization, youthification, diversification, and secularization trend. Dr. Lobsang Sangay, who was elected Prime Minister (Kalon Tripa) of the Central Tibetan Administration in the general election held in 2011, was 45 when he assumed the post. He received an elite education in law at the University of Delhi in India and Harvard University in the United States,

and obtained a Doctorate of Jurisprudence. The average age of the six Cabinet members was only 40-50 when appointed, and the youngest of them, the Minister for Health, was only 38. Two of the Cabinet members are women (the 46-year-old Minister for Information and International Relations, and the 48-year-old Minister for Home); both are secular laywomen who have returned from North America, having received first-rate educations in India and North America. Most of the Cabinet members, Parliament members, and government administrative staff are second-generation Tibetans born abroad. At the same time, they reflect the exiled Tibetan community's spirit of dedication and commitment to their nation.

Fifth, the international pro-Tibetan civil society has become globalized and has made a significant contribution to the Tibetan cause. For the past few years in particular, while the confidence of the Dalai Lama in the Chinese government has continued to decline, the number of Chinese people, both at home and abroad, who are drawn to come together at his side has continued to grow. For instance, in late 2011, when the Dalai Lama bestowed the sacred Kalachakra Initiation in India's Buddhist holy town of Bodh Gaya, thousands of Mainland Han Chinese were drawn to attend. His confidence in Chinese people has been growing, because many among them have come to realize that the moral revival and democratic transformation of the Chinese nation can positively interact with the deliverance and liberation of the Tibetan nation.

The Origin of Monk Suicides by Self-Immolation

One could say that the Chinese government's perverse policy of violence against Tibet during the last 25 years stands in sharp contrast to the rapid secularization and democratic transformation of the Tibetan community in exile. It has further ripped apart the Tibetan communal soul from its body, spiritual home from ancestral homeland, the supreme spiritual leader from the believers, resulting in a more concealed de facto genocide. It is in this kind of context that torment (emotional or psychological) has become the normal state in the life of every Tibetan.

In Buddhist teaching, the Buddha founded Buddhism after he first confronted the 'four sufferings:' birth, aging, sickness, and death. To Buddhist monks, Buddhism is the benevolent way of eliminating all suffering. The Dhammapada explicitly teaches: 'All living things fear death,' and 'Life is dear to all living things. You should think of others as yourself, and neither kill nor allow killing.' A fundamental objective of

Buddhism is thus to stop all killing, and Theravada Buddhism is explicitly opposed to suicide. So why have the Buddhist disciples in Tibetan regions, who have left their homes to become monks and nuns, become agents of continuous self-immolations? What is the reason for the monks - with commitments to deliver all living creatures from suffering - to turn the suffering of death into a strategy? If death has become a strategy, what is the higher value that it serves? What factors are threatening this higher value, so that the monks have to grapple with death to protect it?

Let us for a moment analyse the testament of Sopa Rinpoche (Rinpoche being what we call in Chinese a 'Living Buddha'), who self-immolated in Darlag county, Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, on 8 January 2012. The barely 42-year-old Sopa Rinpoche was wearing his yellow robe when he ignited gasoline to set himself on fire. In the recording that he made before his self-sacrifice, he said: "My self-sacrifice is not to display my own greatness. With all sincerity, I repent for violating the Samaya precepts and for all the bad karma; particularly for violating the secret tantric commitment against abusing and sacrificing one's own body, I hereby devoutly repent.

"In addition, I vow my wish for all the beings in the Dharma realm, even the smallest ones like the lice, to die without fear and not to suffer any pain, to be reborn at the side of the Buddha of Infinite Light and obtain the state of perfect enlightenment. I thus wish to make the offering of my own life and my body. I turn my life and body into a manja offering to all the senior monks led by the tulku, His Holiness the Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, so that they may live long.

"I am taking this action by no means out of a selfish desire to seek fame, respect or love. Like the Buddha who in his time gave his body to feed a hungry tigress, I am sacrificing my life, with a pure mind and with sincere devotion, for Truth and Freedom. The other Tibetan fellow martyrs have done the same as myself.

"Oh! My many Vajrayana friends and believers from various regions, you must unite and work together for the future freedom of Tibetans in the Land of Snow, for the Tibetan lands to truly become our own homeland. For the dawn of such a new era you must all unite together and strive for this common goal. This was also the wish of all the heroes who sacrificed their precious lives. You must therefore renounce all the behaviour that does not benefit this goal, such as the quarrelling among those who are

fighting each other over grassy knolls.

“Finally, to my spiritual friends at home and abroad: Please, do not be sad. Please, pray for our benevolent and wise spiritual teachers, until enlightenment, when it will be as if we had never parted. And I ask of the old people and the common folks who rely on me to also make this vow: Whether in merriment or suffering, in good times or bad, when happy or sad, we must rely on our Supreme Teacher and the Three Jewels, because there is nothing we can rely on but the Three Jewels. Please, do not forget this! Tashi Delek!”

From the above excerpts from his testament, we can see several layers of meaning. First, Sopa Rinpoche followed the instructions in the Tibetan Book of the Dead on how to prepare oneself before death by avoiding greed, anger and fear, and by quieting the mind. At the same time, he visualized the Supreme Spiritual Teacher and offered his prayers for him. Second, he was candid about his violation of the religious precepts against harming one’s body and self-sacrifice, and repented it. Third, he offered prayers for the Supreme Spiritual Teacher, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and all beings, particularly his Tibetan brothers and sisters, wishing long life to the former, and peace and freedom to the latter. Fourth, he offered prayers for all the Tibetan heroes who sacrificed their precious lives before him, because according to the Tibetan Book of the Dead, prayers offered for the deceased within 49 days can help their smooth transition into the next life. Fifth, Sopa Rinpoche pointed out that the ‘Three Jewels’ (the Buddha, the Supreme Spiritual Teacher; the Dharma, the doctrine; and the Sangha, the Buddhist brotherhood) are the only things the Tibetans can ‘rely on.’ Sixth, he explicitly stated that his self-immolation was ‘a sacrifice of life for Truth and Freedom,’ and that there were no personal desires he wanted to fulfil. The main point here is to safeguard the purity and endurance of the Dharma, and the premise for achieving that is the freedom of Tibetans in the Land of Snow. Seventh, Sopa Rinpoche uses the example of the Buddha bravely giving his body to a hungry tigress to prove that in order to practice, confirm, and defend the fundamental Dharma of compassion, the corporeal body can be discarded. Eighth, the ‘unspoken accomplishment’ here is that the testament never says a word about the Chinese government, the military invasion of monasteries, the suppression of monks, etc.

From the above testament we can see that the self-immolating monks are fully aware that they are violating a religious precept but are still ready to

go through fire and high water, because the choice for Tibetans is no longer between good and bad, but between bad and worse.

So, is the ‘bad choice’ of self-immolation made by Sopa Rinpoche and the other self-sacrificing monks a way to avoid an even worse choice? The former is the monks’ abuse of their own bodies, the later the obliteration of the ‘Three Jewels’ and the future of Tibetans in the Land of Snow.

What is the justification for saying that the Three Jewels are currently being obliterated on the snow-covered plateau? Let me sum it up briefly in the following three points. First, the atheist and materialist ideology pursued by China has systemically wrecked and destroyed the belief systems in China and Tibet. Jiang Zemin’s brutal suppression of Falun Gong, the harassment of and crackdown on underground churches, the handling of the so-called ‘evil cults’ by criminalizing them, and the indiscriminate killing of Tibetans and Uighurs are all clear cases in point.

While the initiative to bring ‘one million leader portraits’ (of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao) to villages and temples and install work groups in monasteries to apply the policy of the ‘Nine Haves’ (namely, to have portraits of the four leaders, to have the national flag, to have roads, to have water, to have electricity, to have radio and television, to have films, to have a library, to have the People’s Daily and the Tibet Daily newspapers) was implemented by the CCP Committee for Tibet during Lunar New Year. At the very same time displaying portraits of the Dalai Lama as strictly forbidden. Ideologically speaking, this was an insult to Tibetan beliefs at the highest level aiming to siege-and-destroy.

Second, the Chinese government’s meddling in reincarnation by using fraudulent methods to select tulku reincarnations behind closed doors, and forcing monks and believers to renounce and dishonour their own spiritual teachers, is destroying the fundamental doctrines of Tibetan Buddhism, its independence and purity. Chadrel Rinpoche, the abbot of Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse - which has been the traditional seat of successive Panchen Lamas - who was heading the committee in charge of finding the reincarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama, was sentenced to a six-year prison term by the Chinese government for leaking secrets and later died an unnatural death: (According to the people at his side, he was poisoned.)

The former abbot of Kumbum Monastery in Qinghai, and former Deputy Chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association, Arjia Tulku, after his

escape from China revealed how the Chinese Communist authorities used fraud during the Golden Urn ceremony held to choose the Panchen Lama's reincarnation by drawing lots: they stuffed cotton inside the brocade cover of one of the ivory sticks bearing candidates' names, so that it stood higher than the other sticks, thus enabling the smooth selection of the candidate they had already chosen behind closed doors. The Chinese government took into custody Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the boy who was endorsed by the Dalai Lama as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama.

To this day it is not clear if he is dead or alive, having been turned into the world's youngest political prisoner. At present, the Chinese government is once again preparing to make an issue over the future reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.

Third, in the conclusion of his book *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, where he discusses the relationship between the Communist Party's political power and traditional religion, Joseph Levenson writes that while on the surface some temples and sacred objects have been preserved, their function is not intended to be religious. He writes: "Religious objects and religious people, both were left to be looked at; 'do not touch the icons,' seemed figuratively extended to do not feed the worshippers'. And do not touch the icons seems an extension, not a reversal, of revolutionary iconoclasm." In other words, although we see the Chinese government restoring and rebuilding some monasteries, because it has dispatched several thousand work groups to establish their presence in the monasteries and replace Buddhist research and instruction with political studies and propaganda, because it arbitrarily expels uncooperative monks and mobilizes the monks to criticize and vilify their own Supreme Teachers (such as, in addition to the Dalai Lama, the 17th Karmapa, the former abbot of Kumbum Monastery, Arjia Tulku, etc.), it is essentially not allowing the monks to worship their own Supreme Teachers and not allowing the Supreme Teachers to bless their own worshippers.

If those who leave their homes to become monks have no way of promoting Buddha Dharma and delivering all living creatures from suffering, if the worshippers have no way of proclaiming allegiance to their Supreme Teachers and receiving their guidance, then one cannot talk about Tibetan Buddhism. If the monks want to do anything not permitted by the government, the government promptly dispatches troops to besiege and invade their monasteries. The physical destruction has been widely known, but the mental suffering of the monks and lay people who self-immolate by far surpasses physical pain, and that is the only reason why

Tibetans can peacefully accept the self-destructive act of self-immolation.

Self-Immolation Incidents and Value Judgments

If we understand the act of self-immolation in the above-mentioned context, self-immolations reveal four different levels. One, self-immolation is a kind of protest of the highest order, which does no harm to or endanger others. Its protest target is the 60-some-year-long failed rule of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet and its recent escalation in violent suppression. Two, the self-immolation of monks is a kind of martyrdom. It uses the setting of the physical body on fire to extol the greatness of the Dharma and to maintain its dignity. Three, on the personal level, when they self-immolate, the monks break away from this life of suffering and achieve perfect fulfilment. Four, from the self-immolations of monks we can also see that, having suffered both physical persecution and spiritual torment, only the heroes who have achieved the moment of perfect enlightenment can transcend the bodily pain. At the same time, having experienced the torment of spiritual suffering, they are able to achieve the sublime state of Nirvana, allowing the life energy to burn and blossom into immortal sparks. To the millions of Tibetans, their radiance will illuminate the snow-covered plateau.

An ethical question is involved here: Is self-immolation a destructive force? From the standpoint of individualist ethics, individual freedom includes the freedom to manage one's own body (privacy, euthanasia, suicide, etc. are good examples). But the individual freedom must also be curtailed by responsibility and duty. An individual's suicide could produce harmful effects on his or her family and children. But to a person who has left home, such as a monk or a nun, such family responsibility seems not to exist.

Some scholars interpret that in Buddhist doctrine suicide is permitted under certain circumstances, particularly when it comes to monks who have attained enlightenment. For instance, scholars are debating whether the Buddha's Nirvana was a kind of suicide, whether the Buddha's giving of his body to save the tigress was a kind of self-destructive act, and so on. In the Corresponding Discourses (also known as Samyutta-nikaya) of the Pali Canon, the suicide of the monk Channa is mentioned as 'being irreproachable.' In his book *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* the Indian philosopher S. Radhakrishnan writes, "The Buddha condemned suicide, but there were also some exceptions: Ah, Sariputra, if one gives

up a body and takes up another one, then I say that one is blame-worthy. But the monk Channa's suicide should not be blamed. If the sacrifice of one's flesh stems from a strong inner faith, and if its maintenance no longer has any benefit, or if it serves a higher public good, then it is indeed praise-worthy."

Of course, some scholars object to this view. They believe that the Buddha did not 'accept,' let alone 'encourage' suicide, but that he was merely eliminating some malicious interpretations of suicide and criticism piled on the person of the deceased. But then again, there are scholars who point out that Chapter 23 of the Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (also known as the Lotus Sutra) entitled 'The Former Deeds of the Bodhisattva Medicine King' contains an exposition on 'setting fire to one's body' to 'make an offering of one's own body to the Buddha,' and later, on 'burning one's arms to make an offering,' and they believe that these are the most respected and the highest of all acts of offering.

'Having made this offering, he arose from samadhi and thought to himself. I have made this offering to the Buddha by means of spiritual powers but is it not as good as making an offering of my body. He then swallowed many kinds of incense-sandalwood, kunduruka, turushka, prikka, aloes, and liquid-ambar gum. He also drank the essential oils of chambaka and other flowers. Having done so for a full 1,200 years, he anointed his body with fragrant oil, and before the Buddha of Pure and Bright Virtue Like the Sun and Moon, he wrapped his body in heavenly jewelled robes, poured fragrant oil over them, and using his powers of spiritual penetration and will, he ignited his body. The bright light shone everywhere, illuminating the worlds as numerous as the sands of eight billion Ganges. All the Buddhas in these worlds simultaneously praised him: 'Good! Good! Excellent man! This is true dedication! This is called a true Dharma offering to the One Thus Gone! Presenting every kind of material offering, such as flowers, perfumes, necklaces, burning incense, powdered incense, paste incense, celestial silks, banners and canopies, along with the incense of the sandalwood that grows by this shore of the sea, can never match this! If one were to offer his domain and cities, wife and children, he would still not match this! Excellent man! This is called the foremost offering! It is the most honoured and exalted of all the gifts, because it is an offering of the Dharma to the One Thus Gone.' Having thus spoken, they all fell silent. His body burned for twelve hundred years, after which time it at last burned itself out. After the Bodhisattva Gladly Seen by All Living Beings had made this Dharma offering and his life had come to an end, he was

reborn in the land of the Buddha of Pure and Bright Virtue Like the Sun and Moon. He was born suddenly by transformation, firmly seated in the lotus position, in the household of the King of Pure Virtue. He promptly spoke the following verse to his father:

‘Great King, you should now know:
Having passed through that place,
All at once, I attained the samadhi
Of the manifestation of all physical forms.
Diligently practicing Great Refinement
I cast aside the body that I loved.
As an offering to the World Honoured One,
In order to seek Supreme Wisdom.’

‘If anyone who has resolved to attain highest enlightenment can burn off the fingers of his hand or even a toe of his foot as an offering to a Buddha’s stupa, he will surpass the one who offers his domain and cities, wife and children, or the mountains, forests, rivers, and lakes, and all the precious treasures in the three-thousand-great-thousand realms.’

It is because of the wide circulation of the Lotus Sutra in Northern Buddhism that we, in the countries that practice Mahayana Buddhism, could experience the act of self-immolation by monks. Outside Tibetan regions, Master Liang Qing, the abbot of Famen Temple in Xian, burnt himself to death during the Cultural Revolution in order to protect Buddhist treasures from the vandalism of the ‘revolutionary little generals.’ In 1963, during the Vietnam War, there was also the Vietnamese Buddhist incident when Master Thich Qung D c set himself on fire. So it isn’t the case that Buddhism is completely intolerant of suicide and self-immolation. There is no moral stain at all attached to giving up one’s life for a just cause or in an act of protest, let alone in giving it as a Dharma-offering to the Buddha. The reputation of those who die as a result is thus not tainted.

Another topic, related to self-immolation, is whether Buddhist disciples cannot be involved in violence at all. In Lin Zhaozhen’s book *The Lama Killing: The Tragedy of Tibetan 40-Year Exile* there are many detailed accounts of historical events when the lamas who had pledged not to kill took off their robes and became fighters in order to save Tibet. In the book *Buddhism, War, and Nationalism: Chinese Monks in the Struggle against Japanese Aggressions, 1931-1945*, Xue Yu records the valiant history of monks from ethnic Han lands who took up arms en masse and joined the

forces of anti-Japanese resistance.

Therefore, both violence in a broad sense and self-immolation in a narrow sense can be accepted, and even considered heroic acts, if the actors' hearts are in the right place for the welfare of society at large, in the defense of the Three Jewels, or as an offering to the Buddha. As my friend, the poet Zhen An (who is also an American Doctor of Religion, specializing in Buddhism) said in his book *The Suicides Speak*: "Heroes have fallen\ for those unfinished lofty ideals\ Martyrs have died\ for that sacred calling... The heroism of embracing life\ The tragedy of embracing death\ Different courage\Different joy."

The Chinese government's official propaganda machine completely disregards the structural violence of the State and the military police massacres of peaceful monks in Buddhist temples. The government has not responded in good faith to resolve the religious and cultural demands of Tibetan people and the resulting Tibetan resistance. Rather, it blames the deceased, the other victims, the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration abroad for being the root-cause of the problem.

The research of American Professor of Modern Tibetan Studies at Columbia University, Dr. Robert Barnett, shows that during the five years before the current protest movement erupted in 2008, the expenditure for maintaining social stability in Kadrze and Ngaba prefectures in Sichuan Province rose rapidly. In reality, the floating rise in the cost of maintaining social stability reflects the fact that the Chinese Communist Party has made repression its basic policy in solving the Tibetan problem. Yet the emergence of large-scale protests, and of young people as their principal agents, reflects the failure of the big-stick policy. But today's Chinese communist government continues to rope in the economy and add political pressure. Moreover, as it oppresses Tibetans with both its communist dictatorship and racism, the combined resistance of ethnic Tibetans both within and outside China's borders can only escalate. As the Dalai Lama has already said on many occasions, he no longer has any confidence in either the Chinese Communist Party leadership or the Chinese government.

What is certain is that the system and policies of control over Tibet forged and maintained by Hu Jintao and Zhou Yongkang will be hard to change when their terms in office end at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. But it is now also hard to determine if the new leadership that will ascend at the 18th National Congress will have the

political vision, courage and wisdom to sincerely cooperate with the Dalai Lama on settling the demands of the ethnic Tibetans and defusing the tense relations between Tibetans and Han Chinese.

I am afraid that both ethnic Tibetans and ethnic Han Chinese jointly face an even more daunting challenge. That is, both the Tibetans and the Han Chinese can achieve freedom and liberty only through a movement to democratize and wrest freedom from the Chinese Communist Party, thereby jointly establishing a positive interaction between the two ethnic groups that is cooperative and peaceful.

The possibility of putting an end to self-immolations in the short run thus lies in the ability of Tibetans and Han Chinese to join hands in the spirit of co-operation and mobilize the international community to use every possible way to put pressure on the Chinese government. In the long run, Tibetan and Han ethnic groups must support each other's cause of freedom and democracy, put an end to Communist Party rule and bring 'freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from fear, and freedom from want' to all the people who live within China's borders.

Faced with the endless sacrifices of Tibetan people, we can also put into practice what Sogyal Rinpoche talks about in *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. We can use prayer to show our concern and care for the deceased, especially for those who suffered violent or accidental deaths: Visualise an immense light emanating from the bodies of all the Buddhas or enlightened beings, shining down all their compassion and blessings. Visualise this light flowing to the bodies of the deceased, fully cleansing them, freeing them from the confusion and pain of death, to give them a deep and lasting peace. Then, wholeheartedly visualise the deceased transforming into light, while at the same time they have been cured and freed from the consciousness of all suffering, rising high into the air and forever binding inseparably together with the wisdom mind of all the Buddhas.

Om Mani Padme Hum!

1 Translator's note: Shajié. Sishi nian de jiyi jinqu (Forbidden memory. Tibet during the Cultural Revolution) (Taiwan, Dākudi wénhuà 2006), ISBN 986-7291-84-0.

2 Translator's note: The Gvalwang Karmapa is the head of the Karma Kagyu, the largest sub-school of the Kagyu, one of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

3 Translator's note: Located in the state of Himachal Pradesh in north India, Dharamshala

is home to the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration.

4 Translator's note: Nalanda, was the premier Buddhist monastic university in India, and a major centre of learning from the fifth to the 12th century. It attracted scholars and students from as far away as Tibet, China, Korea and Central.

NGABA

Xu Zhiyong⁵

22 December 2012

The night of the Mid-Autumn Festival in Xisuo Village. I have not seen such a bright moonlight for quite some time. In the living rooms of Tibetan homes, the television sets are broadcasting the [CCTV] Mid-Autumn evening show ‘All together at this Time at Far Corners of the World,’ while I come to the kitchen to chat with the owner of the house. He is a 68-year-old retired secretary of the township party committee. His ancestors were servants of the neighbouring Chogtse hereditary tribal headmen; his son is an assistant chief of a prefectural bureau. One of his grandsons is a traffic policeman. The police minivan that came behind us as we entered the house was in fact driven by his grandson.

“Do you believe in Buddhism?” I ask him. He seems to hesitate as he answers, “I do.” In Ngaba, 1 there should have been no need to pose this question, but this family has an unusual status. In the Kitchen God niche, offerings are being made to a Living Buddha whose name I don’t know. A group portrait of the four generations of Chinese Communist Party leaders and the nine current members of the Standing Committee of the CCP Central Committee is posted in a hallway corner on the second floor. I have heard that for the past few years the local government has been engaged in the campaign to bring these leaders into monasteries, but it is only here that I have seen the leaders’ portraits.

“Do you believe in the Dalai Lama?” I ask. “We believe in the Panchen Lama. He is a very good man. When I was party secretary, I once received him here.” “Many locals here have a portrait of the Dalai Lama at home. Does your family have it?” I go on. “We don’t.” “Because you don’t believe?” “No. We just don’t have it.” “Are you worried about something!” “We just don’t have it.” In the face of my persistent, rude questioning, the sound of his answers grows fainter.

“There are many, many temples in Sertar.² It’s a magical place.” When we talked about the hereditary tribal headmen, he brought Sertar up. He said

5 Xu Zhi yong is a prominent Chinese rights lawyer

that his wife had seen with her own eyes when a Living Buddha called six vultures to the sky burial platform there and, sure enough, as by magic, six came. He shook his head as he spoke.

He has a weathered face specific to the people of the plateau. Not only is his face full of wrinkles, it also has a complexity that is hard to put into words. His wife's age is the same as his, and she is already the image of a typical Tibetan old lady. With a kindhearted and honest expression on her face, she keeps silent. He is Tibetan, yet in the eyes of the local Tibetans, he is a representative of another nation's regime. This is an awkward group. In the background, there is the myth of emancipated serfs becoming masters, which has been passed down for some time. It had once been the rule of the Chogtse people. Then it became their turn. But like before, it is still a rule by a few. The people of their generation have had materialist education for many years, but he is after all a man of this land, who in the end still believes in such magical lore. Amidst the powerful currents of modern civilization, those mysteries could have gradually become distant, but an ethnic group that is fighting for its freedom would rather return to the past.

I didn't choose Sertar. I wanted to go to a place without the shuttling tourists, where I could see genuine Tibetan life. I also wanted to visit the home of a young man called Nangdrol.

It is early morning. Chogtse Laird's Castle village is still fast asleep. After a hurried Chinese-style breakfast, I went to the roadside to get an unlicensed taxi, which for 20 yuan took me from Chogtse to Barkam, which is the capital of the Ngaba Prefecture. National Highway 317 is practically the only thoroughfare in town, lined on both sides by towering, brand new buildings in Tibetan style, but their style is only the surface. Except for the Tibetan decorations, narrow on top and wide at the bottom, which are painted below every window, in terms of the quality, the interior, and even the speed with which they were erected, they are actually the same as buildings anywhere in China's interior. You can see such brand new, abruptly-rising small towns, like Gyalthang to the north of Lijiang, in almost every Tibetan area-probably a new wave of development after the March 14 riots of 2008.³

The regular non-stop bus from Barkam to Zamthang has already left. I got a bus to Guanyinqiao, a few dozen kilometres away, where I had to transfer. With a warm smile, the driver eagerly assisted me to connect to the regular bus service from Jinchuan to Zamthang. Unlike in the tourist areas, almost

all of my fellow passengers on the regular bus are Tibetans, but only about a half of them wear Tibetan clothing. Among them, 20 or so have come from the Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province, especially to worship Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. A young girl in jeans says, “I didn’t do well in the college entrance exam, so I went to a vocational secondary school for nurses. I have a temporary job at the Zamthang hospital at the moment.” By the roadside I occasionally see huge China Unicom billboards. A young deeply suntanned man in Tibetan clothing smiles at me after he finishes his conversation on the mobile phone. I don’t need to ask. His somewhat dishevelled appearance tells me that he is coming from the pastures.

He makes me think of a time more than 10 years ago when I passed through Ngaba in the midst of a prematurely aborted trip to Tibet. Having crossed the Erlang Mountain, a vast awe-inspiring prairie came into sight, extending to the horizon, not green, but a complex brown - a mix of colours in the densely packed sea of flowers whose fragrance hits you directly in the face. At the time, Ngaba was still not a tourist destination, and plump marmots crouched by the road-side, their little hands dangling in front of their chests, inquisitively watching our shabby coach. Fortunately, the coach broke down midway and as we swooped down to the meadow, amidst cheers, to admire the flowers, a Tibetan horseman came dashing from the distance. His name was Tashi and he had just learned how to make money: The bus passengers took pictures riding on his horse, and when they asked, ‘How much?’ he extended one finger. Only a complicated communication revealed that he meant one yuan. When the coach was repaired, Tashi, spurring his horse and waving, saw us off for quite some distance. That is the eternal Ngaba that lives on in my memory.

Ngaba, along with Golok in Qinghai Province, and southern Gansu Province belongs to the traditional Tibetan Amdo Region. I first set foot on this plateau 21 years ago, when I went to the Labrang Monastery in Xiahe with a classmate from Lanzhou University, where we met a young lama whose Chinese name was Chen Lai. I remember him saying that their tulku had to endure great humiliation in order to carry on his mission. Back then, ethnic conflict had already surfaced, but the situation was, overall, still auspicious and peaceful, while today one keeps hearing the unfortunate news.

Sitting next to me on the bus is a young lama from a monastery in Hongyuan County. He brought his mother to see a doctor in Bharkam,

and took the opportunity to pay homage to Chenrezig while in the area.⁴ He says he does not hate the Han Chinese. He has seen many good Han Chinese people and welcomes me to visit his monastery.

Towns, roads and hospitals have spread to these remote canyons and grasslands, spread to ancient monasteries. What has also spread simultaneously are enormous placards. As we pass through a check-point, a red horizontal banner proclaims from above: ‘Maintenance of Stability Calls for Rapid Response in Emergencies.’ The expressions of passengers are indifferent. The young lama says that what bothers him most are the people who carry guns, gesturing with his hands to assume a gun-toting pose. This is a story of modernization, a long winding road of an ancient civilization’s painful transformation. You can feel its pain on every inch of the land.

Zamthang is a county in Ngaba Prefecture, with a population of over 30,000 scattered over its 6,000-plus square kilometres of plateaus and canyons. The county seat looks like a small district town in China’s interior; two streets, the largest façades belong to government departments, the rest are a few small eateries and shops. Only four public buses make daily trips to Chengdu, Bharkam, Ngaba County, and Jinchuan County. The biggest monastery in Zamthang is located in Barma township, in a basin some 50 kilometres to the east.

Lunch at a Sichuanese noodle shop. The owner is an ethnic Han Chinese from Mianyang. Like in Lhasa, most businessmen here are ethnic Han Chinese from Sichuan Province. The outsiders here live the life of the super-rich, while the locals have chosen to return to the past and to the world of spirituality, yet they are confused by the lure of material desires. This is the subset of the March 14 riots. Across from me are two young women in modern dress. One is Tibetan, the other Han Chinese. Both are last year’s college graduates from Zungchu County.⁵ They both passed the civil service exam and came to work at the Zamthang County CCP Organization Department. They didn’t get time off for this year’s National Day holiday, in part because of the tense situation in Ngaba.

I went to the fork in the road leading to Barma township to wait for transportation and a brand new Chang’an sedan pulled up. Two young Tibetans are returning to Namuda township. When I ask how much it would cost to take me to Barma township along the way, after giving it some serious thought, the driver says, “100 yuan.” Because of road repair

work, we have to wait till 7pm to be able to get through. What follows is an endless wait. Hail is tapping on the car windows, as a mix of snowflakes and raindrops fills the sky. The driver's name is Sonam. He is 24 this year. He just bought the car in Chengdu a few days ago, preparing to get some kind of work, but hasn't figured out what yet. "Are you Tibetan Buddhist followers?" "We are," I reply. He takes out a pendant portrait that is hanging on his chest. "Do you know who this is?" he asks. "I do. It's the Dalai Lama. Are you all his followers?" "Of course. He is our true tulku, the Living Buddha." Devotion is written on his face. "Do you hate the Han Chinese?" I ask. "There are good people and bad people," he hesitates a bit before answering.

"Excuse me," I keep asking over and over again. "Do you hate the Han Chinese?" It is because that young man by the name of Nangdrol used the words 'Han Demons' in his death note, before setting himself on fire in Barma, and it stabbed me deep in the heart.

"Do you know that some Tibetans are self-immolating, setting themselves on fire?" I finally bring up the topic. "Ah. We know." "Could you take me to see the family of a young 18-year-old man who self-immolated, Nangdrol? He left behind a death note when he self-immolated... I would like to see his parents.... to express one Chinese person's... grief."

They were a bit astonished, but then grew friendlier. "Yes. Sure. I've been to that place. Many Tibetans went there. For a few days a white tent was set up at the street intersection where he died, and many, many Tibetans, hundreds and thousands of people, went to make donations to his family. Afterwards, people answered his call and brought their knives and swords to monasteries to be destroyed by fire, pledging to be united in solidarity. I have photographs of the burning of the knives and swords at home. Yes, he is our hero.

"Thank you for suddenly trusting me like this." Except for the county seat, it's all grasslands. By the roadside, there are random accumulations of snow. Golden sunshine spills over distant mild slopes. Herds of yaks are on the slopes. Kitchen smoke rises faintly from cabins and huts.

When we get to Barma it is already completely dark. Moonlight is hidden behind big mountains and black clouds. Sonam stops in front of a street light, gets out of the car and asks a middle-aged man at the roadside for directions. The man waves his hands. He asks a few passers by. They

all shake their heads too. At an intersection, Sonam asks two men on motorcycles, and they seem to get into a dispute. A lama who is passing by comes to the car window to examine me closely, and they have what seems a very unpleasant conversation for a very long time. Sonam returns to the car and says, "I'm very sorry. They were telling me off. They say I shouldn't have brought you here."

Then a minivan comes over and two men jump out. It is obvious that they are angrily censuring Sonam. Fear and hostility, like a curtain of night, shroud this place, and we don't know if we have escaped its wrath yet. We continue the journey in silence. When we leave Barma behind, Sonam suddenly says, "You know? We are Tibetans, we are Buddhists, but we cannot go to Lhasa." "I know," I tell him. In order to enter Lhasa, Tibetans have to be checked and get approved-and that is their nation's sacred land. Many years ago, in Golmud, I saw devoted believers prostrating themselves on the way to Lhasa. But today, after the self-immolations that took place in Lhasa, they are even deprived of the freedom to make the pilgrimage.

They have a reason not to trust me, as I am Han Chinese. On this night in Namda Village, at a tiny inn called "Pengzhou Hotel," as the light rain patters outside the window, I toss and turn restlessly on the bed. With a light headache in reaction to the high altitude of the plateau, I am thinking: where should I go tomorrow? I am full of regret for letting Sonam ask for directions. I should have faced the angry people myself. River valley early in the morning. Blue sky, white clouds, sunshine... meadows of fresh grass and softly fluttering Tibetan prayer flags. The golden domed roofs of the magnificent temple point towards the azure heavens. This is the day after, and on this beautiful autumn day, I have come back to Barma, to this land of sacrifice for one's beliefs, where the sky dissolves the murmuring sound of sutra chanting.

I humbly gazed at the crimson-robed lamas who were holding the morning service in the temple hall. I waited there until a young lama who looked to be under 20 passed me by on the way to fetch water. He dutifully led me to a corner inside the temple's side hall, where a middle-aged lama sat in the lotus position. He asked, "Do you have Nangdrol's photograph?" "So sorry, I didn't bring it." "Then there's nothing we can do." A lama who wasn't much older than 10 said that he thought there was a second-year student of Buddhist doctrine called Nangdrol, but having asked several second-graders, we only confirmed that there were no self-immolators among them.

I asked passers-by. Some said, ‘I don’t know,’ some just shook their heads. An old Tibetan woman who was here for religious practice took me to the small rented hut where she was staying and served me milk tea. With “I am sorry, I have to go look for him,” I cut the visit short. She took me to the construction site of another monastery that was being built beside Zamthang monastery, but we still couldn’t get any leads. On the Internet it said that he was a student. I went to the Barma Elementary School located next to Zamthang monastery. Soldiers in camouflage fatigues were inside. I asked the armed serviceman who guarded the gate where the secondary school was and he suggested that I go to the courtyard next door, where the Chinese national flag was flying, to see if it wasn’t there. I asked passers-by and was told that there was no secondary school there.

I was getting ready to leave. During daytime, the road to the county seat is open to traffic only between noon and 1 pm. Under Ngaba’s magnificent sky filled with melancholy, a row of poplars that ran along a brook were painted gold. A group of junior lamas, all in red, were doing a drill in the wild. Unwillingly, I got in the car, trying to commit to memory this last scene from Barma.

Silently, I prayed to the heavens to help this country. After a few hundred metres, the road passed by a cluster of houses on a small hillside. I begged the driver to wait for me a little while, half an hour at the most. The shop-owner of the small roadside kiosk was a little hesitant when faced with my question. “I am sorry,” I told him in all sincerity. “I really do not want to leave like this.” In the end he told me that Nangdrol’s home was right behind the old schoolhouse near-by. On the slope, an old couple pointed to a house that wasn’t far. “That’s it, over there,” the old lady said. “He was a very good child.”

It was very much like a small courtyard farmhouse in Gansu, with the three buildings and the courtyard walls all plastered in mud. The iron gate was locked. On one side, outside the wall, five streamers of Tibetan prayer flags were set up high, the highest in the whole village. I bowed my head in front of the courtyard gate to offer a prayer: ‘Nangdrol, I love you.’ I fantasized that a kind, elderly couple would open the gate and receive me, on my knees. But perhaps they would be like the old lady who angrily drove me away from the sky burial platform in Lhasa many years ago. I wouldn’t leave. I would bear it all in silence. Even if they beat me or curse me, I would bear it all in silence. Afterwards I would tell them that I am sorry, that I really feel great grief, and that I have already visited this

beautiful plateau many times.

A middle-aged woman and a small boy, not yet 10, came by. The woman said that she knew Nangdrol and that he was the most handsome young man in Barma. His parents were at a far-away grazing ground, and he too, since childhood, grew up on the pasture. “Sometimes I would see him around here, come and go on his motorcycle. That day he was wearing new clothes. Everything on him was new. He had bathed, clean as a whistle. He got a haircut at the Barber’s-shop, put on a pair of sunglasses, and asked around, ‘Do I look good? Do I look good?’ He then went to the intersection, and then...”

“I don’t hate Han Chinese people,” she said. “We are a peace-loving nation. We would rather suffer ourselves...”

“He died for peace,” the boy spoke from her side. “As he burnt, he put his hands together and raised them above his head, then kneeled down. He got up, raised his hands above his head and kneeled down again. He repeated this six times.”

He was only 18. On the young, handsome face in the photograph, the two eyes are laden with the grief of the whole nation. On 19 February 2012, at noon, Nangdrol set himself on fire at the crossroads in front of the Zamthang monastery in Barma. In a note left behind he said: ‘Raise your heads, unyielding, to honour Nangdrol. My most kind parents, beloved brothers and relatives, I am about to leave this world. So that a blessing may be bestowed on the countless Tibetan people, I shall set my body aflame... praying that the Tibetan nation may break away from the Han demons. In the demonic grip of the Han Chinese, Tibetans suffer greatly. This suffering is unbearable. The Han demons have forcibly occupied Tibetan lands, and they forcibly arrest Tibetan people. I am unable to go on under their vicious laws, unable to put up with the torment that leaves no visible scars. The Han demons have no compassion in their hearts as they destroy the lives of Tibetans. I pray for the long life of Gyalwa Tenzin Gyatso

[His Holiness the Dalai Lama] in this realm!’ This was a brave child of a nation, who at 18 used a bitterly painful method to sacrifice his own life in order to obtain a blessing for the countless Tibetan people, for the dignity and honour of a nation. During the past three years this nation has already had over 70 monks and ordinary people set themselves on fire, of whom

over 40 did so in Ngaba. And on this high plateau, the torment that leaves no visible scars is still present everywhere.

I did not know how else to express myself. I took out the 500 yuan from my pocket and gave it to the woman. “I am sorry. Please give this to Nangdrol’s parents and tell them that a Han Chinese man came by, that he felt very bad.” I am sorry, Nangdrol, that we never said anything at the time when you were dying for freedom. I am sorry that we have so many taboos. Our ancient East Asian nation is likewise a victim. It is a nation caught in a demonic spell, divided by the lack of mutual comprehension, by internal friction, hostility, and infighting. Ours too is a thirsty land. I am sorry that the vast expanse of land I love so dearly contains not only the cities and villages of the east, but also this beautiful high plateau, your native Ngaba. Your fellow countrymen may too one day come to love the cities, plains, and the seacoast where I have spent my life-when this country becomes free.

Yes, indeed, we may yet witness the significance of our own lives, freedom, righteousness, and also love- the boundless, enduring love. Be it the highland plateau, canyons, rivers, or flat plains, be it east or west, the land where the sun rises or where it sets, this is the land we share, our shared home, our shared responsibility, shared dream, and deliverance. Nangdrol, we love you!

1 Translator’s note: Ngaba (or Ngawa; Aba in Chinese) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, is now located in northwestern Sichuan Province, bordering Gansu Province to the north and northeast and Qinghai Province to the northwest.

2 Translator’s note: Sertar La-rung Institute of Buddhist Studies - La-rung Gar was founded by Khenpo Jikmey Phuntsok in 1980. When it was partially demolished by Wujing troops of the P.L.A. in 2001 it housed almost 10,000 students, including around 1,000 mainland Chinese. Khenpo died in 2004 at a Chinese army hospital in Chengdu.

3 Translator’s note: The 2008 Tibetan uprising, also known by its Chinese name as the 314 Riots, was a series of riots, protests, and demonstrations that started in Lhasa and spread to other Tibetan-inhabited regions of the plateau.

4 Translator’s note: Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion in Tibetan, is China’s Guanyin. The place name, Guanyiqiao, meaning Guanyin Bridge, indicates that the dominant feature of the location is a Guanyin (Chenrezig) statue or temple.

5 Translator’s note: A county in Ngaba Prefecture: Songpan in Chinese.

REFLECTIONS OF A HAN CHINESE ON SELF-IMMOLATIONS IN TIBETAN

23 January 2014

Anonymous

Yesterday, after I finished watching the documentary *Fire in the Land of Snow*¹ that friends had recommended, even I, this big macho man, had tears in my eyes. But some of the commentary posted below the video on the Internet, and some of the abuse that the commentators hurled at each other, left me puzzled. How is it that some people, being equally human, can still take the high ground of patriotism to mock and verbally attack the brave individuals who sacrifice their lives through self-immolation?

At the time when Internet technology gets more developed by the day, and when an ever-increasing number of Chinese people venture beyond China's shores, it is really not that difficult to obtain freer information. But for the majority of people this still seems to be hard, since they are all fond of using their own intuitive likes and dislikes to pass judgment on what is right and wrong. For instance, in the area reserved for comments below the video *Fire in the Land of Snow*, I have seen that a lot of people have written things like, 'The intention of Western anti-Chinese powers to destroy us never dies; American imperialists simply hope to incite more Chinese stupid cunts to oppose our government, divide our country, and let them get away with their conspiracy'

I do not intend to discuss here whether such utterances are right or wrong. I merely wish that people who write and say such things would ask themselves honestly what is their frame of mind when they destroy the software upon seeing the news they have never seen before, when they hear someone tell them the truth, when somebody mentions the ethnic problem. Do they get the feeling of fear and anxiety that they are too embarrassed to mention? Do they get so rattled after they see such news that they disinstall the software that breaches the Great Firewall of China? Do they distance themselves from a person who brings up the topic of politics or nationality? I think a lot of people are like that.

Recent psychology research shows that a people often think that they are rational in their understanding of things, while in fact they are always

irritational. It is because their understanding and judgement is usually influenced by their pre-existing emotions and intuition. Therefore, when they call other people stupid cunts, have they considered the possibility that the righteous national cause they so devotedly stick to might merely be the reflection of the fear and anxiety in their own minds?

Could the collusion of the separatists forces and anti-Chinese forces that they so movingly preach about simply be the venting of their pre-existing narrow-minded values? We Chinese constantly chant the mantra ‘Harmony without Homogeneity, 2 but we don’t ever seem to be able to sit down face-to-face with other people to have a discussion, to hear what’s on other people’s minds, and find out what other people’s positions are. Outward dictatorship is admittedly hateful, but internal arbitrariness and arrogance are even more woeful.

It may well be that the views of the Chinese have matured significantly during the past 30 years, such as in: ‘Capitalism is better than China. There are many problems with both the Communist Party policies and its officials. We need a government that is more democratic and less corrupt. But when it comes to many issues we still live in our own world. As soon as we think of the ethnic issue, it becomes a separatists force: As soon as we think of foreign countries, they become Western anti-Chinese forces. The moment Japan comes to mind, it is all blood and deep-seated hatred. Think Taiwan, and it is an American and Japanese bitch.

The thought of toppling the Communist Party and democratizing equals total chaos. Transformation of social thought cannot be separated from an environment that tolerates expression of opinion.

When we contrast the former with the latter, it is not difficult to discover that the opening up of the former into a mature way of thinking cannot be separated from a general environment of openness and economic freedom, while the latter’s conservatism and arbitrariness are related to the core interests of Communist Party rule.

It is for that reason that the Communist Party will absolutely not allow the opening of the latter to expression of opinion, and the way the Chinese think on that score has become even more constrained and conservative. Put from another angle, the opening of the former to the expression of opinion is because the former involves more interests of the proletariat, while the prohibition of expression of opinion on the latter is because it

involves more human dignity and the ability to think in very abstract terms. Finally, I would like to return to our main topic - the topic of Tibetan self-immolations. As I said earlier, if an individual is self-centred he will consider this topic from his personal standpoint. On one hand, you have not been able to resolve the problem, ever; on the other, your narrow-minded value system and your cold and indifferent attitude toward the people who self-immolate will only further isolate us - the Chinese - from the rest of the world.

Even though we have machine-guns and tanks, money and material goods, which can make the ethnic minorities surrender and pay allegiance to us on the surface, has it ever occurred to you that the pains and daily struggles you had to endure may by far surpass the cost of occupying them? The more arrogant you are about your military force, the more you flaunt your ethnic Han chauvinistic positions, the more you refuse to talk about the truth and actual facts with your ethnic minority compatriots in an even-tempered and good-tempered fashion, the more you believe that the others are separatists and scoundrels, the less approval from your ethnic minority compatriots you will get.

The ancients used to say, 'Listen to both sides and you will be enlightened.' Only if you listen to other people's positions and if you pay attention to what other people think will you be able to gain another friend and gain the trust of others. But when you take your patriotic stance and inflate your ego, you will discover that you will become more isolated in this world, that the road you have taken gets more difficult and that it becomes harder to enter the world of others. Is it possible that this is the end result that we Chinese, we the ethnic Han want?

I could say a few words on behalf of Tibet (although my position is humble and my words insignificant), in part because of the commitment to my friends, but even more so because I feel that I should use this opportunity to share my viewpoint with my ethnic Han compatriots. I don't consider myself a traitor, nor do I think I am an accomplice of the 'separatists.' It is because I believe that, whether Tibetans or Han Chinese, we are all human. Presuming that we are all motivated by a humane point of view, even if you are not pained by the sight of over 100 people using the method of setting their own lives on fire in order to shout for freedom and the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet, you shouldn't be denying that in their own world they are sublime and movingly tragic. We don't live in feudal times. The imperial ideology of great national

unification should have been covered by the dust of history long ago. Patriotism, of course, carries the connotation of defending national sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. But the notion of patriotism should connote even more guarantees for human rights, social equity, and freedom of speech and thought. We should open our eyes, open our minds, and listen more calmly and attentively without getting excited, and it could be that we will discover that the truth we used to assert with such a sense of stern justice merely derives from our fear of freedom and our narrow-minded values.

I don't actually have much of a political position in regard to either the Middle Way or Independence. But I feel that everything can be discussed in a calm and even-tempered way, as long as it can guarantee human rights and guarantee that opinions can be voiced freely, allowing Tibetan people to live better.

As the great majority of China's population, we Han Chinese should be broad-minded enough to tell the Tibetans, 'As long as you live better than I do, nothing is a problem.'

1 Translator's note: *Fire in the Land of Snow* (2013), an hour-long documentary that explores the causes behind the 118 self-immolations known to have taken place in Tibet since 2009 up to that year. Combining smuggled videos, first-hand accounts and interviews with experts, scholars, and officials, this film provides an in-depth, comprehensive look at the recent history of Tibet and the powerful forces that lie at the heart of one of the largest waves of political self-immolations in history.

2 Translator's note: A quote from Confucius' *Analects*, originally meaning 'A gentleman maintains a harmonious relationship with others without compromising his principles,' which has been appropriated as the cultural foundation of Beijing's conception of soft power to read: 'Harmony without Homogeneity.'

WHY ARE PEOPLE IN HONG KONG CONCERNED ABOUT THE TIBET PROBLEM?

Tang Huiyun⁶

23 September 2013

Hong Kong pro-Tibet groups recently held a symposium to call the attention of people in Hong Kong to the fact that the failure to achieve genuine autonomy under Chinese rule is causing intense discontent in Tibet. Some experts pointed out that the 17-Point Agreement, 1 signed in the past by Tibet and Beijing, is similar to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, 2 and that Beijing's sinicising rule of Tibet is closely linked to the sinification faced by Hong Kong.

Multiple pro-Tibet groups, including Hong Kong Stand with Tibet, Free Tibet, and Concern for Tibet, held the symposium on Tibet to probe into the predicament of present-day Tibet under Chinese rule and the connection between the current situation in Tibet and the future of Hong Kong.

Zhang Yaoliang, a member of the China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group,³ said during the symposium that the people of Hong Kong should be concerned about the course 'One Country, Two Systems' is taking, and that he believed studying the problem of Tibet could provide some enlightenment. Zhang Yaoliang pointed out that Hong Kong and Tibet are in a completely different position, as there was not much controversy about China's sovereignty over Hong Kong, but that it was very controversial whether China had sovereignty over Tibet or not. After the People's Liberation Army entered Tibet in 1950, Tibetan troops were powerless to resist, so in 1951 Tibet signed the 17-Point Agreement with Beijing - similar to the Sino-British Joint Declaration - in which Beijing promised 1 give Tibetan people freedom of religion, to recognize the position of the Dalai Lama, to maintain unchanged the existing Tibetan way of life, etc.

Tang Hui Yun reports for voice of America in hong Kong 6

Similarities in the 17-Point Agreement and the Sino-British Joint Declaration

Zhang Yaoliang noted that after the signing of the 17-Point Agreement, there was a ‘honeymoon period’ between Beijing and Tibet that lasted a few years. But by the late 1950s, China’s socialist reform political movements quickly spread to Tibet and relations between Tibetans and Chinese were about to blow up until, in March 1959, Beijing suppressed a massive Tibetan demonstration and the Dalai Lama fled to India as the conflict between Tibet and Beijing had developed into a bloody struggle.

In an interview with Voice of America, Zhang Yaoliang stated that the 17-Point Agreement that Tibet signed with Beijing back then is identical to the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law,⁴ insofar as the contents are all protocols of political expediency.

Zhang Yaoliang said: “The first similarity of the Tibetan 17-Point Agreement with the Basic Law, or the Sino-British Joint Declaration, is that they are all intensely characterised by political expediency, because the circumstances forced everyone to make the necessary compromises. That is to say, I accommodate you, the Chinese communist government wants to accommodate you (Tibet), so we (for the time being) give you the 17-Points in order to maintain stability when we begin the takeover of political power. In the same way, the Sino-British Joint Declaration enabled China to maintain stability for at least a period of time when it took back Hong Kong, which was all very expedient politically, but will it ultimately be implemented long-term? Let’s wait and see. I see in the case of Tibet that it was only maintained for a very short time. In Hong Kong, it is already deteriorating. So we can really see some similarities between the two.”

Tibet’s Modernization Turned into ‘de-Tibetanization’

According to Zhang Yaoliang, China has always believed that it could never win the hearts of Tibetans, so it has used a two-hands approach to govern Tibet. This on the one hand incorporates vigorous control through infiltration by army and security personnel to monitor Tibetan monk organizations and non-governmental political activities. while on the other it consists of the rapid development of Tibet’s economy. There is, however, a big problem with this type of economic development, as it turns Tibet’s modernization into ‘de-Tibetanization,’ with traditional monasteries

becoming secularized and turning into government offices.

Zhang Yaoliang said: “A lot of money has been thrown into it [Tibet] to modernize it. If you go to Tibetan karaoke bars these days, what a tragedy! Karaoke bars, restaurants, it is totally like you were in a big city in China’s ethnic Han interior; it has been ‘de-Tibetanized.’ I think this is wrong. It has backfired by arousing an even stronger ethnic sentiment among the locals, turning into hostility and hatred. I think this is the wrong way to go.”

Zhang Yaoliang pointed out that on the surface it may not be immediately apparent how Hong Kong could provide substantive and immediate help in regard to the international community’s concern over the issue of human rights in Tibet, and that Beijing might further tighten its Tibet policy, but that it could still create certain pressure on Beijing. In his opinion, whether today’s Tibet could become the Hong Kong of tomorrow might be stretching it too far, but the people of Hong Kong must preserve One Country, Two Systems and should not place hopes on the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

Hold Onto the Rights Guaranteed by the Basic Law

Zhang Yaoliang said: “The Sino-British Joint Declaration, in my opinion, is already a thing of the past. What I mean is that it was the result of an agreement reached in the midst of the so-called political haggling at the initial stage. It has been concretized in the Basic Law, and further concretized in the legal practice in the courts of law. I don’t think we should get entangled by the Sino-British Joint Declaration. What we should talk about is whether we can hold onto the rule of law, human rights, and freedoms guaranteed in the Basic Law. Beijing tells lies and we take it seriously. I often use a phrase: ‘You take their fictions for truth, you are trying to cure a dead horse.’ That’s all you can expect if you play the game of pretend.”

Cai Yongmei, Executive Editor of the Kaifang Magazine that focuses on Tibetan issues, took part in the symposium and expressed the view that the 17-Point Agreement signed between Tibet and Beijing and the Sino-British Joint Declaration were alike in their basic spirit, which was to let both Tibet and Hong Kong have a high degree of autonomy; for Tibetans to enjoy ethnic autonomy, just like the people of Hong Kong have the right of self-rule in Hong Kong. The late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping

promised that for 50 years there would be no change in Hong Kong, but there was no 50-year time limit in the 17-Point Agreement, so the future changes were up to the Tibetan people to decide based on their aspirations.

Why Should Hong Kongers Care about the Tibet Problem

Cai Yongmei said: “But we can all see what happened from the current situation in Tibet. This is why I feel that we in Hong Kong should pay attention to the Tibet problem, in fact we are all aware that there is this problem, that if we in Hong Kong don’t come out to defend our freedoms, if we don’t fight for democracy, we could one day find ourselves in Tibet’s situation.”

Cai Yongmei pointed out that Tibetan human rights problems have been getting worse in recent years, mainly because after China’s successful bid to hold the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008, it used to the fullest every possible method to maintain social stability in Tibet, including the monitoring of monasteries, conducting brainwash- style patriotic education, ordering the new generation of Tibetans, and to speak and write Chinese, and introducing large numbers of ethnic Han Chinese migrants into Tibet.

According to statistics, there are currently more ethnic Han Chinese than Tibetan residents in Lhasa. Unwilling to submit to oppression, Tibetans staged a large-scale demonstration in Lhasa in March 2008. After Beijing suppressed it, self-immolations started; the first case occurred on 27 February 2009, and there have already been 125 individual cases up to now.

Cai Yongmei said: “Why would they want to self-immolate? The first reason is despair, because they see no hope. The second is because they feel that they can’t make a sound, they can’t let out any sound at all, so they can only burn themselves, turn themselves into torches, using the most painful way to express themselves. Because self-immolation is a very cruel, very painful kind of death, and it can become big news only because it is so cruel. It uses the method that shocks the eye and startles the heart to relay what the Tibetans want to express.”

Tibet Faces Serious Ecological Problems.

Cai Yongmei pointed out that Tibet faces a serious ecological problem, as

China continues to mine mineral resources in Tibet, causing Tibet's natural scenery to turn into an eyeful of sores. Furthermore, Chinese authorities recently announced plans to open a mine in the Three Rivers Nature Reserve,⁵ prompting a sit-in demonstration by Tibetans from Qinghai.

Cai Yongmei said: "The Three Rivers Nature Reserve is, actually, not only an ecological resource for Tibetans, the ecology of China as a whole and entire Southeast Asia are part of it too. The three rivers are the Yangtze, yellow River, and the Lancang- the lower reaches of the Lancang are the Mekong, which flows straight to Vietnam, Cambodia, and other countries. So, the fountainhead of these three rivers is now to be mined too. We can all imagine how awful the pollution of the water resources will be, but the Tibetans have absolutely no right to speak out on this topic. The Tibetan resistance was already tremendous at the time of the construction of the Qinghai-Tibet railroad, but the voice of Tibetans in China seems very powerless."

At the symposium, China's rights defence lawyer and visiting scholar at the Chinese University of Hong Kong Law School, Teng Biao, related how he was planning to defend Tibetans with a group of China's rights defence lawyers, when his license to practice law was revoked by Chinese authorities. But he believed that the work to defend the rights of Tibetans cannot stop, because the human rights issues encountered by the Tibetans, including prison sentencing for actions such as the crime of speech, are much graver than those faced by the Han Chinese, creating enormous inequality.

Tibet, Xinjiang and the Political Transformation of China

Teng Biao believes that the problems of Tibet and Xinjiang are very pivotal, extremely important issues for the political transformation of China, but many scholars are not aware of these two key issues. Many people are in the midst of contemplating the social and political transformation of China, arguing for reform vs. revolution, gradualism vs. radicalism, presidential system vs. parliamentary system, etc. But after the watershed events in Tibet on 3-14 March 2008, and in Xinjiang on 5 July 2009, hopes for peacefully resolving the problems of Tibet and Xinjiang are fading by the day.

Teng Biao said: "Some even say that the beginning of the democratic transformation of China is the day when rivers of blood flow in Xinjiang

and Tibet. This is by no means an alarmist exaggeration. If we keep on neglecting, keep on underestimating their problems, it is very possible that it will become a reality.”

How the Symposium Neutralized Brainwashing

In an interview for VoA, a Shenzhen resident who took part in the Symposium on Tibet, Mr. Huang, related how when he came to Hong Kong for the first time to visit the Hong Kong Book Fair, he became aware of the 1908 Bookstore which sells books banned in China and holds various events focusing on human rights, society and culture.

Mr. Huang said: “Last time I saw Room Inspection [a Chinese independent film covering actual events]. After the event, I felt that many of the things at the 1908 Bookstore, we can’t see on the Mainland, and they have a neutralizing effect. Namely, they can balance out some of what we know in the country [China]. We are sometimes, as you say here in Hong Kong, brainwashed by the government, but when we come here we can become much more neutral.”

Mr. Huang explained that having attended the Symposium on Tibet organized by the 1908 Bookstore, he realized that the current situation in Tibet was very different from the Tibet publicized in Chinese education and media. “To tell you the truth, it’s completely different from what I’ve known about Tibet. We, on the Mainland think that Tibet is very free, very democratic, and that there aren’t that many restrictions on human rights. But after they spoke, I realized that if those things could be true, then they are really covered up. We don’t have access to them at all. That is, we would hope to find out more, is all this really true. That is, we can’t assume that what people say is really so.”

Mr. Huang stated that in his work as a social worker, he handles issues involving judicial disputes, and that his family is Catholic. He is interested in learning more about the banned books on Catholicism, human rights issues, etc. He also got to know some online friends on the Internet who follow the problems of Tibet and Hong Kong, and who share information about various events and other things online.

1 Translator’s note: The Agreement of the Central People’s Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, or the 17-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet for short, is the document signed by the

delegates of the 14th Dalai Lama, sovereign of the de facto State of Tibet, in 1951 in Beijing, affirming Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

2 Translator's note: The Sino-British Joint Declaration, formally known as the Joint Declaration of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Question of Hong Kong, was signed by prime ministers Zhao Ziyang of the People's Republic of China and Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom on behalf of their respective governments on 19 December 1984 in Beijing. It was the document that sanctioned the handover of Hong Kong from UK to the PRC, effective 1 July 1997.

3 Translator's note: Established in January 2007, China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group (CHRLCG) is a Hong Kong-based non-profit organization that advocates for the protection of the rights of human rights lawyers and legal rights defenders in China.

4 Translator's note: The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, or simply Hong Kong Basic Law, serves as the constitutional document of the Hong Kong Special Administrative (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China. It was adopted on 4 April 1990 by the Seventh National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, and went into effect on 1 July 1997.

5 Translator's note: The Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve, or the Three Rivers Nature Reserve, is located in the area of Qinghai province containing the headwaters of the Yellow River, the Yangtze River, and the Mekong. It was established to protect them.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN BURNT?

Wang Dan⁷

14 November 2012

On 8 November, the Communist Party of China convened its 184 National Congress in Beijing. On that day I got an email from friend in the U.S.A. asking me if I knew that four Tibetans had self-immolated. I went on the Web to look up details and felt as though I had been dealt a heavy blow, because what I saw was the following: On Wednesday, 7 November, at approximately 3pm, three teenage monks self-immolated at the Ngoshul Monastery in Ngaba Prefecture, Sichuan Province; 15-year-old Dorjee, and two 16-year-olds, Samdrup and Dorjee Kyab.

They set themselves on fire in protest near the government building in Gomang Township, shouting the slogans, “Let the Dalai Lama return to Tibet,” and “Freedom for Tibet,” and heroically died at the scene. At 15 and 16, they were in the flower of their youth, at the fresh green age, yet they doused their bodies with gasoline in the pursuit of justice, without a second thought. Another self-immolation took place in Rebgong County, Qinghai Province. The deceased was a twenty-something Tibetan herdsman Tamdrin Tso, who left behind a five-year-old child.

On 10 November, a young Tibetan man, Gonpo Tsering, self-immolated in front of Shakdup Thubtenling Monastery in Tsoe, Gansu Province. He shouted for ‘the freedom of language’ and the ‘return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet,’ and died soon thereafter.

These incidents increased the number of self-immolations in Tibetan regions to 70.

I only started paying attention to Tibetan self-immolations recently. There were several reasons for my lack of involvement at the time. First, I think I know very little about Tibetan issues. Whenever I encounter questions about Tibet during my many lectures and speaking engagements, I always confess that I am not familiar enough to be able to discuss it. Second, for a time I found the expression of one’s political ideas through self-immolation

7 A student leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, Wang Dan is now a writer in New York

too shocking for establishing a good discussion angle that would allow me to weigh the balance between life and political ideals. Third, I think I am like many people more likely to pay attention to matters that relate to me personally or to my immediate surrounding environment. The tedious trivia of daily life makes us neglect to look at the world beyond.

What made me change was a minor burn.

That day, I wasn't careful when using a cigarette lighter to ignite a scented candle, and a drop of hot wax fell on my hand. For a split second I felt a piercing pain and subconsciously dropped the lighter to the ground. In that same split second, I don't know why, the shocking images of Tibetan self-immolations that had been reported in the news suddenly flashed through my mind.

If one has mastered putting oneself in someone else's shoes, one should be able to imagine: Those young dead bodies had been made of flesh too; if I suffered because one drop of candle wax on the back of my hand caused me pain, what kind of purgatorial torment it must have been when the big flames engulfed their bodies! If one has mastered putting oneself in someone else's shoes, one should be able to imagine: How could a person bear the misery of burning oneself in the raging inferno, if not out of the utmost grief and despair, if not because one would rather bear the pain and face death, while being determined not to accept the reality? Putting oneself in someone else's shoes is the basic ethical norm of a civilized society. How long has it been since we've put ourselves in someone else's shoes? Particularly when we hear the news about Tibetan self-immolations?!

I still don't know anything about Tibetan issues, and I still have reservations about self-immolation as a mode of protest, but having seen those young Tibetans one after another face the blazing inferno, I have decided that this time I must stand together with the Tibetans!

If you insist that I give you a reason, I have to ask you in return: Have you ever been burnt?

In the evening, having sped for an entire day through the Amdo region that guards the Tibetan Plateau, the train pulled by two diesel locomotives finally arrived at its destination, the Lhasa station. The only thing I felt on the railway platform was how imposing and lofty the station building was, mixed with the maroon colour of Tibetan-style buildings, making me

want to rush out and take a group photo at the square in front of the station, when my companion and I reminded ourselves that we had to prepare our train tickets for inspection.

To our surprise, what they wanted to inspect were not our train tickets but our identity cards, and it wasn't the railroad personnel who inspected the tickets but the armed police.

The hope for a group photo turned out to be too extravagant, as the square in front of the station was completely sealed off, guarded by armed police, and we had to make a big detour in order to get to the parking lot. Forcing a smile, I said, "Where in China do you find a train station without a single person in sight in the square in front of it?"

THE EXPERIENCE OF GUIDING TIBETANS IN BEIJING

Anonymous

18 December 2013

People with a conscience are fair, so, friends, let's speak about Tibetans fairly too. I am an ordinary tour guide in Beijing. I have just led a group from Tibet that was purely ethnic Tibetan a few days ago. The shock they gave me in the course of our tour of Beijing was enormous.

In truth, before I met the group, my impression of Tibetans had been largely based on what I saw in movies and on television or the random information provided by others, and it can be summed up as: They don't bathe, they are rather barbaric, their cultural level is very low, they are out of line with civilized society. When I first met the group, I felt that these representations were in fact not wrong and that what was played on TV was very close to the truth. They really fit that image: Dark, generally looking much older than their actual age, looking as though they didn't bathe all that much, shouldering extremely heavy and crudely made large sacks. There was just about not a single piece of decent-looking luggage in the whole group. I conceitedly thought that, indeed, they were out of line with civilized society.

In the course of our later contacts, however, I discovered that I was completely wrong. Moreover, their words and actions made me, as an ethnic Han Chinese, blush with utter shame.

We had prepared no itinerary for the day they arrived. The plan was to let them rest at the hotel. But because of a planning error, the hotel we had booked on the Second Ring Road South suddenly said that it had no rooms and could not take them. As a result, they had already arrived at the hotel door and had not yet completely unloaded their luggage, when they had to load it back on the bus and drive to another hotel on the Third Ring Road East.

After they got off the bus again, they huffed and puffed under the weight of the huge sacks heaved on their backs, as they patiently waited for me to finish distributing room cards, and then climbed the stairs to their rooms. In the end the unexpected happened again; the hotel where we had made the original booking now said that it had vacated the rooms and was asking us to go over there. The director of the travel agency rushed over and decided that we should after all move back to the original hotel. As a result, the Tibetans, who had just unloaded the luggage and had not yet completely unpacked, started packing again, so we could put the luggage on the bus and go back there once again.

As their tour guide, I was on edge all that time, afraid that they would start making trouble. Since I had heard that Tibetans were rather barbarous, if by any chance they started making trouble - having been put through all this excruciating shuttling back and forth- there was a chance that they would smash the hotel or beat us up. But the end result was completely beyond my expectations. Not only did they not make trouble or even utter a complaint, as we who were in charge of their reception kept apologizing, they surprised us by telling us, 'Thank you,' in Chinese that wasn't terribly proficient, smiling all the while.

I was quite stunned. Because based on my many years of experience as a tour guide, if this had been an ethnic Han tourist group, it was 10,000 percent certain that they would now be complaining, cursing, and asking for compensation. At the very least they would be demanding to be moved from a three-star hotel to a four-star hotel, requesting free visits to places of interest or extra meals. Yet the Tibetans did not even express any anger. I asked myself what I would do if I were a tourist in these circumstances, and I knew that I would definitely not have their attitude. Even if I didn't take advantage of the situation to get extra service, I would be cursing too.

In a frame of mind I couldn't quite fathom, I led them back to the hotel

that had locked its doors to them just a little while ago. After the ordeal was over, it was past five in the afternoon. They had arrived in Beijing just past noontime. The person in charge of accompanying the group on their entire trip was a man who seemed to be honest and straightforward. Although under enormous pressure in the face of this situation, he, much to my surprise, also did not voice a single complaint to me. Rather, he kept comforting me by saying, "It's OK don't worry, I will work on them." I don't know how to describe my astonishment. Because I have seen too many group escorts who, in order to brush off any responsibility and deflect tourist grievances away from themselves, always help the tourists in placing collective blame on local guides, in the fear that the tourists might think they are speaking on behalf of the local guides. And yet he went so far as to sympathize. I was so astonished that I just about let my jaw drop.

On the second day we were to visit the Imperial Palace, Gugong. We got off the bus at Qianmen, and after we walked for a while turned around to check on the contingent, to avoid having somebody wander off and get lost. This was because it is quite common when I lead ethnic Han Chinese groups for them to scatter like a handful of sand in the wind as soon as they get off the bus. Some are taking photos, some are buying water, some forge ahead on their own as they please, or the whole group swarms together to buy souvenirs - all this happens all too regularly. But when I looked back, I was startled yet again! Much to my surprise, the Tibetans were quietly following me from behind in a neat row, two by two, without the slightest disarray.

As soon as I stopped, they immediately stopped too, their smiling faces all looking at me. I felt somewhat speechless. I couldn't even utter the phrase that would normally be rolling out of my mouth, 'Listen, everyone, do not disperse, stay close to me, don't wander off, because judging by the present situation, the only person that could wander off was me. I opened my mouth, but said nothing. I just flashed a smile at everyone and continued to walk at the head of the contingent.

When we got to Tiananmen Square, nobody who passed the security check first seized the opportunity to run ahead and take a few photos, or got lost because of unfamiliarity with the experience. Those who passed the check first still formed a queue in front, and the ones behind kept their place in line, without anyone trying to cut in. As a result, our group of more than 40 people passed the security check in five or six minutes and

was even organized in a queue! You should know that if it were another group, it would take me almost 20 minutes just to gather all the people at the security check.

I walked on in silence, holding up my jaw to keep I from dropping. When I found an empty spot, I directed everyone so put their bags there and line up to see Chairman Mao. When done with the viewing, I told them to assemble at the same spot. Not a single one of them threw the bag down and ran ahead to line up, as though in fear of falling behind. Instead, they all stacked their bags in layers, lined up, and slowly went forth. None of them were unhappy because their bags were weighed down at the bottom, nor did anyone pull out their bag to put it on top.

While they were lining up, I reassessed myself. I had always thought of myself as being Han Chinese to the core and flaunted myself as a man from China's interior cut from superior cloth. Now, faced with this kind of behaviour by the Tibetans, should the Chinese not feel uncomfortable? Should the Chinese not be, just like I was, blushing with shame?

Before we entered the Imperial Palace, I asked everybody to wait for me at the Meridian Gate while I went to buy tickets. When I came back with the tickets, my jaw got dislocated yet again. This, because I saw those professional beggars that I see so often begging for money. But this time their target was the visitors from my group. All the people who were in the square at the time were raising their eyebrows as they watched my tourists all lined up, each one of them holding a one-yuan bill in their hands. I wanted to alert them that this was a swindler. Yet, I don't know why, I said nothing.

When their permanent escort who was standing on the side saw my expression, he laughed and explained that even if this was a swindler, they would still give him money. Because this is alms-giving, and by giving alms one accumulates merit and good fortune. As I looked at the honest and natural expressions on their faces, I suddenly felt how dark my psyche was; it was just one yuan, so why not give it to someone whose life is in fact hard? Even if he is a swindler, his hand cap has sill inconvenienced his life in a major way indeed. I watched quietly as the beggar took the money and thanked them in turn. His 'thank yous' must have been sincere, I thought.

While we were sightseeing around the Imperial Palace, I got worried that

we would miss our lunchtime, because the distances we had to cover on foot were great and there were some old people in the group whose legs were somewhat challenged. As a result, I occasionally let out the customary, 'Come on, everyone! Keep up with me! Hurry up!' But I discovered that nobody would really hurry up - not because they didn't want to listen to me, but because everyone's speed was based on that of those few old people whose legs were unsteady and who were interspersed within the group. Their speed was the speed of the whole group. Even when I told them to disband, and go and take pictures, they were certain to return together with those few old people.

Boarding the bus after the visit to the Imperial Palace they were extremely orderly too. Not one went out of line, no one scrambled to get on the bus first and grab the seat in the front row. They boarded slowly and in order, saving time and energy, without me having to say an extra word. I just stood next to the door helping those who had some difficulty, providing support. And they all paid me back with brilliant smiles as they turned their faces to me and the only thing they could say fluently in Chinese, which was, 'Thank you.' In comparison, when I lead groups from China's interior, even if someone thanks you, it's always done routinely, with an indifferent expression. It is completely out-of-the-question that they might turn their faces to me and smile as they say it.

During the last few days of their visit, I noticed that regardless of time, the Tibetans were always calm, and that regardless of whether they were encountering something good or bad, they would always smile at others and say 'Thank you' in Chinese. When lining up, they always wedged the old people in the middle; when walking down the street, they always lined up into an orderly group; when taking photographs, they never scrambled for the best spot; when they ate something, they always divided what they had in their bags so that each person got some, even if everyone had their own. They always lined up to get on the bus; they always gave money when they saw beggars; whenever they saw a Buddhist image, they piously honoured it with reverence. When they had to wait, they always did so quietly, without incessant chatter; encountering a happy situation, they always happily smiled; when they said 'thank you,' they always looked you in the face.

They humbly think of themselves as lacking culture, yet are unaware of the fact that they are literate in Tibetan as well as knowing some Chinese, which, although they cannot speak they can more or less understand. But

I, this Han Chinese man, don't know any Tibetan at all. So if we speak of lacking culture, it should be me. But do I have that kind of humility? No.

In the course of a few days, their firm beliefs, their devotion to the Buddha, their reciprocal kindness, and their view of the world began to influence me. They all wore strings of Buddhist prayer beads on their wrists, and as long as they were not carrying anything, they rolled the beads with their fingers, one by one, mumbling something in Tibetan.

When we went to the Lama Temple, I chatted all the way with their tour escort, this Tibetan fellow. I asked him what was the thing they kept murmuring every day. He said it was the six-syllable mantra, 'Om Mani Padme Hung.' In Chinese, it would be something like, 'May the common people of this world no longer suffer.' I asked, "This is what they recite every day? Why common people of this world?" He laughed and said, "That's what our Tibetan Buddhist doctrine is like. It attaches most importance to the common people of this world." Afterwards, he told me about karma and reincarnation. It seemed to me that I understood a little about where their tolerance and tranquillity came from.

I asked him why he had been so painstakingly looking for restaurants in the past few days. "There are many places we could have gone for group meals. You just decide on how much to spend per person and the restaurant arranges everything. It would be much cheaper, and also more convenient than the way you did it." He said, "It wasn't easy for them to make this trip, and if the food was not good, they wouldn't have a good time. Group meals are OK, but the food is really not good. Looking for a better restaurant and ordering individual dishes may be more troublesome and more expensive than having group meals, but they feel better this way. While they are away from home, I may as well make them as comfortable as possible. We will only have a bit less money, but money can always be made. So as long as we have enough, we are happy. If you make a lot of money, but make other people unhappy, there could be retribution."

I looked at him, feeling deeply moved. You hear this sort of talk all the time. Just about anybody will say it. But how many people can really do it this way?

When I saw them off to the station on the last day, they placed a khata scarf around my neck and put down their heavy bundles to take turns shaking hands with me and expressing their thanks. In my heart, I discovered, I

hated to part with them. This was very different from any other group I had ever led before. In the past, when I was seeing the groups off, I would be eager to quickly send them off and be done with them, as I was dead tired from having braved them in a battle of wits during the few days of their visit. But as I was seeing the Tibetan group off, I felt very reluctant to let go - to let go of the few happy days of tranquillity that they had brought me, and even more reluctant to let go of the relaxed, worry-free feeling I had when I was with them.

My encounter with them made me feel that in fact there weren't too many things worth fussing about. Of all the people from different parts of China that I had encountered, none had been able to give me such a sense of redemptive influence.

After their tickets were checked and they entered the station, their full-time tour escort came out one more time to wave his farewell. I told him we had to embrace, and then entered the station to hug him and say goodbye. I didn't know if he understood that of the too many people I'd seen from all over the country, there honestly weren't many that I felt I could wholeheartedly embrace as friends. He was one of the few.

To be able to meet a friend like that after leading tourist groups for so many years is truly a great fortune in one's life. I sincerely hope that he can come to Beijing again, and that we will again get together.

INDEPENDENCE: THE RIGHT OF TIBETAN PEOPLE

The Cao Changqing⁸

November 1994

The issue of Tibet has always been a controversial subject. Not only do the Chinese governments on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait hold an entirely different view on the subject from the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, the opinions of Chinese people at home and abroad are also considerably different. This variety of differences mainly stems from the degree of understanding that people have about Tibetan history and reality, as well as on the 'value scale' or 'ethical yardstick' that they deploy. Consequently, discussions of the Tibetan issue not only promote understanding of the true history and reality of Tibet, they also impel us to reconsider human free will and the unification of national territory, the right of people to choose and the shape of the nation, as well as a nation's right to self-determination and other important value concepts and conflicts. Whether we choose to accept or reject those values directly influences the course of Chinese people's move towards freedom and democracy.

Tibetan History: The Truth

Chinese governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait claim that Tibet is an inalienable part of China's territory. But the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, the Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan Government-in-Exile think that history is not like that at all and that Tibet is an independent nation.

The People's Republic of China believes that after the People's Liberation Army entered Tibet in 1950, Tibet was 'liberated' from serfdom and that during those years it gained enormous progress and Prosperity. But the Tibetan Government-in-Exile feels that during those years, Tibetan people have been enslaved and deprived of their basic human rights.

Which one of these two completely opposite views is closer to the truth?

8 Chinese: American writer Cao Chang Qing was born in Heilongjiang province, China and now based in the united states.

An Historical Outline of Relations between Tibet and China

Let us use the historical record to examine relations between Tibet and five Chinese dynasties: Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing. In 127 BCE, when the Han dynasty was first established, the first king of Tibet, Nyatri Tsenpo, ascended the throne. For several hundred years after that, various tribes on the Plateau were engaged in a power struggle for hegemony. Tibet became powerful during China's Tang dynasty. In the seventh century, the Tubo King, Songtsen Gampo, annexed several tribes, unified them into one state, and expanded his territory. The Tang dynasty presented Princess Wencheng to Songtsen Gampo to be his imperial concubine, seeking good relations between the two countries. On one occasion, the Tibetan army stormed China's capital of that time, Chang'an (today's Xian).

During the final years of China's Song dynasty Tibet was also annexed by the mighty crack horsemen of the Mongol Genghis Khan. The Mongols established the Yuan dynasty in [China's] Central Plains. But the founder of the Yuan, Khubilai Khan, honoured the Tibetan Grand Lama, Phagba, as the supreme spiritual master in the whole Mongol empire with the title of State Preceptor, and gave him charge over Tibet's political and religious affairs. The Mongols did not directly rule Tibet. After the decline of the Mongols, Tibet had practically no contacts with the Chinese Ming dynasty, which succeeded the Yuan.

At the time of China's Qing dynasty the relations with Tibet were basically friendly. Qing troops entered Tibet four times in response to calls from the Dalai Lama to expel foreign invasions and quell internal rebellions, and they withdrew each time after their mission was accomplished. At the end of the Qing, Tibet experienced incursions from neighbouring Nepal and British-India. In 1909, after the Qing Guangxu emperor and the Empress Dowager Cixi died in quick succession, Qing troops attacked Lhasa and occupied Tibet. Two years later, after the outbreak of the Xinhai Revolution (in China), Qing troops stationed in Tibet split into 'royalist' and 'republican' factions and started fighting each other. Tibetans seized the opportunity to rise in revolt, and after they defeated the Qing troops the 13th Dalai Lama declared Tibet an independent country.

In early 1950, the People's Liberation Army started an offensive on Tibet. With a large military force bearing down on their borders, Tibetans sent a delegation to Beijing to sue for peace, and were forced to sign the '17-Point Agreement' with the ruling regime. The main substance of the

Agreement was that Beijing promised to preserve everything in Tibet unchanged, while the Tibetans would allow the Liberation Army to enter Tibet peacefully. But soon after its entry, the Chinese Communist Party implemented socialism and the Tibetans grew increasingly dissatisfied. The 1959 Tibetan Uprising, which the Chinese communists call an ‘armed rebellion,’ was put down by military force. The 14th Dalai Lama and nearly 80,000 Tibetans fled to India and established the Tibetan Government-in-exile.

The Basis and Flaws in Viewing Tibet as Chinese Territory

At present, Chinese governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait claim that Tibet has been Chinese territory since ancient times, and they base their claims on five main points. First is that during China's Tang dynasty, a Tibetan king married Princess Wencheng, who later had great power and influence in Tibet. Second is that Tibet was also incorporated into the Mongol empire and was under Yuan jurisdiction. Third is that during the Qing dynasty its troops entered Tibet many times to act as protectors. Fourth is that the title of the 5th Dalai Lama was conferred by the Manchu Qing emperor. Fifth is that Chiang Kai-shek's Central Nationalist Government dispatched the head of its Commission for Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs, Wu Zhongxin, to Lhasa to preside over the 14th Dalai Lama's ‘sitting-in-bed’ ceremony (the enthronement ritual by which the five-year-old Dalai Lama was officially instituted as the supreme political and religious leader of Tibet.)

Neither historical sources nor common sense support any of the five ‘foundations’ for such claims.

First, the Tang Princess Wencheng was married to Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo because the dynasty used marriage as the means of seeking good relations between the two countries. It's absurd to have people today using the Tang dynasty's offering of a concubine - more than 1,300 years ago - to reason that Tibet had relations with China since ancient times and was Chinese territory.

Second, the Mongol Genghis Khan's cavalry invaded China's Central Plains and established the Yuan dynasty. Because it was a regime established in the region inhabited by ethnic Han Chinese, Chinese people view the Yuan as one of the dynasties that belong to Chinese history. But it doesn't make sense to argue that, because Tibet was also occupied by Genghis

Khan's cavalry and made a part of the Mongol empire, it was part of the Yuan dynasty and, furthermore, part of China. If this kind of reasoning can stand, then today's Mongolian descendants of Genghis Khan should also stand up to claim that they have sovereign rights over the territories that their forefathers conquered, such as Tibet and China's Central Plains, as well as a large part of Russia. And in that case, today's China should also be turned over to the Republic of Mongolia. Based on this kind of logic, present day Vietnam and Korea should also be China's territory, because they had both been subjugated by the Chinese at one time. This kind of logic obviously makes no sense.

Third, the fact that Qing troops entered Tibet several times, to help Tibetans put down rebellions and repulse foreign invasions, cannot become grounds to claim that the Qing dynasty had sovereignty over Tibet. If this kind of argument held water, wouldn't the United States of America, which a few years ago helped Kuwait beat back an Iraqi invasion, have sovereignty over Kuwait? Should the United States have sovereignty over Haiti because it entered Haiti with allied troops to help the popularly-elected President Aristide, who had been overthrown by the military, take back his power?

Fourth, to say that the Shizu emperor of Qing invested the 5th Dali Lama with his title - and use this as proof that Tibet belonged to the Qing dynasty - does not tally with historical facts. After the Chinese Communist Party established a government, Ya Hanzhang became its authority for Tibetan history research, and he compiled a book on Tibet's history up to the present 14th Dalai Lama, entitled, *The Biographies of the Dalai Lamas*, where, he writes in the Preface: 'Because of the demands of our struggle, the organization has asked me to write a book about Tibetan history, to be used to debunk the slander disseminated by the opposition and to advance the anti-imperialist education of the Tibetan people.'² An historian should be faithful to the historical truth, but he wrote this book because of political demands. And yet even he in this book notes that the title of the Dalai Lamas was in fact not conferred on the 5th Dalai Lama by the Manchu Qing emperor, but rather by the Mongol ruler, Altan Khan, on the Tibetan religious leader Sonam Gyatso sometime during the Chinese Ming dynasty.³ 'Dalai' is a Mongolian word meaning sea or ocean: 'Lama' is a Tibetan word meaning 'supreme spiritual master' or guru. Tibetans then posthumously recognized two Buddhist leaders as the 1st and the 2nd Dalai Lamas, and considered Sonam Gyatso to be the 3rd Dalai Lama. The title has been used since continuously, in numeric order.⁴

What the Manchu Qing emperor conferred on the 5th Dalai Lama was an honorific title composed of 24 Chinese characters, but at that same time, the Dalai Lama also conferred on the Qing emperor a bunch of titles of respect.⁵ These mutual conferrals were a way of expressing friendship at the time. The relationship was not one of subordination.

Fifth, during the almost 40 years between the Xinhai Revolution and 1950, Tibet was completely independent. During this time, despite the shift of power caused by the death of the 13th Dalai lama and the succession of the 14th, Tibetans never complied with the demands of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Government that Tibet be considered China's territory, subordinate to Han Chinese rule. The Anthology of Archival Materials on the Death Ceremony for the 13th Dalai Lama and the Reincarnation and Enthronement of the 14th Dalai Lama (referred to as Anthology below), collected 478 official letters, telegrams, and other documents related to this topic which were issued and received by the Nationalist Government at the time.⁶ I have carefully read all of these documents and have discovered that during this period Tibet had never agreed to turn itself over to Chinese rule.

The Chinese governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait emphasize that the Nationalist Government at the time dispatched Wu Zhongxin as a special envoy to Lhasa to 'examine and confirm' the child reincarnation on behalf of the Central Government, and that he 'took charge' of the enthronement ceremony of the 14th Dalai Lama. They use this as proof of Tibet's subordinate status. But one can see from a telegram sent by Wu Zhongxin to Chiang Kai-shek, which is included in the Anthology, that the Tibetans allowed Wu Zhongxin to see the child reincarnation and take part in his enthronement ceremony only to give face to the Nationalist Government. Wu Zhongxin had no decision-making power in the installation of the 14th Dalai Lama.

Ya Hanzhang also writes about this in his book, *The Biographies of the Dalai Lamas*: "The so-called 'examination' was no more than a ploy of the Nationalist Government to save face, as it in fact had no veto power over the decision."⁷ A dispute erupted at the enthronement ceremony over the seating location arranged for Wu Zhongxin, which was not prestigious enough. Tibetans in the end reluctantly agreed to give him the seat that corresponded to the one previously accorded the Qing Imperial Resident Minister in Tibet. Ya Hanzhang writes: 'The so-called "seating" issue was likewise merely a way to recoup some face for the Nationalist Government,

showing that Wu Zhongxin's status was at least equal to that of a Resident Minister in Tibet.' 8 Wu was not at all 'in charge of' or 'presiding over' the 'sitting-in-bed' enthronement ceremony.

Kuomintang newspapers at the time published a photograph of the Dalai Lama with Wu Zhongxin as evidence that Wu was in charge of the Dalai Lama's enthronement, but the former Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, pointed out in a speech published in Tibet Daily that the photograph had been taken several days after the ceremony when Wu Zhongxin paid a formal visit to the Dalai Lama.⁹

As I carefully studied documents in the Anthology, I discovered two telegrams that can corroborate this point: e.g. Official Correspondence Document #439, which is a telegram sent by the Nationalist Government's Deputy Chief of the Central Propaganda Department, Dong Xianguang, to Wu Zhongxin in Lhasa, and which says that the Associated Press wanted to obtain news photographs of the Dalai Lama's enthronement ceremony for publication, and that in order to save time Wu should send them directly to a newspaper in India for transfer to AP. Wu Zhongxin responded by telegram (Official Correspondence Document #441), in which he said that because the enthronement ceremony took place in the morning, taking photographs was not convenient.' What he meant was that he didn't have any photographs of the ceremony. He said in the telegram that he would send photographs taken on other occasions to AP. Photographs could be taken on other occasions, but there was not a single one of what the Nationalist Government really wanted - of its special envoy Wu Zhongxin 'presiding over' the enthronement ceremony - and because no one among the group of almost 100 special envoys had taken a photo of Wu Zhongxin presiding over the ceremony, the claim about the enthronement ceremony being presided over by Wu Zhongxin is very hard to believe.

The Special Status of Tibet as a Religious State

Both Chinese governments on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait maintain that Tibet is not a sovereign nation, the main reasoning being that Tibet did not have official diplomatic relations with other countries. Also, the Manchu Qing emperor dispatched troops to Tibet on many occasions to put down revolts and repulse foreign invasions. These conditions were created by Tibet's unique character as a religious state.

Close relations between Tibet and China developed mainly during the Manchu Qing dynasty, amounting to those of a 'grantor' and 'grantee,' [more commonly known as the 'patron/priest relationship']. As the grantor, the Manchu Qing emperor used military force and yearly offerings of generous wealth to enable the grantee, the Dalai Lama, to not only wield political and religious power over Tibet, but also to act as the highest spiritual leader of the entire Qing empire's state religion. The religious influence of the Dalai Lama, which reached as far as Mongolia, East Turkestan, Korea and Burma, helped to maintain the stability of the Manchu Qing dynasty. Both parties benefited mutually from this secular and religious cooperation.

To draw a comparison, the relations between the two parties were very much like those between a village and a Buddhist temple on the hillside outside the village. The village chief acts as the secular leader and holds all the authority in the village in his hands. He has absolutely no authority over the Buddhist temple. But if there is a bandit incursion at the temple, or if the young monks rebel and the senior lama asks the village chief for help, the chief can send the village militia to the temple to drive out the foe and help restore order. Once this is done, the militia promptly withdraws. Normally, the village chief also acts as the 'patron' and provides food to the temple. The respect for, and the friendly relations with, the temple's senior lama brings the village chief increased support from the Buddhist villagers and increases his political power in the village. The temple does not need to provide for its own military force, since Buddhism advocates against killing, but in a desperate situation it can plead with the village chief to send over the village militia for its protection. Nor does the temple need to declare its independence, since it has never been under the jurisdiction of the village. The relationship between the lama and the village chief is mutually helpful and beneficial.

The situation is also somewhat similar to the relationship between Italy and the Vatican. Although the Vatican is located in Italy, it is not an Italian province, and it does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Italian government. But if someone were to launch an attack on, or engage in destruction of, the Holy City where the Roman Catholic Pope resides, upon a request from the Pope Italian troops could be deployed. But they could definitely not stay on and occupy the Vatican after they helped.

When this kind of rural relationship breaks down, the cause usually rests with the village chief's side. For example, he ignores pleas for help when

there is trouble at the temple, or he is tempted to seize the temple of his own accord. The temple's existence is based on its spiritual strength; it does not have a military force. If a secular village does not set store by its religious spirit and talks through the use of military force, the temple is, naturally, the weaker side. If the village chief does not believe in any religion, if he not only seizes the temple but also wants to socially transform its lamas and monks, then the temple will definitely suffer.

Tibet's unique character as a religious state and its patron/priest relationship with the Manchu Qing dynasty had turned it into an atypical independent state without formal diplomatic relations with other countries around the world. And this has created one of the misconceptions in China that Tibet is China's territory.

Two Proofs that Tibet Was Not a Province of Imperial China

From the invitation the 5th Dalai Lama received from the Manchu Qing Shunzhi emperor, and the protocol during his visit to Peking in 1652, we can see that Tibet was not under the rule of the Manchu Qing dynasty. According to a written account in Ya Hanzhang's *The Biographies of the Dalai Lamas*, before the Dalai Lama arrived in the capital the Manchu Qing emperor convened Manchu and ethnic Han ministers to discuss the protocol to welcome him. The Manchu ministers believed that since the Dalai Lama was the State Preceptor, the emperor should personally greet him outside the city walls, and that by doing so he might induce the Mongols beyond the borders - who were Buddhist believers - to surrender and pledge allegiance to him. The ethnic Han ministers believed that 'His Majesty the Emperor was the Lord of all countries of the world,' and that he would lose dignity by personally going out to greet the Dalai Lama.

In the end, the Shunzhi emperor made an impartial choice and went 20 kilometres out of the city under the pretext of 'hunting,' where he 'chanced upon' the Dalai Lama on the route. Not only has there never been an emperor in the history of China's feudal dynasties who personally went outside the city walls to greet a person who was under his rule, but when during the waning years of the Qing dynasty the emperor faced a special envoy sent by the mighty British Empire, he insisted that the envoy follow the ceremonial protocol of approaching him on bended knees and kowtowing to him. The special protocol accorded to the 5th Dalai Lama shows that Tibet was not subordinated to the Manchu Qing dynasty.

Another clear case in point is that if Tibet was subject to the Qing dynasty, it would have had to pay tribute to the court, just like the vassal provinces and other subordinate states. But history contains no such records at all. On the contrary, it was the Manchu Qing dynasty that continuously offered generous tribute to Tibet. This is because the Manchu Qing regarded Buddhism as their State religion and honoured the Dalai Lama as their supreme spiritual leader.

The Main Basis of Tibet's De Facto Independence

Modern Tibet only had diplomatic relations with countries such as Nepal. Except for not adequately meeting the formal conditions of foreign relations to be viewed as a sovereign nation, Tibet files of other criteria that mark an independent country.

It did so in the following eight respects: One, Tibet had an autochthonous way in generating its Head of State, namely the Dalai Lama. It had its own government institutions and government cabinet. Two, Tibet had its own capital which has always been in Lhasa. Three, Tibet had its own set of laws that it had formulated itself. Four, it had its own tax system, printed and issued its own currency, and had an independent financial system. Five, although not large in scale, it continuously had its own army. Six, even more importantly, it had its own culture, its own customs, and a spoken and written language that was different from Chinese. Seven, its lofty geographic elevation had historically provided natural boundaries for its territory. Eight, it has had an unbroken history of independence.

Facts About Tibet: Respect for its History

The Chinese population on both sides of the Taiwan Strait do not know much about the true history of Tibet. Because both regimes claim that Tibet is China's territory, it is difficult to publish any books that deal with the plateau's history of independence. Add to this the national sentiment of 'Great Unity' that the Chinese have always held, and the first reaction when they think about Tibet is that it cannot be independent. What Chinese people know about Tibetan history is basically what Chinese-run governments have instilled in them.

In September 1992, the People's Republic of China released the White Paper 1992: Tibet - Its Ownership And Human Rights Situation. The text quoted and revolved around a directive issued by Deng Xiaoping, which

read: ‘The key issue is that Tibet is a part of China, and whether right or wrong, use this criterion to make judgments.’ 13

How rude and peremptory is this logic that whether ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, ‘Tibet is a part of China!’ Regrettably, this Deng Xiaoping line of thought represents the way many Chinese people think namely, that as soon as Tibet is mentioned there can be no talk of independence. They disregard historical facts, don’t delve into the actual state of affairs, don’t want to know about the research done by Western Tibetologists, let alone listen carefully to the voices of Tibetans.

A Square Look at the Tibetan Reality

Respect for history should be the basic starting point for anyone pondering over the issue of Tibet. It is even more important to look squarely at Tibet’s reality under Chinese Communist Party rule and the aspirations of most Tibetans.

If assessing the current reality for Tibetans, we should primarily weigh it on the basis of the following: Under the 45-year-long Chinese Communist Party rule, have Tibetans been liberated politically, and have they gained freedom as ‘masters of their own affairs,’ or have they been deprived of their basic political rights? Economically, has the right of Tibetans to own private property been protected, and have they become rich, or have they been deprived of this right and become impoverished? As to religion, has their choice to believe in what they want been respected, or has their freedom of religion been trampled down? In terms of the human and ecological environment, has the Tibetan culture and the natural environment been protected, or have they been destroyed? In terms of racial relations, have Tibetans been respected as an ethnic minority, or have they suffered discrimination?

If only people looked into these matters a little more, they would find out that the facts are rather painful and a cause for indignation.

Politically, Tibetans have been completely stripped of their rights of choice. Like the rest of Mainland China, Tibet does not have elections by popular vote and its government institutions on all levels are not at all based on popular will. The most powerful man in Tibet is the Secretary-General of the Chinese Communist Party’s Tibet Autonomous Region Committee. From the time of the so-called ‘pacification’ of the Tibetan uprising in 1959

to this day, all seven 'Party Committee Secretaries' - Zhang Guohua, Zeng Yongya, Ren Rong, Yin Fatang, Wu Jinghua, Hu Jintao, Chen Kuiyuan - were Han Chinese with the exception of Wu Jinghua who belongs to the Yi ethnic minority.

Like the rest of China, Tibet does not have freedom of the Press or freedom of speech. Any resistance is suppressed by the Chinese military. As the Chinese Communist Party document from the Tibet Military District that was leaked to the West reveals, 87,000 Tibetans 'perished' during the 'pacification' of 1959.¹⁴ According to figures provided by the 10th Panchen Lama, a former Deputy Chairman of the Chinese communist National People's Congress, 10-15 percent of the entire Tibetan population were imprisoned at the time, and of those 40 percent died in prison.¹⁵

According to Amnesty International sources, between 1987 and 1992 alone there were over 150 street protests by Tibetans in Lhasa that were suppressed.¹⁶ Above all, in the spring of 1989, two months before the advent of the 'Tiananmen pro-democracy movement,' the Chinese Communist Party embarked on a large-scale suppression of Tibetans in Lhasa and declared martial law. Beijing Youth Daily reporter Tang Daxian, who was in Lhasa at the time, published his insider story overseas of this suppression based on eyewitness accounts, plus Chinese Communist Party documents obtained via other channels. According to his figures, over 400 Tibetans were massacred at the time, thousands of people were wounded, and over 3,000 Tibetans were arrested.¹⁷ Other sources say that, consequently, over 40,000 Tibetans had their urban residence registration rescinded because of their involvement with the protests and that they were driven out of Lhasa.

In his speech at Yale University in America, the Dalai Lama said that 1.2 million Tibetans have died of starvation and persecution during the 40-plus years of Chinese communist rule. ¹⁸ The Tibetan Government-in-Exile has a detailed breakdown of this figure into separate categories: Of the total, 170,000 died in prison; close to 160,000 were shot to death; 430,000 died on battlefields; 340,000 died of starvation; 100,000 were forced to commit suicide and were driven to death during 'struggle sessions.' The total number of Tibetans who died in the three Tibetan regions - 'the Tibet Autonomous Region,' Central Tibet and Eastern Tibet, that is the former Tibetan regions of U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo - is equivalent of one-sixth of the entire Tibetan population. That means one in every six Tibetans died of unnatural causes. ¹⁹ This kind of mortality ratio is rarely seen in the

modern history of mankind.²⁰

Economically, Tibetans have been completely deprived of the right to own private property. The Chinese Communist Party has forced them to undergo socialist movements which have made their lives poorer. In 1980, the General-Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Hu Yaobang, made an inspection tour of Tibet. Faced with the extreme poverty the Tibetans were living under, he was furious when he spoke at the Tibet Autonomous Region Communist Party Committee meeting: “Have you thrown all the funds the Central Committee has been allocating especially as aid to Tibet into the Yarlung Tsangpo river?” Soon after, the Tibet Autonomous Region Communist Party Committee Secretary Ren Rong was sacked and replaced by Yin Fatang. Hu Yaobang’s instruction to the committee regarding Tibet was to work hard for a few years and restore the living standards of the Tibetan people to pre-1959 levels. Yin Fatang later wrote in an article for the Red Flag magazine: ‘When Comrade Hu Yaobang made the inspection tour of Tibet, he pointed out, based on the state of affairs in Tibet at the time, that the actual condition of Tibet is one of poverty and backwardness.’²¹

In recent years, following economic reforms in all of China, the living standards of Tibetans have considerably improved compared to the time of Hu Yaobang’s visit. However, according to people who are familiar with the true state of affairs in Tibet, those who are now getting rich on the plateau are mostly the ethnic Chinese. This is because all economic activity relies on ‘connections,’ and there is no fair competition. And only the Han Chinese have connections and access in Beijing and on the Chinese mainland. According to media news reports, on the most prosperous Barkhor Street in Lhasa, shops operated by Han Chinese outnumber those of Tibetans.

When it comes to religion, Tibetans have been subjected to even more severe persecution. According to data provided by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, 6,259 monasteries on the Tibetan Plateau were destroyed by 1979. Only eight remained. Of the original 590,000 monks, 110,000 were persecuted to death and 250,000 were forcibly returned to secular life. In 1988, the founding conference of the China Tibetology Research Centre, the 10th Panchen Lama remarked on this, visibly distressed: “In all areas inhabited by Tibetans, 100 percent of the monasteries have been destroyed; of the seven or eight that survive, not one is in good condition.”

The present religious persecution by the Chinese communists is not as brutal as it once was, but Tibetans still do not have religious freedom. All monasteries and monks in Tibet have to take orders from the United Front Work Department and the State Administration for Religious Affairs. ‘Regulations for Monks’ stipulate that they must ‘be over 18-year-old, love their country, love the Communist Party, have their parents’ consent...’ After they enter the monastery, they must study Marxism and get a clear understanding that idealism and materialism are two opposing worldviews.’

If the monks show the slightest resentment at the way they are deprived of religious freedom, they meet with punishment. Repression is even more ruthless when it comes to Tibetans who advocate independence. According to Tibetans who had personally experienced abuse in prisons, the Chinese military police not only use electric batons, rifle butts, iron rods, punching and kicking, but also resort to cruel measures, such as inflicting cigarette burns and attacks by dog, and prodding nun’s vaginas with electric police truncheons to extract confessions. As a former Chinese Public Security Bureau officer in Tibet - who is now in exile - enumerated, “In Tibet, there are 33 types of police torture.”²²

In terms of the human and natural environment, Western scholars who study Tibetan issues unanimously agree that Tibet’s culture and national resources are being seriously damaged. The Chinese communist regime has re-partitioned Tibet’s territory by integrating large regions of Tibet’s former Tibetan regions of Kham and Amdo provinces into the bordering Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu and Qinghai. Great numbers of Han Chinese have been moved into these areas. According to figures extrapolated from the results of several Chinese national population censuses, the number of Han Chinese currently residing in the three traditional Tibetan regions has already reached seven million, exceeding the number of Tibetans, which stands at six million.

Even the people who are not familiar with circumstances in Tibet, but who have lived under Communist Party rule, can easily put themselves in the Tibetans place and imagine just how dark the autocratic rule of the Chinese Communist Party can be! While being enslaved by the Chinese communist dictatorship, the Tibetans also endure racial discrimination by the Han Chinese people.

The well-known Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng recalled in an article

how his parents, who had never met a Tibetan person, upon hearing that his girlfriend was Tibetan firmly opposed marriage and even wanted to break off their own relationship with him. His father's reason for being against it: "Tibetans are not humans, they are half-livestock."²³ This kind of conclusion was the result of the many years of Communist Party propaganda.

Ethical Issues in Chinese Opposition to Tibetan Rights

A considerably large number of Chinese do not have any respect for history and have even less regard for the suffering of the Tibetan people in the past 40 some years. They blindly oppose Tibetan appeals for independence and insist on placing the 'Great Unification' of China above all else. The Chinese governments on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait both oppose Tibetan independence, which naturally stems from their self-interest as rulers. But the intellectuals on the two sides of the strait should absolutely not disregard the right of the Tibetan people to choose independence.

Some people oppose Tibetan independence because, if Tibet is allowed to become independent, then other regions such as East Turkestan and Inner Mongolia will also follow suit and demand the same, so Greater China will disintegrate. Who wants to be responsible for that?

However, what is our starting point? Is it 'human beings' or is it the 'State'? Which value is more important? That of national unification, or that of 'human freedom'? Which one is the ultimate value? Or, to put it in other words, what is more to be feared: 'disintegration,' or human enslavement?

Let's conjure two propositions. In the first, Lenin is resurrected and he uses military force to unify the 15 states that formerly belonged to the Great Soviet Empire, including those that are within Russia. He restores the Greater Soviet Union and establishes communist rule. All the Soviet people are enslaved, but the country is unified. In the second proposition, the Soviet Union disintegrates into the current 15 states. The Greater Soviet Union is no more, but the people have obtained freedom. Which one of these two propositions, which one of the two ways of life, would people choose? The Soviet people have chosen personal freedom, even at the cost of the disintegration of the 'Greater Soviet Union.' Why do the Chinese people insist on clinging to 'Greater China,' even if it means not being free?

Concepts like borders and states never hold the ultimate value. The Helsinki Accord, signed by European states in 1975, has a clause that the changes of borders between European states can be allowed so long as they are carried out by peaceful means. The main spirit of the Helsinki Accord is that borders are not eternal and that human aspirations for freedom are of higher value than states and borders. The reasoning is not complicated at all, because things like borders, the form of states, and social systems are all human creations whose point of departure and final destination are human freedom and dignity. When they go against the will of the majority of the people, or when they are not in line with the needs of the people, the people will want to change them, not adapt to them by modifying human freedom.

Some people say that, if we accept this kind of reasoning, what about if all 29 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions in China, such as Guangdong, Sichuan, and Shanghai, want independence? The problem is that there is no basis for such assumptions. For the people of a certain place to demand independence, there must be some special conditions, such as different ethnicity, different culture, former history of independence, aspirations of the majority of the people, etc. One cannot demand independence without any grounds or for no reason at all. For instance, after the former Soviet Union broke into the present 15 states, the territory and population of Russia by far exceeds that of any other of the 14 states that had split off, but no one has heard until now of the Russian people still demanding a further breakup into smaller pieces. The main reason for this is that Russia is one nation with the same culture, without past divisions into a number of states in its modern history. Even more importantly, the majority of Russian people do not have such aspirations.

This is much like the three provinces of northeast China that were formally set up as the State of Manchuria, Manchukuo, under Japanese rule, but no one in the northeast today demands 'independence' to establish a state. The assumption that letting Tibet become independent would result in independence for Guangzhou, Qingdao and Harbin, is like the speculation by some people that 1.2 billion Chinese might flee to the United States if the mainland Chinese refugees who gravitated to the United States are not quickly deported back to China. These are all presuppositions that can never come to pass; they are used to deprive a group of people in a weaker position of their due rights.

Unification or Freedom: What Is More Important?

This Chinese tradition of viewing the ‘State’ as more important than individual freedom and dignity goes back in time. An entire subset of the 5, 000-year-long history of Chinese civilization puts more emphasis on group values, such as the sovereign, the State, and the society, than on individual freedom. The core of Chinese civilization, so meticulously constructed by Confucius, Mencius, and their disciples - the forefathers of Chinese intellectuals - is that the individual is subordinate to and obeys the group.

Famous Chinese renewal and reformist intellectuals of the modern era, such as Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Chen Duxiu, Zhang Taiyan and Liang Shuming, all emphasized strengthening and legal reform to make China a powerful nation. They rarely discussed individual freedom and rights. Even someone like Yan Fu, who translated *On Liberty* [by John Stuart Mill] with the intention of introducing and popularizing English liberal intellectual thinking among the Chinese, still treated liberalism as a means to enrich the country and strengthen the military - not because he saw liberty and freedom as the objective.

The higher value of the State in comparison to the individual has been stressed even more during the recent half-a-century of Chinese Communist Party rule and carried to the extreme. Chinese people have been deeply affected by the corrosive culture that puts State power and the motherland’s interests above all else. One can see this kind of nationalistic sentiment that puts the interests of the State above all else in all the recent movements for democracy and freedom in mainland China. As an example, whether during the ‘April 5th’ Tiananmen Movement of 1976 or the ‘Pro-democracy Movement of 1989,’ the main theme at Tiananmen Square was always ‘patriotism.’ The principal demand that the student leaders at Tiananmen presented to the government was for the authorities to recognize them as a patriotic movement. The calls for individualism and freedom were quite weak.

With the momentum and exuberance of China’s economic development today, some intellectuals are advocating for ‘neo-authoritarianism,’ but the essence of this ‘-ism’ is yet again the traditional Chinese cultural mindset that sees State interests as more important than individual power and social order as more important than individual freedom.

The irony of it - and it also gives one pause - is that this kind of thinking, which places the greatest importance on 'making the nation strong,' has lingered on in China for 5,000 years but the nation has never become strong. The fundamental reason for this is that the Chinese people, and the endless succession of obdurate intellectuals in particular, have turned the value system on its head: By stressing the power of the nation they have stripped away individual freedoms and rights. A prosperous and powerful nation should emphatically not be the ultimate goal. On the contrary, only the protection of individual freedoms and dignity gives value and meaning to a nation's existence.

The strength of a nation should only be an 'end result;' people can only be imaginative and creative when free, and only then can they create more spiritual and material wealth which in the end 'results' in a powerful nation. Chinese people have been confusing the cause and the effect for 5,000 years; as a result their nation has not been strong, while they have been stripped of human freedom.

Setting store by human freedom is not only the fundamental way to solve the Tibetan issue, it is also a crucial factor in whether the Chinese can transform themselves into a modern people and whether China itself can become a truly free and democratic nation.

Who Decides - 1.2 Billion Chinese or a Majority of Tibetans?

Some people say that whether Tibet is independent or not cannot be left to the choice of the Tibetan people themselves; it should be decided by the majority in China, whether the over-one-billion ethnic Han Chinese agree to it or not. Some people implicitly convey that this should be decided by the Han Chinese and Tibetans jointly. The kind of 'decision by a Han majority doctrine' effectively deprives Tibetan people of their right to choose their own destiny. The reason is quite simple; there are more than a billion Han Chinese and only six million Tibetans. If the Han Chinese population were to stop growing, and the Tibetan population were to increase by the world's highest annual growth rate of 3 percent, it would still take 1,500 years for the Tibetan population to catch up with the number of Han Chinese. In fact, the position that the majority Han Chinese should be making all the decisions would deprive Tibetans of ever having the opportunity to be the masters of their own fate.

On the issue of Tibet, to respect a 'majority decision should primarily

mean to respect the aspirations of the majority of Tibetans. Just as 'Greater China' and 'unification' are not the ultimate goals, neither is independence the most crucial value. The most important thing is to respect the right of Tibetan people to freely decide, whether they choose independence or to be united with China.

A good example of respect for a people's right to choose their destiny is the referendum held in the United States' territory of Puerto Rico in 1993 to decide whether the island should become the 51st state of the United States of America. Whether the island should become a part of U.S. territory was decided by a free vote cast by all the inhabitants of the island, and did not hinge on the aspirations of Americans from the 50 United States. If the principle of majority decision was applied so as to imply the entire U.S. population, there would be no ground left for the Puerto Ricans to exercise their choice, since the population of the island merely numbered three million, while the U.S. population stood at 250 million.

The result of the 'referendum on self-determination' was that the majority of Puerto Ricans chose to preserve the status quo - that is, they did not want to become a U.S. state. The U.S. government and American people did not interfere with this result and fully respected the aspirations of the local populace. According to US law, however, if the majority of the people in Puerto Rico chose to unify with the United States and wanted to become the 51st constituent state, they could not realize this automatically. This motion would have to be introduced to the U.S. Congress and ratified after debate. The U.S. Congress is the highest legislative body in the nation, and it represents the will of the people. Its approval is the approval of the majority of American people. In other words, when Puerto Ricans chose independence, they did so by the unilateral decision of their own majority. If they chose to join the United States of America, they would need to seek the consent of the American people.

This is very much like marriage and family relations. In the U.S., if one spouse files for divorce, the court promptly accepts the case and can approve separation without the consent of the other spouse. But if one of the spouses proposes to re-enter the union, he/she must obtain the consent of the other side; only then can the 'union' take place. That is to say, for divorce it is enough if one side asks for it, but for marriage both sides have to give consent. Legally, 'marriage' cannot take place just because one side insists on tying the knot. Family relations are like that too. Let's say that there is a big family where several brothers live together. If one of the

brothers wants to move out and live ‘independently,’ the right to make this decision should be his own. But if one day this brother wants to move back to live ‘united’ with his family, he has to get the consent of the majority of his brothers.

All the above examples and analogies embody the same concept: Full respect for the human right of choice, which holds human free will as the highest value. The history of mankind increasingly testifies that as long as something is good or a good way of life, it does not have to be forced on others to accept it. When people are allowed to choose freely, they are certain to ultimately choose the good thing. They choose ‘the good thing’ because they were also given the right to choose ‘the bad thing.’

Can Tibetan Independence Pose a Threat to the Security of China?

Some relatively realistic Chinese stress that if it became independent, Tibet could cause a national security threat to China. What they mean to say is that China and India have fought a border war and they still have troops stationed facing off across the Himalayas. Once Tibet becomes independent, India’s armed forces and influence could enter Tibet, and without the natural protection of the mountain ranges the security of China’s hinterlands could suffer a direct military threat.

In reality, this conceit ignores the Tibetan people’s pursuit of peace as well as their tradition of - and aspirations for - independence and sovereignty. In modern history, Tibet has been invaded time and again by other countries, and by the Qing empire, and is currently under the autocratic rule of the Chinese Communist Party. What is the basis for saying that Tibetans, once they break away from Chinese rule and become independent and sovereign, would be willing or allow the Indian army to invade them and submit them to foreign rule? The Tibetan Government-in-Exile and over 100,000 refugees have been based in India in exile for 35 years now, and although they reside within India’s national territory, they have not been ruled by Indians. The Tibetan exile government and the Tibetan community under its leadership have been independent all along.

In his speech to the U.S. Congress in 1987, the Dalai Lama proposed the Five-Point Peace Plan²⁴ for the solution of the Tibetan problem, which included turning Tibetan regions into a demilitarised zone, a natural environmental protection area, and a peaceful destination for tourists. Turning Tibet into a demilitarized zone would be beneficial for the security

of both China and India, since if either one of the two were to attack the other, it would first have to enter Tibet, which would not only meet with Tibetan resistance but would also be condemned by the international community. It wouldn't be like the explosive situation right now, where, without a buffer zone between them, any friction between Chinese and Indian troops could lead to an armed conflict. How would a demilitarized Tibet - led by the Dalai Lama, who has received the Nobel Peace Prize for his advocacy of non-violence - pose a threat to the security of any country?

Could Independent Tibet Survive Without Aid From China?

When talking about Tibet, many Chinese particularly like to emphasize one incessantly repeated position of the Chinese government - that Tibet used to be under serfdom, and was poor and backward. The life of Tibetans only improved because of the years of large-scale aid in the form of manpower and material resources, contributed by the Chinese mainland. The White Paper on the Condition of Human Rights in Tibet published by Beijing, also cites a huge list of official figures to illustrate this point and thereby prove that 'without the Communist Party of China, there would be no New Tibet.'

To begin with, the trustworthiness of these White Paper figures is suspect. To this day, there is no freedom of expression and freedom of the Press in mainland China. When a figure is not subject to scrutiny by the media and public opinion, and when it is not allowed to be refuted it or challenged by a different opinion, how credible can it be? But let's even take a step back and say that those figures can be trusted. How could a country or a region not experience some progress and life-improvements after a 45-year-long period of development? Who can prove that Tibet's economic development would not have been better than today if the Tibetans been governing themselves?

Secondly, nobody is denying the backwardness of serfdom previously practiced in Tibet. But can one use the expediency of military occupation to forcibly transform the society of a nation different from one's own?

When the Chinese talk about serfdom, they often think of the film *Serf*, made by the Chinese communists in the past to expose the cruelty of Tibetan serf masters; images of the suffering of the film's main protagonist, Jampa, have come to symbolize Old Tibet. But in reality the darkness of Old Tibet has been exaggerated by the Chinese Communist Party's

monopoly of the media. It is the same as the Chinese Communist Party's exaggeration of suffering in Old China, the purpose being to make people satisfied with their current life, no matter how impoverished it may be, and at the same time prove the rationality and legitimacy of present-day Chinese Communist Party rule. Because the Chinese have been living with this kind of one-sided propaganda for so long, after a while their image of Tibet has become nothing but the movie *Serf*, and to them all the Tibetans are Jampas. Nobody thinks back to consider the brutality of forced social transformation imposed on Tibet after the military occupation by Chinese communists.

Thirdly, would there be no New Tibet without the Communist Party of China, just as one might ask whether without the Communist Party of China, would there be no New China? The painful reality of mainland China during the past 45 years has already informed the public that Communist Party rule has brought profound misery to the Chinese people. It is the same in Tibet: The Communist Party has not done a good job during the past half century, so why still insist on 'Party leadership'? Moreover, the view that without Chinese help the Tibetans could not survive in fact belittles the wisdom, creativity, and human commonality of the people of Tibetan ethnicity. It is essentially racial discrimination.

Tibetans in India have not only established their own exile government, they have also created a constitution that guarantees freedom of expression and of the Press, as well as over private property, through a free vote by all Tibetan refugees. In the assessment of Columbia University's Professor Robert Thurman, a Tibetan scholar, "His Holiness (The Dalai Lama] reconstructed a viable Tibetan community in India, preserving the culture of Tibet."²⁵

If Tibetans can establish an independent, rich and democratic society under India's roof, why would they lose this ability after they truly become masters of their own affairs in Tibet? Some people say that there is no industry in Tibet, and that this kind of region is difficult to develop without Chinese help. But the inhabitants of the People's Republic of Mongolia are nomads too, and they can make a living. Moreover, since they abandoned communism after the collapse of the Soviet empire, the people have become increasingly prosperous and free.

The crucial thing is to trust that people, regardless of their ethnicity and skin colour, can create their own future as long as they are free. The

Chinese should not always stick to the Communist Party's line of thinking and be impelled to act as 'saviours' of other people.

Human Freedom is the Highest Value

The fundamental principles in solving the issue of Tibet are respect for people's right to choose, and holding human freedom as the highest value. States, borders and social systems should be set up in order to safeguard human freedoms and rights. When they violate such original intentions, they should be changed. The English philosopher John Locke, one of the founders of modern Western civilization, already expounded on this incisively 300 years ago. Locke believed that before the establishment of State and the appearance of State laws, there existed a kind of 'natural law,' namely, the inherent right to freedom, equality and private property that people receive from God. Laws that govern state and society are formulated to protect this 'Law of Nature' so that individual freedom is not infringed upon by others. But when State laws and social systems violate the spirit of the Law of Nature, they should be changed.

In the face of autocracy, people have the right of revolution. Locke's theory of people's sovereignty and liberty above all else was reflected in the writing of the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who in his work *Of the Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right*, maintains that the form of government is merely a 'contract' between the people and the State; in this, the people authorize the government to administer State affairs, and the aspirations of the majority of the people are the basis for the legitimacy of the government. The American Declaration of Independence, drafted by Thomas Jefferson, and the exposition by the Father of the United States Constitution, James Madison, both continue in this humanistic spirit that upholds human life, freedom and dignity as the highest value.

With this people-centric spirit as the starting point, we should respect the free will of the Tibetan people. This means Tibetans having the right to choose their own leaders, their own social system, their own culture, their own form of State and way of life. This right to choose does not belong to the Chinese; it belongs to the Tibetan people alone. Chinese people oppose the tyranny of the Chinese Communist Party because this kind of political power has deprived them of freedom. If the Chinese people - while taking a stand against communism - still insist on their right to rule over Tibet, which is on depriving the Tibetan people of their freedom to choose, this is committing sacrilege against freedom.

Chinese always place emphasis on nationalism. Today, in the face of the Tibetan problem, the Chinese should, for once, really be emphasizing nationalism - but in terms of a weak and small Tibetan nation confronting the over-one-billion-strong ethnic Han nation and its long-time bullying and oppression. As Chinese, we should feel ashamed in front of Tibetan people. Chinese intellectuals in particular should feel even more ashamed of themselves for their silence in the face of violence perpetrated by those in power, and even going as far as to conform to Chinese communist propaganda.

Modern China, that was once bullied and insulted by foreign powers, is now humiliating another small and vulnerable nation. This will forever be a disgraceful page in the history of Chinese people, particularly the ethnic Han Chinese. As Chinese, may we repent at the trial that we will certainly be facing in the future.

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1 Translator's note: The term 'sitting-in-bed' appears only in Chinese sources, and stems from an erroneous translation of the Tibetan word khri, which means, 'throne,' though Chinese dictionaries say it can also mean, 'couch,' or 'bed.' For a full discussion of the topic see <http://earlytibet.com/2009/09/15/sitting-in-bed-ceremony/>.

2 Ya Hanzhang. The Biographies of the Dalai Lamas. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1984, Preface.

3 Ibid, p. 21.

4 Ibid, p. 21.

5 Ibid, p. 35.

6 Anthology of Archival Materials on the Death Ceremony for the 13th Dalai Lama and the Reincarnation and Enthronement of the 14th Dalai Lama, compiled jointly by the China Tibetology Research Center and The Second Historical Archives of China. Beijing: China Tibetology Publishing House, 1990.

7 Ya, The Biographies, p. 329.

8 Ibid., p. 330.

9 Tibet Daily, August 31, 1989.

10 Anthology, see *Official Correspondence Document #439*.

11 *Ibid.*, see *Official Correspondence Document #441*.

12 Zhang, Yahan. *Dalai Lama: A Biography*, p. 34.

13 *White Paper 1992: Tibet - Its Ownership And Human Rights Situation*, Information Office of the State Council, The People's Republic of China, 21 September 1992. See Hong Kong's *Ta Kung Pao*, 24 September 1992, p.8.

14 See John F. Avedon, *In Exile from the Land of Snows: The Definitive Account of the Dalai Lama and Tibet Since the Chinese Conquest*, Chinese edition, Taiwan: Huiju Publishing House, 1991, p. 134: 'In 1962 a Tibetan guerrilla army attacked the Chinese army on the road from Xinjiang to Lhasa, killing the commanding officer and some official advisers. They also captured a book, *Basic Educational Teaching Material on the Condition in Tibet*, written by the Political Department of the Tibet Military District. The book says: "Between March and October in 1959, [the Chinese army] wiped out 87,000 Tibetan rebels".'

15 For the Panchen Lama's figures see Daniel Southerland's special report.

'Uncounted Millions: Mass Death in Mao's China,' *Washington Post*, 17 and 18 July 1994.

16. See *Tibet: Proving Truth From Facts*, Chinese edition, Department of Information and International Relations, Dharamshala, India, 1993, p. 20.

17 Tang Daxian, 'Bayonets Directed at Lhasa-A Record of the 1989 Tibetan Incident in Lhasa,' *Democratic China*, published in the U.S., August 1990, Issue No. 3, p.33.

18 The Dalai Lama's speech at Yale University on 9 October 1991, published in the Japanese monthly *Democratic China*, September issue, 1993.

19 *Tibet: Proving Truth From Facts*, p. 19.

20 According to figures provided in the *White Paper 1992: Tibet - Its Ownership And Human Rights Situation*, published by the State Council of the People's Republic of China, the total number of Tibetans in the 4th National Population Census of 1990 was 4,590,000. According to the research figures published by the Director of the Centre for International Studies of the State Council, Huan Xiang, in *Peking Review*, February issue, 1988: 'Of the total ethnic Tibetan population of 6 million, 2 million live in the Tibet Autonomous Region, and the remaining 4 million live in other provinces.' According to data of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, the total Tibetan population is 6 million, including those in Tibetan regions of Kham and Amdo, which have been divided among Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu etc.

21 For Yin Fatang's article see *Red Flag* magazine, 1983, Issue No. 8.

22 *Tibet: Proving Truth From Facts*, p. 21.

23 See the letter Wei Jingsheng wrote to Deng Xiaoping when he was in prison, published

in the New York magazine Beijing Spring, February Issue 1994, P. 59.

24 The Dalai Lama, 'Five-Point Peace Plan for the Solution of Tibetan Problem,' published in the Japanese monthly Democratic China, July Issue, 1994, p. 33.

25 Claudia Dreifus, 'Interview with the Dalai Lama,' New York Times magazine, 28 November 1993.

RAGING FLAMES AND A SOUL ON TRIAL

Pan Qing⁹

13 April 2014

This essay is a record of the writer's past few years of contemplation amidst humanity's desert. It pulls the blinkers from the faces of so many people who would rather not see the Tibetan problem. It also points directly to the actual state of affairs that no compatriot can evade: Why is the Land of Snow Burning? This is also a test of our compatriots' views on the value of life - a trial of the soul! If you still want to be regarded as a member of civilized humanity, please be brave enough to confront the following subjects that are of concern to you.

What is the meaning of Tibetan self-immolations that continue to occur in the Land of Snow?

Does the suffering and plight of ethnic Tibetans have nothing to do with us?

How do you view a nation that lives the life of religious convictions and spiritual recall?

How are ethnic antagonism and ethnic hatred created?

Recollections on the Qingming Tomb Sweeping Day

Qingming is the time of pattering spring rain, persistent sad memories, serious reflection on the departed, and memorial rites for our ancestors. My mood is particularly grief-stricken and heavy on this year's Qingming (or Pure Brightness) Day because of the untimely deaths of tyrannically-persecuted people like Huang Heging and Cao Shunli, and also the flames that are incessantly igniting on the snow-covered plateau, have also been scorching my heart.

These past few days, the images of burning figures keep appearing in my mind. I know that they are projections of the unyielding souls of heir

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departed spirits in heaven, urging me to get out of my grief and complete this essay that I have been pondering for so long.

Qingming's tradition originated in the now-already-forgotten Cold Food Festival. During the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BCE), Duke Wen of Jin requested the distinguished scholar Jie Zhi-tui to assist him in his rule, and consequently set a mountain on fire to pressure him into submission. Rather than yielding to the demand, Jie Zitui preferred to be buried alive in the sea of flames, in his pursuit of becoming a historical paragon for his generation. Afterwards, Duke Wen of Jin buried Jie's corpse on Mount Mian, building a temple and shrine there, and issuing an order that on the day Jie Zitui burned to death fires were prohibited and only cold food should be eaten in mourning over Jie's demise. This was the origin of the Cold Food Festival, when 'all between the Four Seas were to eat cold food for a thousand years in memory of one man.' Because of the symbiosis between the Cold Food Festival and the Qingming Festival, the two gradually merged in meaning.

In my mind's eye, the moral integrity of Tibetans who set themselves on fire for their beliefs and freedom is closely interlinked with that of the ancient Jie Zitui, 'the scholar who was willing to burn to death, rather than yield to the high official.' What is sad, however, is that people today all belong to a generation of 'scholars who are willing to brave death in the pursuit of corruption, while conscience and moral integrity turn to ashes.'

This has become the realistic portrayal of the present-day Chinese society, of which I do not need to say anything more by way of explanation. My fellow countrymen have been well aware for some time of what constitutes the notion of right and wrong for today's Chinese. Does righteousness still exist in this society? Distorted by the preaching of imperial 'Great Unification' over time, our value system has become the habitual way of thinking for more than 1,3 billion people. Consequently, the indifference of my compatriots to Tibetan self-immolations is not at all surprising.

Yet, regardless of how insensitive or evasive people might be, these flames ignited in the Land of Snow will make history over the ages shudder in bitter despair and grief, just as they have not only shocked the international community but also laid bare the truth about the Tibetan problem once again confronting the Chinese. The recurring incidents of self-immolation among Tibetans do not only display the willingness of a Tibetan nation to die for its beliefs in the quest for freedom: Even more so, they put to the

test the consciousness and attitudes of all people around the world about the ultimate meaning and significance of life in terms of ‘life and death.’

I think that only in the midst of this tragedy, the likes of which have never before occurred in the history of mankind, my compatriots lacking an ultimate concern for life might look squarely at the completely different view on life and death held by Tibetans, and might begin to reflect on and try to understand why Tibetans would make such a choice, and might be able to let go of their prejudices and begin to show an interest in the suffering experienced by Tibetans.

These Tibetan tragic sacrifices of life are a shock and inspiration to my compatriots in the following ways. A nation that truly seeks freedom of the mind and soul (regardless whether in respect to religion, faith, culture, philosophy, moral integrity, or dignity) dreads losing freedom even more than physical death. To the Tibetan nation, there is no higher value than freedom! On the other hand, a nation that does not genuinely strive for the deliverance of its mind and soul has no hope worth speaking of. And on this account I feel deeply ashamed for the Chinese people, myself included. From the perspective of people in the Land of Snow - the ‘people who have no fear of death’, so how can you make them dread it? - this kind of courage, and this kind of determination are truly a trial for the souls of those Chinese who are so reluctant to surrender the enslavement of Tibet!

To the Tibetans who self-immolate, the test of coming face-to-face with death strengthens their religious vows to take the journey of delivery from torment. The awakening of consciousness achieved by redemption through the burning of the flesh shows their nation’s broad view of life in the universe, and displays the meaning of existence and the value of a life that benefits others. To the Chinese, this is a completely new revelation on the meaning of life, because each one of us then has to face and accept death. That Tibetans remain calm and undaunted in the face of this ‘life or death’ challenge genuinely reveals their nation’s consciousness and wisdom.

After Qingming comes the annual Easter Holiday. According to the Christian tradition, Jesus Christ transformed his body for the salvation of mankind. He was willing to act as a scapegoat for humanity, was nailed to the cross by Romans, and resurrected miraculously three days later to show humanity the way into the kingdom of heaven. This is the reason why Easter is so important in Western history and civilization, and the reason why humanity needs religion - because the nature of humanity is a

spiritual existence requiring salvation of the soul.

Religion connotes spiritual salvation and is ultimately concerned with life and death; it is a universal worldview mindful of the life of myriad things, and an important foundation for establishing an ethical system of values regarding life. Investing one's life to defend religious beliefs is a common occurrence in all human history. In particular, religion always seems to accompany human suffering. It is precisely because 2,000 years ago Jesus suffered on the cross to save the souls of humanity, and the apostles paid with their lives by defying hardship and peril to spread the gospel, that Christian civilisation arose and has continued unbroken since then.

Sadly, under communist rule most Chinese today are believers in atheism. But in reality, an ordinary person does not have to be, religious believer. As long as one returns to the basic innate sense of right and wrong, one can look into the suffering in the Land of Snow and comprehend why those Tibetans would want to set themselves on fire; one can feel for their convictions and their quest and ought to take a fair viewpoint and attitude.

As for me, personally, Tibetan self-immolations are a sacrifice of life for a just cause, an offering of the self because of the great love for one's nation. They make it clear that convictions are a heavy load on one's shoulders, a commitment, and an ultimate journey that can only be completed at the expense of one's life.

This tragic road to salvation taken by more than 130 Tibetan martyrs has shaken my soul! It has allowed me to grasp the true meaning of life. As a result, I have also gained a new understanding of the famous verse by the Hungarian poet Petofi Sandor: 'If not free, I would rather die!' 1

Revisiting the Lessons of History

To a civilized society, the flames burning in the Land of Snow are an extremely unfortunate human rights disaster. But in China, the suffering and the history of Tibetans is a subject discarded at the tip of a bayonet and shrouded in lies; it is a forbidden zone whose true facts very few people are willing to explore. For more than half a century our countrymen have not had an opportunity to get to know the true Tibet, let alone to treat the suffering of Tibetan people fairly.

The Chinese communist P.L.A. invasion of Tibet in 1950, the bloody

suppression of Tibetan resistance and the cruel colonial rule that followed were the beginning of an enormous catastrophe for a nation that has been in existence for several thousand years. All the main ethnic groups in East Asia have their own countries: Japan of the Yamato people, the South and North Korea of the Goryeo people, the Annamese established Vietnam, the Uighurs (ethnic Turks) have Turkey, and even the Mongols have an independent state. But the once-rich and powerful Tubo Kingdom has been truly vanquished and subjugated since the middle of last century!

Having been long subjected to the autocratic poison of the 'Great Unification,' not many Chinese are aware of this part of not-so-old history to realize that this was an occupation of the territory of a vulnerable and small nation by a multi-ethnic state, although this multi-ethnic nation had itself not been liberated from the slavery of subjugation not that long ago. For more than half a century, people have been immersed in various lies created by the official preaching of 'since ancient times' and 'the princess myth' and they are absolutely certain in their belief that everything done by the Chinese in Tibet is proper and fair - because 'Tibet has been an unalienable part of China since ancient times,' etc.

The real facts about the damage and destruction of the religion, culture, environment and ecology of this small and vulnerable nation continuing for more than half a century, have never truly entered our compatriots' field of vision. The never-ending repeating of the rationale for the invasion, and the dissemination of deception by the Chinese communist regime has been like an epidemic, with germs of ignorance, stupidity, greed, depravity, cruelty and gore spreading into the lives of each and every countryman and reaching deeply into their souls. And so, the moment the subject of Tibet is raised they instinctively start arguing in favour of the flag of 'Great Unification' and angrily condemn Tibet.

We see that the overwhelming majority of our compatriots are numb and indifferent in the face of these shocking self-immolations. Maybe they secretly rejoice that they are not themselves victims of such a tragic human disaster? Or perhaps the scenes of these tragic burnings are too terrifying, making people so profoundly horrified that their mental equilibrium crumbles? Maybe they are in shock, so that evasion and even refusal to accept what is happening becomes a kind of automatic choice without thinking? Too many 'maybes' about my fellow countrymen make me unspeakably sad, although I am unwilling to give in to doubt that in their heart of hearts some sympathy could still remain for those who confront disaster.

That death on one side, and indifference and forgetting on the other, are linked together is nothing new. Our compatriots have likewise remained insensitive and indifferent to the Chinese communists' crimes of human rights persecution that have been going on for many years among ethnic Han Chinese. What I resent is that there are actually some people who publicly side with tyranny and raise bloodthirsty clamour against the suffering Tibetans, filling me with scorn and shame. How can they not know that when we witness the deaths of others and the suffering of another people, and can still remain cold-blooded like this, we are witnessing the death of our own souls that actually make us human?

In China today, ignoring the suffering in the society has become normal behaviour, and having a conscience and the sense of right and wrong have been completely obliterated. We see that although tyranny is terrible, what is even worse is not this kind of rule itself that runs against human nature, but that the great majority of people can accept the rationale for this mode of brutality. When people see unthinkingly irrational and inhuman tyranny as normal order by which to rule a society, everybody naturally becomes a part of this tyranny. And the scheme of the rulers is not only to give the people a taste of a slavish and almost deranged frivolity and drunken stupor, but they use their logic to unequivocally tell the world that slaughter and brutality are justified, and that the bloodied and dark regime will go on.

The ignorance and myopia of our countrymen who turn a blind eye to the suffering of Tibetan people cannot make the ethnic Han Chinese under the 'Great Unification' so fortunate as to be impervious to obstacles. During successive campaigns launched by the Chinese Communist Party, in the midst of the Cultural Revolution, the June Fourth Movement, and the mass suppression of Falungong and the Civil Rights Protection Movement, millions of Chinese have like-wise groaned and struggled under tyrannical rule. This clearly reveals that a country that deprives a small and weak nation of the right to exist cannot be humane in any normal sense, and that in a jungle-like society that supports the strong and maltreats the weak, the main ethnic group - the majority Han Chinese - are likewise unable to survive in the dark reality under autocratic oppression.

The folly of the human race is that it always forgets lessons from history, no matter how extraordinarily horrific catastrophes it has experienced. Only when the army used tanks and submachine-guns to storm into Beijing in 1989 did Chinese people (the Han Chinese) realize that in the eyes of their rulers the blood of a Han Chinese is not any more valuable than that of a

Tibetan. And now, barely 25 years after the June Fourth bloody massacre, is it possible that our compatriots have forgotten this disaster? It is as if those Chinese who so quickly forget similar suffering have been massacred themselves - and by that I mean their consciousness and their souls.

I have been maintaining for many years now that the suffering in the Land of Snow has been created by the Chinese Communist Party's totalitarian regime and that every Chinese person who approves tyranny and enslavement cannot avoid being, directly or indirectly, implicated. The attitudes and positions of the populace (who may not be aware of the true state of affairs) have long since become the justification for the rulers' tyranny in Tibet. During the torch relay before the 2008 Olympic Games, when a young Chinese woman, Wang Qianyuan, stepped forward bravely to confront the 'sea of red' that was attacking Tibetans and spoke the truth, the ignorant and stupid behaviour of the 'Red Guards' - playing the role of dictators at the scene - sufficed to illustrate that this was the culpability and disgrace of every person from the so-called 'emerging great power.' This attitude goes so far that even among some 'dissidents' that I have encountered, the conceit behind the concept of 'Great Unification' and 'Han chauvinistic' thinking are extremely strong. Some of them rely on the past colonial history of Western nations as they search to justify China's high-handed ways today. I have had arguments with some of them, but, frankly speaking, I am astonished by the imperiousness and cold-bloodedness they reveal in private! The feeling of superiority of the so-called 'advanced ethnic group' displayed by these people, known as the 'intellectual elite,' immediately makes me think of the 'racial superiority and inferiority' argument flaunted by the Nazis, and makes me shudder to the core.

Recently, the ethnic issue has once again become the focus of public attention. I feel deeply that unless we discuss this issue by returning to the principle of human rights and ethnic equality as the starting point, we can easily sink into that 'nationalistic' state of mind. When arguing over the future connection between 'democratic China' and 'self-determination' different views and positions can in a flash turn into antagonism and conflict between public figures belonging to different ethnic groups. From what I have observed, ethnic minority public figures are increasingly resisting the so-called 'National Unity' proposition, and are even especially guarded and hesitant with regard to a future "democratic China."

Should our countrymen not engage in some self-searching, not merely because this is a catastrophe for other ethnic groups but even more so

because it directly relates to us? Under tyranny, no one can be so fortunate as to be spared from problems, whether Tibetans, Mongols, Uighurs, or Han Chinese. This includes each one of us.

If you tolerate the atrocities committed by the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet and Xinjiang, then don't complain when the State and party bigwigs occupy your land, forcibly tear down your housing, and throw you into prison. A regime that acts with cruelty toward another nationality is not going to be lenient with you because you are ethnic Han. Countless catastrophes clearly show that autocratic tyranny toward everyone can only succeed under the illusory concept of the State as a 'Great Unity,' while we gradually lose our humanity through apathy and tolerance towards tyranny.

Tibet's Foundation of Existence - Religion and Spiritual Recall

In 2009, I visited Dharamshala and discovered that it was a place-where the soul can find its mooring. This is where you can witness the compassion, love and altruism of Tibetan beliefs. And I feel deeply that this is also the common need of the ethnic Han people as well as all the other people of the world. Because those are not merely religious qualities; all human beings, and even animals, need compassion and empathy for growth, self-protection and survival.

The Dalai Lama says, "Compassion, love and forgiveness are not a luxury; they are the foundation of existence. What is the purpose of life? I believe that the ultimate goal in life is contentment, joy, and happiness. Happiness comes from kindness, compassion, and love."

Indeed! Hadn't we come from thousands of miles away precisely in search of human values and the meaning of life? Supporting the Tibetan cause of freedom means, first of all, holding fast to one's human conscience and defending the freedom, dignity and rights of all mankind. There is no difference here whether one is Tibetan or Han Chinese, because we are first and foremost members of the same human race.

In this age of human greed, excessive materialistic desires, profit-above-all, incessant disputes, smoking guns and constant crises, the qualities of tolerance, compassion, optimism, contentment, self-confidence, determination, lack of extravagant demands, unforced benevolence and spiritual devotion seen in Tibetans embody a state of humanity at its most sublime. What one finds here is the embodiment of the ultimate fairness and justice of the harmonious interaction between human and human, human and society, and man towards nature.

This is exactly the inherent law of all things in the universe that humans must comply with, the ideal state pursued by human society. Many human disputes are in reality meaningless. Humankind should not become the predator that preys on the weak, the conqueror of nature with avaricious materialistic desires. Instead, we should be protectors of the natural world.

According to legend, the origin of Tibet is as follows: In ancient times, when the primal chaos first erupted, the earth was completely covered in water. Later, as the water slowly evaporated, dry land and high mountains took shape. The primordial Buddha changed himself into a monkey and mated with a demon in female form, giving birth to the first human being. Their six children represent the six classes of beings in the world. Gods, demigods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts and hell beings. They continued to produce offspring by multiplying, and this is how the Tibetan race came into being.

Tibetans are a people who live in a world of gods and spirits. If you don't know the supernatural world, there is no way to find the key to a Tibetan's soul. Of course, it doesn't have to come from the textual research by scholars of history and culture. The concepts of Tibet's traditions and status held by Tibetans entirely come from historical transmission passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years and from their personal experiences.

However, Tibetans cannot understand the Chinese occupation of Tibet, nor the claim that Tibet has always been a part of China. This is because they have a completely different view of history. The Communist Party views these kinds of orally-transmitted myths as ridiculous. But to Tibetans, these stories that have been passed down through generations have importance and relevance.

For several thousand years, the nomadic life on the snow-capped mountain grasslands, highland barley wine and dried yak meat, the spiritual world worshipped by Tibetans, the muttered recitations of the Great Compassion mantra, stories mothers tell to children generation after generation, as well as the living environment in the harsh climate at an elevation of several kilometres - all these elements have separated Tibet from China. And they are more real and valid to the Tibetans than the powers that can decide on the destiny of Tibet and so-called 'international recognition'.

Ordinary Tibetans possess a natural intuition and know what is right and

what is true. The Chinese Communist Party's assertions of sovereignty over Tibet and its artful foreign policy arguments are completely irrelevant to an average Tibetan person. Tibetans know, based on common-sense and general knowledge about life over generations, that Tibet has always been a nation that existed on its own, and that they have traditions, a culture, language, religion, and history separate from the Chinese. This is as clear to the Tibetans as the fact that milk and water differ.

The unique charm of Tibetans is in their concern for sentient life, reverence for nature, living a simple life without materialistic desires, and veneration of spiritual contentment. The ultimate concern of Buddhism for the next life and its reverence for and protection of life and nature have resulted in the nation's unique beliefs and lifestyle. These concerns are also the most natural cause of their resistance to enslavement and plunder by foreign colonialists.

I cannot help but thinking this: Had the Chinese communist troops not invaded Tibet over half a century ago and rewritten Tibetan history, this kind of unique culture and way of life might have become a good remedy for the increasingly degenerate lifestyle of mankind in today's world overflowing with materialistic desires. Might it not have pointed out a shining path to salvation for humankind, delivering all creatures from suffering in the abyss of deep-water and the scorching fires of Armageddon?

Human civilization today has already evolved to the point of concern about the extinction of all plants and animals on earth, protection of the earth's existing biodiversity, and interest in saving ancient ethnic histories and cultures. Anthropologists have, furthermore, made the endangered languages of disappearing ethnic groups an important cause in saving human civilization. As a result, interest in the suffering experienced by Tibetan people, and the gradual dying out of ethnic cultures enslaved by Chinese communists, are indeed very closely related to us - if we still consider ourselves members of a civilized society.

We therefore must concern ourselves with challenges to the existence of Tibetan people, as well as with the survival, development and cultural heritage of all ethnic minorities. In a nutshell, every ethnic group and every culture represents a unique crystallization of ideas of humankind. Their unique ways of life and thinking, languages, vocabulary, and histories of religion and culture are akin to a series of exquisite buildings integrated into the village architecture of human civilization. Oppression by a tyrannical

regime can very easily damage this kind of composite structure. If one is not careful, it can disappear forever.

What makes one sad is that for more than half a century, this ancient civilization of the snow-bound plateau, this Shangri-La in people's minds, this last expanse of Pure Land in the world, has been rapidly heading for destruction under enslavement, ravages and plunder by an outside power.

Don't Do Unto Others As You Wouldn't Have Them Do Unto You

I left China after the June Fourth Massacre in 1989 and have been leading a wandering life for 25 years. During these years of forced exile in foreign lands, how many times have I felt like shedding tears of blood! And for Tibetans in exile it has been 55 years already! Historically speaking, 55 years are but a brief moment in time. But in terms of a human life, they may have stretched over two or three generations, and even more likely they spell out the end of an individual's life!

Is exile the choice the Tibetans made with no regrets or misgivings? How many years of bloodstained tears are we talking about here? The 55 years have passed in the blink of an eye, and some people might ask: Back then, had the Dalai Lama chosen to stay in Lhasa, what shape might Tibet have been in today?

No one can give that answer to replace history, but the fate of the 10th Panchen Lama - who once served as the Vice Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party National People's Congress - might provide some clues. This Tibetan leader, after offering his views to the Chinese Communist Party during the 1960s by protesting Beijing's suppression of Tibetans, was imprisoned for almost 10 years.

The Panchen Lama had gone on a tour of inspection of Tibetan regions, during which countless Tibetans knelt along the sides of the road and begged, in tears: 'Don't let the living beings die of hunger! Don't let Buddhism perish!' After this he wrote a '70,000 character petition' to Zhou Enlai, in which he reported very honestly: "In the past, because Buddhism was widespread in Tibet, all people, whether noble or humble, had the good habit of giving help to the poor, and so people could eke out a living even just by begging for food. A situation could not have arisen where people starved to death. Today, people are dying en masse, some die directly because they have run out of food, in some cases entire families are wiped

out...” With indignation, he noted: “In the past in Tibet the beggars at least still had their bowls; the beggars today don’t even have a bowl.”

Because of this petition, the 10th Panchen Lama - this Living Buddha whose status in Tibet is second only to the Dalai Lama’s - was thrown into prison by the Chinese communists for 10 full years and later passed away in the prime of his life under strange circumstances, leaving Tibetans with endless grief.

There is no denying that after the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese Communist Party indeed restored some monasteries in Tibet, relaxed restrictions on religious activities, and invested great amounts of capital in construction. But the Chinese communist leaders cannot understand why Tibetans are still resisting their rule with increasing intensity, and why their demands for freedom and desire for independence are skyrocketing. They particularly cannot understand why such demands have developed into a repeated and ongoing rebellion among the young descendants of the ‘slaves’ they ‘emancipated’.

The reasons are in fact quite simple. Violence and lies cannot force a nation to surrender. Likewise, money cannot make a nation abandon its pursuit of freedom and its faith. The Dalai Lama is a Living Buddha, a God, the King of the Tibetan people. The Chinese are giving money to the Tibetans on one hand, while on the other they are making them curse their own Supreme Teacher, their own God and King. Isn’t this utterly preposterous and hilarious? What the result of it can be is obvious at a glance.

The flames that are raging in the Land of Snow are telling us that the catastrophes of more than half a century have long exceeded the limits of what the Tibetan nation can bear. The Chinese Communist Party insists on using violent repression and demands that all monks and lay believers accept the official argument for unification. This has created a huge, sharp contradiction with the entire population of Tibetan religious believers and it inevitably implies acceleration in discrimination and oppression caused by different beliefs. To ethnic Tibetans this even implies being forced to take the dead-end road to ruin. Tibetan self-immolations are a full reflection of the awakening of the consciousness of the young generation of ethnic Tibetans and the rebirth of their determination to resist! By setting their lives on fire, they have awakened the Tibetan nation’s deep-seated historical memory and aroused it to once again pursue the spirit of Tsenpo.

The seriousness and catastrophic nature of the Tibetan problem is the result of the red empire's inability to give up its colonial rule and plundering, and at the same time the inability of ethnic Tibetans to give up their faith - which they view as their very life - and their pursuit of freedom. Viewed from this angle, Tibet's future is worrisome. Scholar Wang Lixiong has pointed out that the 'Palestinianization' of the Tibetan problem is cause for fears that are not at all groundless! If the Chinese communist authorities are firmly set on using might and violence to maintain this kind of rule, it can only lead to the sad cycle of hatred, resistance, suppression, and cruel killing turning the pure and beautiful snow-bound plateau into a brutal and bloodstained hell on earth.

After the 'March 14 Lhasa Incident' and the 'July 5 Urumqi Incident' in Xinjiang in particular, an anxious atmosphere of ethnic discrimination, ethnic antagonism, and ethnic conflict rapidly escalated grin the eyes of the entire ethnic Han majority in China. In the wake of the Kunming Incident,² and before the facts about what happened were clear, the Internet was full of nationalistic and chauvinistic clamour targeting Xinjiang Uighurs. Incited by the deceptive propaganda of the Chinese Communist Party, the prospect is for future ethnic confrontation and revenge killings to occur at the regime's beck and call.

The Holy Bible says: 'There are no limits to man's degradation.' How could it not be the same with the degradation of a nation?

Today's Chinese are determined to forget that, historically, ethnic Han people were also repeatedly invaded and enslaved by other ethnic groups. But what is sad is that a nation only recently liberated from enslavement by the Japanese, turns around to invade and enslave nations that are smaller and defenceless, and even more innocent than it was itself. This not only violates divine justice. Even more so, it is disgraceful conduct. If one loathes a foreign oppressor, and if a nation that was oppressed suddenly becomes the oppressor, then one can only despise it.

Some people argue that this is only the doing of the Chinese communist regime and that it has nothing to do with ethnic oppression. But please, let us not forget that the Chinese communist regime and its army are mainly made up of ethnic Han Chinese. They commit crimes of murder and oppression against Tibetans and Uighurs in Tibet and Xinjiang and massacre other ethnic minorities. Is this not enough to arouse scorn and make all civilized humankind blush with shame? To say nothing about the

humiliation these kinds of savage acts bring to the entire Han nation.

Tibetans are a Buddhist, compassionate and altruistic nation. The Dalai Lama is a compassionate, honourable man. Although Tibet has myriad justifications to be independent, because of real political considerations and on account of his concern for the peace and welfare of his people, the Dalai Lama has renounced his demands for Tibetan independence and proposed the Middle Way for Tibet to achieve autonomy within the framework of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China - a real autonomy, and not just in name.

The Dalai Lama's Middle Way is straightforward and above board. There is nothing hidden behind it. But the Chinese communist authorities have been using all possible means to distort the truth, stubbornly rejecting this ethical choice for the future welfare of the closely-knit ethnic Han and Tibetan people. This is pushing the Tibetan nation into disaster and forcing it to move toward a genuinely bad precedent for independence. The mighty imperiousness and shameless deceit of the Chinese Communist Party - and the impetuous chauvinistic blather of our countrymen - will effectively result in the permanent split of the Chinese nation.³

The pure and sacred snowbound plateau of Tibet has already been enslaved by the tyranny of the arrogant, dictatorial and peremptory Chinese Communist Party for over half a century. This is an humiliation for the Tibetans and a disgrace for the Han Chinese. Even more so, it is a disgrace for all of civilized mankind. To everyone with goodness and compassion in your hearts, and with a thirst for justice, I say this: Please search deeply in your hearts and tell us, should this kind of tragedy go on?

1 Translator's note: The verse reads: 'Freedom and love/Are dear to me/My life I give/Sweet love, for thee/Yet love I give/For liberty.'

2 Translator's note: On 1 March 2014, eight knife-wielding men and women attacked passengers at the Kunming railway station in Yunnan. The incident left 29 civilians and four perpetrators dead, and more than 140 injured. Although no group claimed responsibility, Xinjiang separatist terrorists were blamed for the attack.

3 Translator's note: The term 'Chinese nation' used here implies 'people of China,' and includes the majority Han 'nationality' as well as various 'national minorities'

A TIBETAN GIRL DREAMS OF TRAVEL ABROAD

BBC: From Our Own Correspondent

5 September 2013

Ethnic Han Chinese in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, insist that Tibet is ‘an integral part of China,’ but some locals emphasize that they are ‘Tibetans, not Chinese.’ BBC correspondent Sarah Cruddas met a young Tibetan female tourist guide in Lhasa and heard her talk about a dream that will be hard for her to realize. This is Cruddas’s report.

“Like so many other girls of a similar age, the 24-year-old Tsam likes to travel. Tsam dreams of one day being able to visit England and seeing London. But until now, her longest journey has been from her small native village in the foothills on the Tibetan side of the Himalayas to the capital, Lhasa.

“Tsam speaks three languages: Tibetan, Chinese, and English. At present, she works as a tour guide and lives in a house she shares with a few friends. Based only on the first impression, it may be difficult to see any big differences between Tsam’s life and that of other contemporary young women. Her clothing and makeup are all very fashionable, except that what she is wearing is in traditional Tibetan, not western style. And wherever she goes, the ‘fashion accessory’ she brings along is a parasol. In this part of Asia, it is fashionable for young girls to carry parasols.

“The hope to see the world is for Tsam only a distant dream. Like so many other Tibetans, she cannot obtain a passport. What Tsam told me is that., “...they don’t want to let us talk.” What she meant by ‘they’ is the Chinese government. She went on to say, ‘Maybe it’s because of the political situation. But this is extremely difficult for us.’ Without a passport, Tsam is in fact trapped in Tibet. If she wants to, she can move freely around China’s interior.

Chinese Control

“Tibet is under Chinese control, there isn’t a slightest doubt about it. Arriving in Lhasa, we are greeted by Chinese armed guards. The main train station is amazingly modern. As we ride the train from here to the

city centre, both sides of the streets are hung with Chinese national flags. In many places, signs are first written in Chinese, and only after that in Tibetan. I also noticed that a Chinese People's Liberation Army propaganda programme was being broadcast on a big screen.

“As you ride the train into Lhasa, you can see Chinese red flags fluttering everywhere along the way. In addition, there are many other signs that testify to the fact that the Chinese are in Lhasa. In a small military camp, one can see soldiers practicing their drills. They are sitting outside their tents, and when the train passes by, they salute. On the train, someone is constantly inspecting passports and travel permits.

“Tibet is an integral part of China! Every time you chat with the Chinese, you will hear them say this. In Lhasa, the ratio of ethnic Han Chinese to the local people is now approximately eight to one. The majority of the ethnic Han Chinese live concentrated in the western part of Lhasa's city proper.

They say this is the most spectacular, most beautiful place in China, and many Chinese want to visit it and travel here. I have heard that many people line up the whole night to buy tickets to visit the world-famous Potala Palace.

“Yet Tsam and other locally-born-and-bred Tibetans insist that they consider themselves to be Tibetans, not Chinese. Among themselves, they communicate in Tibetan, and they are extremely proud of their Tibetan traditions and culture. In Lhasa's shops one can see different traditional clothing from many parts of Tibet.

Act with Caution

“When Tsam left her small rural village to come to the capital, Lhasa, her parents stayed in the countryside to work the land. Tsam also has relatives in Nepal, but she has never gone to visit them and even getting to talk to them is not easy. They told me that telephone, email and Internet are not only unreliable but are also often monitored. Television, radio, and newspapers are censored too. There are no checkpoints on the streets that lead to the main square in Lhasa, but there are police officers on duty as well as luggage and body security scanners, like the ones used in airports. But, they actually waved at us to let us pass, as though there was no problem.

“Tsam told us that there are times when the security checks are heightened

and the people entering and leaving Lhasa have to show identity cards. She also said that there were video cameras everywhere. Although I saw no evidence to support this claim, it was very clear that Tsam was extremely cautious not to say anything careless that could be used to apprehend her.

“Perhaps that might explain why, when I asked her, “What is your dream job?” she answered: Being a tourist guide for the Chinese, to tell them more and better things about Tibet.”

THE DALAI LAMA ISN'T

'HOLDING COURT FROM BEHIND A SCREEN'

Hu Ping¹⁰

26 April 2011

In March of this year the Dalai Lama officially announced that he was retiring and would no longer have any political leadership responsibilities. We know that ever since the 2001 democratic election of Kalon Tripa, the Prime Minister of the Central Tibetan Administration in exile, the Dalai Lama remained in a state of semi-retirement. Except for writing symbolic comments on a few documents, he handed the real power completely to the Kalon Tripa and acted like a ceremonial head of state. Now he was handing over all authority in secular matters.

The Dalai Lama's announcement drew attention from various quarters. Public opinion commonly held that this meant a great advance in Tibetan democratization, a complete separation of politics and religion. Its significance is profound and far-reaching.

The Chinese government called it tricks to deceive the international community? There was absolutely no justification for such a denouncement, since the Dalai Lama's retirement announcement not only took the form of a public pledge, but it was also reflected in the reforms of relevant regulations and institutions, and the actual transfer of power. Such a denouncement by the Chinese government can only be either a deliberate frame-up or a recollection of its own old practice: Remembering the retirement of Deng Xiaoping, they can only think that the Dalai Lama's retirement must be the same as their own Deng Xiaoping's retirement-no more than a hoax.

Some analysts say that the Dalai Lama remains the highest political leader of the Tibetans even after retirement, that he has merely withdrawn from standing front and centre to a position backstage from which he will continue to lead Tibetan people in the proverbial Chinese manner of 'holding court from behind a screen.'

10 Hu Ping was born in Beijing, 1947 he is a political Commentator and editor of Beijing Spring, now based in New York

I believe that this hypothesis is not accurate. First of all, a few things have to be explained about the so-called ‘holding court from behind a screen.’

When people today bring up this topic they often take it as a set of unwritten rules. In fact, ‘holding court from behind a screen’ was originally a set of distinct regulations, an ancient Chinese institution allowing an empress or an empress dowager to hold court in place of a sick or underage Emperor. Since in ancient times women were unequal to men, they were separated and concealed by a screen in the palace hall, hence the saying.

Here, the regency of an empress or an empress dowager was open and public knowledge, and meant exactly what it was called by name. This is very different from what we mean when we use the saying nowadays.

To give an example, during the pro-democracy movement in 1989, people said that Deng Xiaoping was ‘holding court from behind a screen.’ This didn’t only mean that although Zhao Ziyang was the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party - the head honcho in name - in reality he still had to listen to Deng Xiaoping when it came to major issues on the basis of an internal Central Committee decision. It also meant that this relationship was not public knowledge; it was a confidential hush-hush secret. The mere mention of this fact by Zhao Ziyang during his talks with Gorbachev made Deng Xiaoping and the conservative faction furious. It is obvious that this has nothing to do with the ancient practice of holding court from behind a screen.’

Nowadays this adage usually indicates that a person without a given position and without any public (and thus by extension with a secret) agreement holds great actual power in his/her hands. The person who occupies the actual position is controlled by him/her.

It is not hard to see that ‘holding court from behind a screen’ in this sense can only occur in a dictatorial system whose power is not clearly defined and regulated, whose workings lack transparency, and whose source is not an electorate. It cannot occur in a democracy. Since the Tibetans in exile have already adopted democracy, the Dalai Lama cannot be holding court ‘behind a screen’ after his retirement.

Of course, this doesn’t mean that the Dalai Lama will have no political influence after his retirement. I believe that the Dalai Lama will still have great political influence on Tibetan people. Here we must draw a

distinction between influence and power. The relationship between political influence and political power is very complicated. In many cases the two are intertwined. But influence that is independent and resides outside of political authority does indeed exist. The political influence of intellectuals, for instance, derives from the persuasiveness of their arguments and has nothing to do with political power. Nothing surpasses Mahatma Gandhi as an example of influence. Gandhi had no official position, no army, and no political party of his own, but he had a great moral authority to move Indian people and thus had a great influence on Indian politics. I think that in this regard the Dalai Lama after retirement is very much like Gandhi.

Not long ago, when receiving the editor-in-chief of the Sing Tao Daily, Wang Ning, for an interview, the Dalai Lama stated that even after he completely retires he could still come out to take part in the dialogue with Beijing, should there be a need for it. He stressed that for the past 10 years the dialogues with Beijing officials were prepared and decided upon by the officials democratically elected by Tibetan people. "They only came to ask me afterwards. I, of course, supported them. The main responsibility during the past 10 years has been assumed by them." Depending on specific circumstances, if the democratically elected Tibetan government decides that it wants to enter the dialogue through him, he will definitely continue to carry on this mission.

Take note: the Dalai Lama has here raised the possibility that he still might continue to shoulder the dialogue with Beijing in the future. But this would be different than in the past. In the past, the matters of the dialogue with Beijing were decided by the Tibetan government-in-exile, but he was consulted in advance and they sought his approval. From now on, matters relating to the dialogue with Beijing will still be decided by the government, but there is no need to consult him or seek his approval. They would directly appoint him to carry out this task.

The Dalai Lama has said in the past, "As a Tibetan, so long as I enjoy the confidence and trust of the people, I will never abandon my political and religious public service." This has obviously nothing to do with 'holding court from behind a screen.'

WHY U.S. PRESIDENTS SEE THE DALAI LAMA

Ding Yifu¹¹

18 September 2014

Meeting with the Dalai Lama every year or two has become a political ritual of sorts for the President of the United States of America. Its entire purpose is merely to transmit the message to the outside world, and primarily to the American people, that the President has not forgotten Tibetan people and that the President still stands together with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

In February 2014, the Dalai Lama visited the United States yet again. Well before the visit, rumours circulated in the outside world that when the Dalai Lama came to the U.S. this time, the President would see him. The whole world knows that every time the U.S. President sees the Dalai Lama, the Chinese government expresses its displeasure. Moreover, it shows that it is extremely upset. China is now the world's second largest economy. If the Chinese government is very unhappy, nobody can treat its unhappiness lightly.

The President of the United States, a country which has a huge trade deficit with China, no doubt knows the stakes better than anyone else. Given that the Dalai Lama is basically a person who does not have an official political title and is, according to the Americans, only the Tibetan and Buddhist spiritual leader as well as a popular public figure, and since the President of the United States is worried about upsetting the Chinese government by meeting a civic leader, it would have been reasonable for him to do so by keeping a low profile-to have seen him quietly and have been done with it, without publicizing it as a major political event. But the strange thing is; every time the U.S. President sees the Dalai Lama, the White House announces the schedule of the event in advance to let the newspapers and the television stations carry the news item. When this happens, it becomes impossible for the very unhappy Chinese government to close its eyes and look the other way, so it protests, issues warnings, and raises the alarm to the level of violation of international standards and interference in internal affairs. As a result, the meeting becomes a political incident. The White

11 Ding Yi Fu is a writer based in New York

House then deliberately assumes a relaxed posture and states that nobody can prevent the President of the United States of America from seeing a religious figure and a non-governmental spiritual leader.

Immediately after the American President saw the Dalai Lama, China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs summoned the Charge d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing to express China's indignation. Because of the time difference, the summons occurred in the middle of the night. It wasn't even possible to wait a few hours and discuss it the following day; only in this and no other way could the degree to which 'China was too unhappy' be emphasized enough.

It would appear that the U.S. President and the Chinese government are both acting according to a script written ahead of time in which, however, the U.S. President has the main role, and the main question is: Why does he have to look for trouble by insisting on seeing the Dalai Lama?

All Previous Presidents Met with the Dalai Lama

After the June Fourth Incident in 1989 [the Tianmen Square massacre] and the collapse of the Soviet Eastern Block, there was a fundamental change in the way the post-World War II world had been structured. The meeting of George Bush senior with the Dalai Lama in 1991 was an opening. Every U.S. President after that, even if too busy to see the Roman Catholic Pope, would time and again invite the Dalai Lama to the White House for a meeting.

President Clinton saw the Dalai Lama four times; in 1993, 1997; 1998 and 2000, followed by Bush junior who was even more hospitable and received the Dalai Lama at least five times while in office. A year after he assumed office, President Obama once cancelled plans to meet with the Dalai Lama, which immediately caused a debate among Americans, with the politicians and political commentators criticizing him for currying favour with Chinese government. He promptly invited the Dalai Lama to the White House for two successive meetings in 2010 and 2011. Now, two years later, it was once more the time to do something, and so Obama again reverently saw the Dalai Lama at the White House. This was the third time that he has done so since assuming office.

What have the U.S. Presidents who have seen the Dalai Lama so many times talked with him about? The White House has not disclosed the content of

the discussions. As a matter of fact, people don't really care about what was discussed. Even the Chinese government 'gets angry' without ever pursuing the content of discussion. The content is not important; the form means everything.

Why Do U.S. Presidents Want to See the Dalai Lama?

Seeing that the repeated meetings of the U.S. Presidents with the Dalai Lama have made their own country very unhappy, the ordinary Chinese folk are also inexplicably very angry, although nobody knows why the Americans would want to act in this way.

When Marxism-Leninism was imported to China, it was a very good fit for the Chinese disposition in one respect - namely in that the so-called historical materialism uses material benefits to explain the fundamental causes of all social phenomena and human behaviour. When they don't understand something, the Chinese are especially prone to being small-minded in figuring it out, always believing that some material pros and cons are at play, and that in the end it is all about profit; that money and material benefits have been decisive in the way people think and relate to each other, decisive in the behaviour of all parties involved. After more than half-a-century of Communist Party rule and education, the entire Chinese mainland puts even more stress on the materialistic and disparages the spiritual, preferring to get ahead by abandoning scruples than to suffer poverty, subscribing to the idea that human beings will die for riches just as birds will die for food, and that there is no point in getting up in the morning if there is no profit to be made. They have in fact already transformed 'philosophical materialism' into an 'ideology of profit-making.' The present-day Chinese regard themselves as quite infallible in this respect. Not only do they use this view to judge and measure everything, they also 'do unto others as they would them do unto themselves.'

During the past several decades, when engaging in anti-American propaganda, the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese government have consistently been using this kind of materialistic or profit-making interpretation. The Iraq War was a fight over petroleum. The persistent U.S. support of Israel is because Jewish financial institutions control the U.S. economy and lobby U.S. political and government circles.

When it comes to why the U.S. Presidents would want to meet with the Dalai Lama, however, the Chinese government cannot find a profit-

determined reason. The Dalai Lama is a monk who has been in exile for over half a century. He uses all the support he receives from Buddhist followers, through a benevolent foundation, to help poor people in need all over the world. His own life is very simple. One could say that his hands are clean. For several decades, the one-hundred-and-some thousand exiled Tibetans abroad have been leading lives of scanty means, with all the aid received from various quarters going toward things like education, assistance to old people, and such.

When the U.S. President insisted on seeing the Dalai Lama despite warnings and threats from the Chinese government, not only did he not gain a cent; on the contrary, he suffered a loss, as the Chinese government cancelled its order to purchase Boeing airplanes. As much as the Chinese government racks its brains, mulling over how to explain to the Chinese people what kind of profit drives U.S. Presidents to meet with the Dalai Lama time after time, it cannot think of an answer. It can thus only cover up this inability by the conclusion that, ‘the intent of American imperialism to destroy us dies hard.’

The President’s Declaration to the American People

Seeing the Dalai Lama every year or two has become a political ritual for U.S. Presidents, whose entire purpose is to transmit a message to the outside world, primarily to the American people: The President has not forgotten the Tibetan people; the President still stands together with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The United States of America is a country different from all others in the world insofar as it had a ‘founding philosophy’ from the day it was born - namely the ideals of equality, freedom, and justice for all mankind, as expounded by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence.

These ideals are deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of American people. It is precisely because they raise high the banner of those values that the United States of America has become a natural world leader and gained approval and a following by people all over the world. Moreover, a U.S. president is a democratically elected official, and he has to convince his voters that he has not departed from their ideals.

One often hears that Americans are pragmatic. Indeed, Americans are realists, capable of backing down and compromising when necessary, who view realism as a type of wisdom. But Americans also have a high regard

for spiritual values. The clear proof of this is the fact that in America almost all world religions and popular beliefs can flourish and spread. That all those religions and beliefs, including atheism, can peacefully get along in America is due to the fact that they all have a common core, consisting of the universal values of the world today.

Chinese communists are a rare breed in today's world—a bunch that openly say they do not believe in the existence of common, human, universal values. Yet, universal values are precisely what brings U.S. Presidents and the Dalai Lama together. Over a thousand years ago, Guru Padmasambhava, who brought Buddhism to Tibet, had prophesied the suffering that Tibetan people experienced in the last century: “The Tibetan people will be scattered like ants across the world, and the Dharma will come to the land of the Red people.”

The Dalai Lama believes that the Buddhist compassion and knowledge held by Tibetans can be assimilated by the world. When he came to the United States for the first time, after 20 years in exile, he said in a speech at the national capital, in Washington, D.C., “I don't envy your American material power. I don't envy your nuclear weapons. What I envy are your principles - the principles of freedom, democracy and justice.” His Holiness the Dalai Lama also said; “The question of Tibet is a moral issue. Please, let the hearts and minds of American people speak out.”

I believe that every U.S. President since then has remembered those words.

1. Translator's note: Padmasambhava, (meaning 'Lotus-Born'), is also known as Guru Rinpoche.

WHY THE MIDDLE WAY? WHY NON-VIOLENCE?

Hu Ping¹²

6 May 2013

On 14 April of this year, while receiving Tibetans who live in Switzerland during his visit to the country, Tiber's spiritual leader, the Declan Lama, talked to them once again about the principles of the Middle Way and non-violence.

The Dalai Lama said that in order to resolve the issue of Tiber there is no other alternative but to - sooner or later - have a dialogue with the Chinese government. If one raises the subject of Tibetan independence under these circumstances, there is no way to have a dialogue. It can only lead to confrontation, and that is not good; there is no hope in that. If Tibet were to gain true freedom that it now only has nominally, this would be good for the Chinese government and for Tibetan people.

In my view there are two major advantages of the Middle Way. First, it is morally right, because it protects the basic rights of the Tibetans, but it is also mutually beneficial for both the Tibetans and China. Second, it is politically feasible and it is pragmatic.

This second point is very important. On the one hand, it is undoubtedly wrong to only think of the reality and abandon ideals, to surrender to the present reality and give up basic rights. On the other hand, it is also wrong to engage in high rhetoric about ideals and disregard reality, not to consider the actual possibilities and the feasibility on the operational level.

Two years ago in March, when I visited Dharamshala with Su Xiaokang, by a lucky coincidence the editor-in-chief of the North American edition of Sing Tao Daily, Mr. Wang Ning, was also in town for a visit. Upon his return to the United States, Wang Ning published a group of related reports, one of which was his exclusive interview with the Dalai Lama. In the interview, the Dalai Lama made a concrete analysis of why there is no way for Tibetans to achieve their goals through violence.

12 Beijing born hu ping is a political commentator and editor of Beijing Spring New York

He said that he once met with a Tibetan radical and that he told “Suppose that we now decide to use military force to achieve our goals. Well, first, we need to have guns. We need ammunition too. A few guns are not enough. We need thousands, but who is going to sell them to us? India? The United States? There doesn’t seem to be anybody who would sell arms and munitions to us.” the time, such radicals may have been able to buy former Soviet arms and munitions from Afghanistan or Pakistan. “So, we get the source for weapons, but where is the money going to come from? The formerly-mentioned countries are not going to give it. But let’s say that we have the money and we bought our guns. How are we going to bring them into China? What country’s borders would we move them across? No country would agree. In the past, the CIA helped us with airdrops. But that was the past. They would definitely not do it now. That is why there is no way that using military force can solve our problems.

The Dalai Lama also pointed out that many European and American public figures explicitly told him they would no longer support Tibet if Tibetans were to use violence to solve their problems.

During the exclusive interview, the Dalai Lama brought up how there are some people among the overseas Tibetans who, while not in it themselves, often severely criticize those who hold office in positions of authority, but when you let them do that work themselves they discover that the things are not as easy as when they were on the outside.

When Su Xiaokang and I visited Dharamshala two years ago, we had a talk with the prime minister of the Central Tibetan Administration, Samdhong Rinpoche, as he was about to leave office, and we touched upon the subject of the Middle Way. We asked him if Tibetans would change the Middle Way approach after the Dalai Lama’s retirement and the re-election of the Central Tibetan Administration in exile.

Samdhong Rinpoche’s answer was very unequivocal: “No” He said that the majority of Tibetans support the Middle Way and that that each one of the three candidates currently running for the office of Prime Minister advocates the middle Way. Therefore, whoever is elected will continue the Middle Way.

I suggested that the Dalai lama’s Middle Way is pragmatic and feasible, that if it were changed to the demand for independence it could very possibly lead to the shrinking of the space for Tibetan international operations.

When the Dalai Lama visits the United States now he meets with the US President; when he visits Germany he meets with the German Chancellor. Chinese communist authorities protest and denounce the Dalai Lama as a separatist. The western heads of State justly and forcefully rebut this by saying that the Dalai Lama is not a separatist, that he advocates genuine autonomy for Tibet. They can even turn this around to call on the Chinese government to have a dialogue with the Dalai Lama and to implement in earnest a genuine autonomy in Tibet. If the Tibetans abandon the Middle Way and start advocating independence, since all western governments recognize the government in Beijing and have formal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, will it still be convenient for them to meet with the Dalai Lama?

Samdhong Rinpoche indicated that my analysis made sense. He said that the Tibetans in exile have discussed the Middle Way thoroughly and reached a consensus.

Some people might say that the Middle Way and non-violence are very good indeed, but that the question is, are they workable? In the face of the pig-headed Chinese communist authorities, is there a chance that the Middle Way may be realized? In regard to this question, the Dalai Lama has said a long time ago that he is not pinning any hopes on the Chinese communist authorities, but that he is placing his hope on the Chinese people. During the Buddhist Teachings in West Bengal he gave in March of this year, the Dalai Lama once again reiterated this point of view.

The Dalai Lama then said: "Despite the fact that until now the Chinese government side has not issued any direct response whatsoever to the Middle Way, but which one is more important, the government or the people? Of course, the people are more important. Although the government has great authority under a dictatorial regime, in the long run it is still the people who are more important."

The Dalai Lama told us that during the past 20 some years, particularly since 2008, he had met many Chinese people, several thousand intellectuals and students among them. Some of them were studying abroad in America and Europe, but there were also some well-known Chinese intellectuals among them who organized some special conferences and who all welcomed it when he explained the Middle Way to them.

The Dalai Lama said that China was at present going through enormous

changes, and that the number of people who dare tell the truth is increasing every day. The number of Chinese who are supporting the Middle Way is also increasing every day. This is why he was convinced 100 percent that in the end this mutually beneficial proposal - advantageous to both sides for solving the problem of Tibet - would achieve results.

I think that the Dalai Lama's exposition on the Middle Way and non-violence is not only significant in guiding the Tibetan cause, but is also profoundly inspirational to us among the Han Chinese who are fighting for freedom and democracy.

THE DALAI LAMA'S ENDING OF REINCARNATION AND TIBET'S DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION

Chen Wei jian¹³

23 February 2010

After his recent meeting with President Obama, during an interview with American National Public Radio station in Los Angeles, the Dalai Lama said, "If people feel that the Dalai Lama institution is no longer much relevant, then this institution will cease - no problem." As soon as the Dalai Lama said that, the literati and '50-cents Party members" hired by the Chinese Communist Party launched a denunciation attack, saying that the Dalai Lama poses everywhere as the protector of Tibetan culture, but his intention to put an end to the institution of reincarnation of the Dalai Lama illustrates precisely that he is the chief destroyer of Tibetan culture.

The Dalai Lama's position regarding the issue of reincarnation has been already explained on several different occasions for many years running, so why has this completely apolitical position caused such an outburst from Chinese communists? In addition to the intense displeasure with the meeting between Obama and the Dalai Lama, it is the fact that should the Dalai Lama put an end to his reincarnation, the Chinese Communist Party's scheme to select its own substitute by kidnapping the Dalai Lama - better to deal with the Tibetan problem according to its own wishes - will fizzle out.

The title Dalai Lama was first bestowed on the Third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso in 1578. The Second Dalai Lama was recognized posthumously. The meaning of the title is 'The Vajrayana Guru of Omniscient Virtue and Wisdom Vast as Ocean.' In Tibetan Buddhism, cyclical reincarnation is a fundamental concept, just as it is in Buddhism practiced in Han Chinese lands. Human life is a cyclical transmigration through the Six Paths. 1 A person can achieve Buddhahood and leave the Six Realms of Karmic Rebirth only by continuously performing good deeds and accumulating virtue, but the Buddha also has Three Bodies: the Truth Body (Dharma-kaya), the Enjoyment Body (Sambhoga-kaya), and the Emanation Body

13 Chen Wei Jian is a pro-democracy activist and writer based in New York

(Nirmanakaya), which is a manifestation that can dwell in the human realm. And the sole purpose of dwelling in the human realm, far from being to demonstrate miraculous powers, is the enlightenment of all sentient beings of this world and universal salvation. Namely, the Dalai Lama is the incarnation of the Thousand-Armed Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Over more than five hundred years, and now already in the fourteenth incarnation, the Dalai Lama is not only the Patron Saint of the Tibetan nation, but also the spiritual leader of Tibetan people. The institution of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama is an important part of Tibetan culture. Because the locus of Tibetan culture has been in the high mountain land of snows, it had always been in the world of tremendous earth-shaking change, until 1950, when Chinese communist troops entered Tibet and the Dalai Lama led a group of monks into exile in India, where the culture of Tibet settled down peacefully to be preserved in a democratic society. In the process Tibetan culture was permeated by the Western democratic ideas, and being the wisest man of Tibetan culture, the Dalai Lama saw that the way out for Tibetan culture lay in its fusion with the Western democratic culture. In 2001, upon the Dalai Lama's recommendation, Tibetan government-in-exile produced a democratically elected Prime Minister and established a national assembly. For more than ten years now its democracy has been maturing by the day. Meanwhile, in the Tibetan native land Tibetan culture has been forever doomed under the communist revolutionary violence of the Chinese Communist Party. Its institution of reincarnation has been completely hijacked by the Chinese Communist Party's brutal political force. The Panchen Lama is another spiritual leader in Tibetan politics and culture. After being kidnapped by Chinese communists and brought to Beijing, he was not only subjected to insult and corrective influence, but also forced to marry and have children. After he passed away, they chose the child who was to be his reincarnation. They secretly imprisoned the child chosen as his reincarnation by the Dalai Lama, turning him into the world's youngest political prisoner. This crazy and ridiculous Chinese communist insult and hijacking of the institution of reincarnation has driven the Dalai Lama to contemplate the value of the institution of reincarnation. He has said that if he cannot return to his native land in his lifetime, he can only be reincarnated abroad, but this could still not prevent a "twin case" reincarnation, such as it occurred with the Panchen Lama. The forceful hijacking of the institution of reincarnation, which is a traditional Tibetan institution, by the Chinese communists, has already become a destabilising factor for Tibetan society now and in the days to come, placing Tibetan people in an incongruous position. This has made the Dalai Lama to realise that only by putting an end to the institution

of reincarnation can he close the loophole that the Chinese communists can take advantage of. In doing so, he is also paving the road toward the future democratization of Tibet, by creating conditions for the Tibetan people to have an independent spirit and mind, and to freely choose their own leaders uninfluenced by the authority of the Dalai Lamas.

Such reflection on his own reincarnation by the Dalai Lama is also based on the fact that the Tibetan government-in-exile is already a mature democratic government, with remarkable performance in the last few years and already entirely capable of leading the Tibetan nation. It is because of this that the Dalai Lama is putting his energy into promoting the Buddhist Dharma and devoting his efforts to the cause of world peace. For the Dalai Lama to put an end to the institution of the Dalai Lama reincarnation shows great historical vision and acute foresight in political terms. In canonical terms, it is a great religious reformation at an opportune moment. In terms of the Buddhist doctrine, all the gateways to enlightenment in the world and all the things that can be named are temporary, changing along with the changes in space and time, which is exactly what is meant by the saying, “Ten Thousand Dharmas Are Empty, The Dharma Is Not a Fixed Dharma.” Is ending the institution of reincarnation not one of the Ten Thousand Dharmas? The Dalai Lama’s sensible manner, which brings to mind the phrase, “the emptiness of ten thousand things make the Buddha nature clear, not to be tainted by even a speck of dust proves one’s Zen mind.,” demonstrates the boundless state of consciousness of a Vajrayana Guru. From the secular point of view, it means giving up his own self through generations forever and displays the visionary courage and charisma of a leader assuming responsibility for the future fate of his nation.

The Dalai Lama, although a Buddhist leader, is able to give up his own embodiment and put an end to the historically passed on inheritance. In comparison, the Chinese Communist Party leaders, who claim to be materialists, are not only racking their brains about the Tibetan institution of reincarnation, but are also to this very day indulging in the institution of designated heirs and third generation successors when it comes to their own system of government. They are so inferior in comparison. The lies that denounce the Dalai Lama for wanting to reinstate theocracy and serfdom are utterly discredited. Today, when the Tibetan community in exile has become a democratic society, the Chinese Communist Party has created a modern-day slave society in Tibet that exists as an appendage to the Chinese communist system. The choice whether to preserve the Dalai Lama reincarnation institution or not should after all be left to the Tibetan people, of course, as the Dalai Lama has said, because in a democratic

society everything works in accordance with the wishes of the people.
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1. Translator's note: The 'Six Paths' are commonly translated into English as 'Six Realms of Karmic Rebirth.'

PHUNTSOG WANGYAL'S MIDDLE WAY AND HIS POLITICAL LEGACY

Ding Yifu¹⁴

7 March 2014

While the meetings of the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference were underway this year, the founder of the Tibetan Communist Party, Baba Phuntsog Wangyal (known as Phünwang), who is currently the most senior and the oldest communist veteran within the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party, published the culmination of a series of theoretical articles he had written in recent years - the book's title, *A Long Way to Equality and Unity: Reflections on Ethnic Relations in Our Country*.¹

Phünwang, who was born in 1922 and passed away this year at the age of 92, attached great importance to this collection that is over 330,000 Chinese characters-long, and had called it "my political legacy." is an injunction of an old revolutionary to posterity. The book is not an easy read for the young people who have not experienced the turbulent changes and the national and ethnic catastrophes of the last century, but it deserves the attention of all those who care about China's ethnic issues. This is a book that history has left us to safeguard.

Phuntsog Wangyal was born in Batang. Batang is located in what Tibetans call Kham, one of the 'three Tibetan provinces,' and Phünwang, was a typical Khampa man. In his childhood, Batang was nominally under the jurisdiction of China's Nationalist government, but in reality - as this was the warlord period of incessant fighting - it was the domain of the Sichuan warlord Liu Wenhui. At the time, Batang had a new-style school set up by the Nationalist government, as well as the West China School run by foreign missionaries where the young people of Batang could learn English.

What the people of Batang fought for in those days was 'Khampas' rule over Kham.' When the young Phünwang left his hometown for inner China

14 Chen Wei Jian is a pro-democracy activist and writer based in New York

for the first time, he drove a yak on foot to Dartsendo, that is to say today's Kangding, and then went to Dazu where he took a boat down the Yangtze River. He later entered the Mongolian and Tibetan Class especially set up by the KM'T Central Political Academy. The young Phuntsog Wangyal was a diligent and eager student, proficient in Chinese, Tibetan and English. He could sing and play music. He was infatuated with the Marxist-Leninist theory and was well acquainted with the complex relationship between the Han Chinese, Tibetans, and the people of Kham

In 1939, Phünwang initiated and established a Tibetan communist organization. As the founder of the Tibetan Communist Party, he was in contact with the Communist Party of China and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and even personally travelled to Calcutta to link up with the Communist Party of India. In Lhasa, he engaged in revolutionary propaganda and was in touch with enlightened, reformist figures of all stripes. He also maintained good relations with enlightened aristocrats in government in Lhasa.

For a whole decade the members of the Tibetan Communist Party were struggling alone, without any support, to publicize change in Tibet, until the conservative Tibetan government expelled its founder from Lhasa. Only just before the Chinese communists entered Tibet, having achieved victory over the entire country in 1949/50, did they initiate a contact with the Tibetan Communist Party and absorbed those young Tibetan revolutionaries into the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party. Zhu De² personally sent a telegram to Phünwang to request him to provide crucial assistance to the People's Liberation Army as it entered Tibet.

Phünwang's Tibetan Communist Party organization dispatched 100 enthusiastic and capable Tibetan cadres to help Chinese communists enter Tibet. Phünwang personally organized the provision of several hundred thousand camels, yaks, and mules that the liberation army needed to penetrate Tibet. Phünwang was not yet 30 at the time, and yet he was already a veteran revolutionary with more than 10 years of experience in revolutionary history and a fairly solid training in communist theory. He had been tried and tested by the revolution and the Communist Party trusted him. He was also a Tibetan, well versed in Tibetan politics, society and culture, and who had a wide range of contacts with Tibetans in all walks of life. He was a person that both Chinese communists and Tibetan clergy and laity could accept. He was the irreplaceable mediator between the two sides.

After the Battle of Chamdo,³ Tibetan government kalon [minister], Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, ⁴ was taken captive by the PLA. Phünwang let the liberation army know that they should not treat Ngabo as a common captive, in handling him they should refer to the etiquette and treatment accorded Tibetan aristocrats. Afterwards, when the Chinese government and Tibet entered negotiations, Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, who had been accorded deferential treatment, served as the chief negotiator for the Tibetan side.

During negotiations and the signing of the 17-Point Agreement⁵ Phünwang acted as interpreter and played an extremely important mediating role. On one occasion, when the negotiations almost fell apart, Phünwang used the flexibility of interpretation to put aside the crisis, nimbly bridge the differences, and successfully bring the two sides back to the negotiating table. That is why, during the celebration that followed the signing of the '17-Point Agreement' the chief Chinese government negotiator raised his glass and proposed a toast to Phünwang.

After this agreement was signed, Phünwang accompanied the first detachment of the People's Liberation Army into Lhasa. He became the only ethnic Tibetan member of the Chinese Communist Party's Working Committee in Tibet, and assumed responsibility for interpreting between the Chinese communists and the Dalai Lama. He held the Dalai Lama in exceptionally high esteem and believed that, with the Dalai Lama as the political and religious leader of the Tibetan nation and the trust of the Chinese government in the Dalai Lama, the prospect of moving the Tibetan nation toward modernization was bright.

The Dalai Lama also thought very highly of Phünwang and trusted him. Later, in his autobiography, the Dalai Lama mentioned Phünwang more than once. More than 60 years later, when I interviewed the Dalai Lama last year, His Holiness recalled the time when Phünwang told him about the first time he had seen the Dalai Lama as a child, then later as the young ruler of Tibet, leading the nation towards an advanced society.

Phünwang talked and talked until he suddenly got so moved that tears ran down his face. And when, later, the Dalai Lama encountered serious problems in his relationship with the Chinese communists, he said he kept thinking that as long as the Chinese Communist Party continues to trust Phünwang, as long as a Tibetan communist like Phünwang represents the Chinese Communist Party in Lhasa, the problems could always be solved.

After 1956, when the CCP decided to launch ‘democratic reforms in the Tibetan districts spread across three provinces - namely the traditional Tibetan regions of Kham and Amdo - which incited Tibetan rebellion, Chinese communists carried out the so-called ‘pacification’ through ruthless military suppression, and when tens of thousands of refugees fled to Central Tibet, the war fires of ‘pacification’ reached the heartland as well. Ever since, the Chinese Communist Party’s Tibet policy has followed the path of extreme violence.

At this time Phünwang, who as a Communist Party member acted as a mediator in all this, became a hindrance to the ultra-left policies. From 1957 on he was submitted to unreasonable purges. He was arrested in 1960 and locked up in Qincheng Prison, where he spent 18 years in solitary confinement; his first wife died and his children were scattered.

After the Cultural Revolution, Phünwang was released from prison in 1978. During the time when Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang were in charge politically, Phünwang had been rehabilitated and again played the role of mediator between the ethnic Han Chinese and Tibetans. When the delegation dispatched by the Dalai Lama in 1985 visited China, Phünwang was once again the man that both sides trusted. For several decades after that, although he politely refused Hu Yaobang’s suggestion that he take on the role of Chairman of the Autonomous Regional Government in Lhasa, and instead concentrated on completing a book on philosophy that he had been pondering while in prison, he never stopped advising the central government on its Tibet policies.

After Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang suffered defeat on the political stage, from the end of the 1980s the Chinese Communist Party completely abandoned the guidelines defined by the First and the Second Work Forums on Tibet. The ultra-leftist faction seized the Work on Tibet office and the Chinese government publicly broke off relations with the Dalai Lama, designating him ‘an enemy’. Anyone who wouldn’t slander and deride the Dalai Lama according to the Chinese Communist Party’s vile tune could be labelled ‘Tibetan Independence’ supporter, and his life and family would be in danger.

After the passing of the 10th Panchen Lama in 1989, almost no one in the land dared openly show approval of the Dalai Lama. There was only one exception; the old Tibetan Communist Party veteran Phuntsog Wangyal. After the death of Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, there was hardly anyone with

enough heft left among the Tibetans whose voice could reach the highest echelons of the Chinese Communist Party. Phünwang was the only one who, with the Tibetan attitude of respect for Gyalwa Rinpoche,⁶ endorsed the Dalai Lama's philosophy and guiding principles of the Middle Way from beginning to end, publicly praising the Dalai Lama's incomparably noble character and moral integrity. He repeatedly emphasized that the Dalai Lama was the key to solving the Tibetan problem - invite the Dalai Lama back, he stated, and the Tibetan problem is solved. He even used their attitudes toward the Dalai Lama to evaluate his colleagues and friends, including the Tibetan revolutionaries that he had led back in the past. He was the one person among Communist Party members who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the Dalai Lama.

Since a young age, Phünwang was a theoretician. He was the Tibetan who conscientiously delved into the classics of Marxism. Even during his days in solitary confinement he did not abandon theoretical contemplation. After he was released from prison, he completed several philosophical works. He also did some in-depth theoretical research into the nationality problem and his reflections on China's ethnic relations had a solid theoretical foundation. He wanted to address Chinese communist leaders and his Communist Party colleagues who had opposed him and attacked him by saying: 'Your current Tibet policy is wrong, it runs counter to Marxism.' He had a pressing desire for discussion and debate with them. But as many of the Han Chinese and Tibetan cadres who now govern Tibet did not dare meet his theoretical challenge, they had no choice but to shun him.

Phuntsog Wangyal, the First Man of Tibetan Communism, got older as the years went by. And as time went on, in his old age, he saw the situation in Tibetan regions grow ever more tense, to the point where it was hard to repair. Tibetan self-immolations became a tragedy rarely seen in human history. Phünwang wrote down his reflections on the Tibetan problem and time and again sent letters to all previous top leaders of the Chinese Communist Party to endorse the Dalai Lama's Middle Way. All this writing was collected into a volume that we now have in front of us

-A Long Way to Equality and Unity: Reflections on Ethnic Relations in Our Country.

Translator's note: Phuntsog Wangyal died on 30th March 2014. Also known as Phuntsok Wangyal Goranangpa, Bapa Phuntsok Wangyal, Bapa Phüntso Wangye, or Phünwang, he

was a major figure in modern Sino-Tibetan relations and lived in Beijing until his death. This book was published in Chinese by Greenfield Bookstore, Hong Kong, in 2014, ISBN 978-988-15571-9-3.

2 Translator's note: Zhu De (Chu Teh, 1886 - 1976) was the founder of the People's Liberation Army and a pioneer of the Chinese Communist Party.

3 Translator's note: The Battle of Chamdo (6-19 October 1950) officially known in China as the 'Liberation of Tibet' was a military campaign by the People's Republic of China against a de facto independent Tibet after months of failed negotiations.

4 Translator's note: Aristocrat-born Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, was one of the four cabinet ministers in the Kashag (the governing council of Tibet). In 1950, at this crucial moment in Tibet's history, the Kashag appointed Ngabo as governor of Kham and Commander-in-Chief of Tibetan forces on the frontier with Chinese-controlled territory.

5 Translator's note: The Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, signed in Beijing in 1951, affirmed Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. Chinese sources regard the document as a legal contract that was mutually welcomed by both governments and by the Tibetan people. But the Central Tibetan Administration considers it invalid, as it was signed under duress.

6 Translator's note: For all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama is the premier lama and is referred to as Gyalwa Rinpoche, meaning 'Precious Victor,' or Yeshi Norbu, meaning 'Wish-fulfilling Jewel.'

SIXTY YEARS OF CHINESE COMMUNIST

OCCUPATION OF TIBET:

A “MASTERPIECE”

Sun Baoqiang¹⁵

27 December 2013

Tibet, known as ‘the roof of the world’ and ‘the earth’s Third Pole’ is of utmost significance both for the landmass of China and the Asian region. Rivers that flow through China and many countries in South-east Asia and South Asia originate there, and it is the ecological source for those countries and regions. Tibet is also the birthplace of the Yangtze, Yellow, Mekong, Salween, and the Brahmaputra rivers, and has been called the water-tower of Asia. It is because of the existence of the Tibetan Plateau that moist air can penetrate so deeply into China’s interior, creating a hospitable habitat for Chinese people.

After China occupied Tibet, enslaving and persecuting the population, it also started to plunder it through extraction and exploitation of its natural resources in the most destructive manner. Half-a-century later, ‘the roof of the world’ and ‘the earth’s Third Pole’ has suffered unprecedented devastation and the once-beautiful Shangri-La has become an eternal reverie.

Extraction and the Destruction of the Ecology of the Plateau

Tibet’s biological resources such as caterpillar fungus, snow lotus and saffron crocus are famous worldwide. In order to rapidly grow its GDP and in order to earn foreign exchange, China’s Communist Party started atrocious extraction. Every spring, the communist government-controlled schools stop classes and send swarms of students to cull natural resources. The quality of the grasslands on the Tibetan Plateau had been well-maintained for thousands of years, the grass grew densely and its root

15 Sun Bao Qiang is a writer based in Australia .He served a three-year sentence for supporting the Tiananmen student movement

system was well-developed; rats were not able to burrow into it and were, naturally, not able to reproduce rapidly. But in the short span of half a century, due to excessive extraction of long-thread moss (*Nostoc flagelliforme*) and caterpillar fungus, the surface of the Tibetan Plateau has suffered enormous damage. The root system of the grasses has been destroyed, the surface has been stripped bare, the rats have dug holes, inhabited the surface soil, and are breeding at an astonishing rate. The rat problem has become disastrous, there is water and soil runoff, grassland degeneration, spreading desertification, growing salinisation, disappearance of wetlands, and the retreat of glaciers.

To make matters worse, the communist authorities have turned high quality grassland into farmland, causing further water and soil runoff and surface deterioration. Data shows a global rise in average annual temperatures of 0.74 degrees centigrade over the past 100 years, while in China the corresponding temperature rise has been 1.1 degrees centigrade. But in Tibet, the average temperature has risen by 1.42 degrees centigrade in just the last 60 years of Chinese communist occupation, making it the location of the second highest average temperature rises in the world!

Because of the rise in air temperatures on the Tibetan Plateau, the humid climate can frequently not penetrate into the interior, which is having a tremendous impact of China's climate. In China's southwest - which is the country's richest area when it comes to water resources, places such as Yunnan and Guizhou - there has recently been a persistent decline in precipitation, with the 'worst droughts in a century' continuing to occur frequently. This is closely related to the destruction of the surface soil on the Tibetan Plateau. In a word, the Chinese Communist Party has been an outstanding leader in manufacturing climate catastrophes and worst-in-a-hundred-years droughts.

Exploitation of Mineral Resources Contaminating Water Sources

According to Tibetan sources, a subsidiary of the China National Gold Group Corporation, Huatailong Mining Development Co.Ltd., has set up a mine on farmland in Gyama Township. 1 Big water pipes and drainpipes extend from the mineral processing plant into the Lhasa River, meaning the pipes draw water from the Lhasa river and the drainpipes discharge wastewater from the mineral processing plant into the River. For many years this has been continuously polluting Lhasa's water supply.

Chinadialogue2 published a report titled ‘Tibet’s Mining Menace’ saying that a study of water quality below the Gyama mine carried out in 2010 revealed that ‘elevated concentrations of heavy metals in the surface water and streambed at the upper/middle part of the valley pose a considerably high risk to the local environment...and to downstream water users. Environmental changes such as global warming or increased mining activity may increase the mobility of these pools of heavy metals.’

Not only are Chinese communist authorities contaminating the city’s water supply, they are bringing disastrous pollution to the grasslands as well. The Gyama Shingchu River, which flows down from the snow mountains through Gyama Township, is the only source of drinking and irrigation water for the local farmers and herders, as well as for their livestock. Ever since the Chinese communist authorities started open-pit mining and open-air slag-dumping in Gyama Township, the Gyama Shingchu river-water has a peculiar odour, is covered in roiling foam and has become a veritable river of toxins. Tibetans who drink it fall ill and get cancer. Livestock drinking it die. When the village chief sent the water to the Lhasa Disease Prevention and Control Centre for testing, the results showed: ‘There are three main toxins; there is an excess of lead, an excess of copper, and it also contains gold.’ The words ‘it also contains gold’ mean excessive use of cyanide. So the Chinese Communist Party has been an outstanding leader in manufacturing water pollution, an executioner who kills without a trace of blood.

Large-Scale Hydropower Development and the Resulting Devastation

On 12 November 2010, the Zangmu Hydropower Station in Tibet cut off the flow of the Yarlung Tsangpo river. This news attracted great attention from the international media. Zangmu Hydropower Station was the first such large-scale project in Tibet, and also the first this size on the Yarlung Tsangpo river. Since then, there is not a single large river within the 9,600,000 square kilometres of China’s territory whose flow has not been obstructed by a dam. The poetry of a natural river flow in China is a thing of the past.

Today, the corporations controlled by the family members of the butcher Li Peng, the Huaneng Group, Huadian Group, Datang Group, and Guodian Group, have completed the division of Tibet’s water and electricity. The Chinese Communist Party has already made a detailed hydropower

development plan, projecting construction of large-scale hydropower stations on Tibet's Yarlung Tsangpo river and its tributaries such as Dozhung Tsangpo, Shab Chu, Lhasa river, Nyang Chu, and Palong river, with a total capacity to produce 140 million kilowatts of electricity, 525 billion kilowatt/hours annually, and generate the amount of electricity equivalent to nine Three Gorges Dams. In addition, they also plan to build the world's largest hydropower station south of Metog, which would be twice as big in scale as the Three Gorges Dam. They are setting the stage for a Three Gorges Dam, this world-famous 'cancer' and 'time-bomb,' on 'the roof of the world' and 'the earth's Third Pole.' This is a tragedy for Tibet, a tragedy for China, and a tragedy for the global village.

Given the Chinese Communist Party's acts against ecology, environment, and nature, that are equivalent to 'killing the goose that lays the golden egg,' experts from several countries have written letters to oppose the building of hydropower stations on the frail Tibetan Plateau. But control over the Chinese Communist Party's electric power development is firmly in the hands of Li Peng's son and grandson, and the frantic Communist Party will never consider the harm that 'river diversion by dam construction' brings to the mountains and rivers, and the disaster it will bring to the world. There is no way that the nefarious Chinese Communist Party will let this piece of fatty meat be pulled out of its mouth. Its aggressive development will create a disaster of global proportions. A catastrophe will once again descend on the snow-covered plateau.

The Chinese Communist Party has consistently followed the policy of 'acting like a whore but building memorial arches anyway' It has refined its game of double-dealing – 'one hand soft-gloved, the other hardened for a punch' - to perfection; 'using force while spewing lies' smoothly to its heart's content. In order to cover up its acts of banditry and atrocious butchery, it frames up and pays literati to write songs in its praise, and frames up and pays singers to smear themselves with heavy makeup and perform to its call. It uses flattery and flowery statements to dilute the bloodbath it has created. It uses hymns and odes to cover up its inhuman atrocities.

The famous song "Heavenly Road" was indeed launched under these kinds of circumstances. The lyrics of the "Heavenly Road" are: "At dawn, I stand upon the green pastureland and see a majestic eagle bathed in morning sunlight. Like a magic cloud soaring through the blue sky, it brings good luck and happiness to Tibetan children. At dusk, I stand

atop the tall mountain peak, and see the railroad built to my hometown. A giant dragon snaking through the mountains, it brings comfort to the snowy plateau. It is the magical Heavenly Road that brings human warmth to borderlands. Mountains are no longer high, journeys are no longer long, as the children of every ethnicity happily gather under one roof.”

Please note that the Chinese communists did not build the railroad to bring comfort to Tibetans, but rather to move the booty back to Beijing. The massive transportation artery moves material resources out of Tibet in a steady flow, day and night, transfusing blood to the dictatorship, recharging the batteries of the autocracy, enabling the maintenance of social stability, and bringing profit to the Princelings. In a word, it is providing the building blocks for the dictatorial tyranny.

The truthful lyrics should read: “At dawn, I stand upon the yellow pastureland and see that the snow lotus no longer blooms. A black cloud covers the sun. The hundred flowers have withered. The sky is dark and the earth gloomy. In the evening, I stand on the banks of a turbid river. I hear that the water from the melting snows no longer sings. A black cloud covers the moon. The hundred birds cover their mouths as the sandstorm wreaks havoc. I stand atop the tall mountain peak and look hopefully in the direction of Dharamshala. When will the revered Dalai Lama come home? When will he return to his beloved native land? Only autonomy for Tibet is the magical Heavenly Road that will take us to Shangri-la. We offer chaang barley wine and butter tea to His Holiness, and His Holiness brings good luck and happiness to Tibet.”

In order to conceal the facts and block the truth, Chinese Communist Party has also produced the gravely misrepresentative song “Tibetan Plateau.” This song is vastly popular on both sides of the Yangtze River, spreading poison in all directions, comparable to “The East Is Red” of the olden days. Its flattery and flowery statements have deceived countless Han Chinese people who do not know the actual facts, playing an important role in embellishing the rule of the Chinese Communist Party.

The truthful lyrics of the song “Qinghai-Tibet Plateau” should be: “Who is it that has brought disaster to the Land of Snow? Who is it that has ravaged the millennial highlands? Don’t tell me that there are wild dogs even more vicious than the jackals, or is it the long-held hatred against both men and gods? Oy! I see mountain upon mountain, mountain river upon mountain river, mountain river upon mountain river shedding tears! Ya-la-suo! And

this is the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau! Who is it that offers prayers for His Holiness Day and Night? Who is it that looks with hope at the idol within our hearts? Could there be another song of praise? This is the belief that Tibetans hold and will never change.

Oy! I see mountain upon mountain, mountain river upon mountain river, mountain river upon mountain river, longing! Ya-la-suo! And this is the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau!”

Tibetan and Han Chinese people unite and say NO to the Chinese Communist Party, the root of all evil!

Translator's note: Gyama Township is located in Meldro Gongkar County, near Lhasa.

Translator's note: Chinadialogue is a bilingual website, with news, features and reports on environmental issues in China and the rest of the world.

Translator's note: <https://www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/4509-Tibet-s-mining-menace>

Translator's note: Yarlung Tsangpo River is the upper stream of the Brahmaputra River, one of the major rivers in Asia.

Translator's note: In Confucian tradition, memorial arches were built in praise

HU YAOBANG'S TIBET POLICY RECONSIDERED

Wang Dan¹⁶

12 March 2014

The Kunming Incident has once again placed the issue of daily conflicts that occur in China's ethnic regions in front of the world. It has also turned the so-called problem with borderlands, which include Tibet, into a national problem. As we face the prospect of gradually escalating violent confrontations, besides condemning the willful slaughter of innocent people by extremist forces, we must also add the ethnic policies that Chinese communists have been implementing for a long time to the list of items that need to be examined, or else there is no way to explain a simple fact: Why is the result of the increased suppression of separatist forces in Xinjiang and Tibet regions the opposite of the expected—an ever-more intense incidence of violent attacks?

Talking about the Chinese central government policies that deal with ethnic national minorities, the key issue after all is whether the so-called high degree of autonomy has been implemented in the regions of Xinjiang and Tibet. I believe, one, that, whether in Xinjiang or in Tibet, those who truly advocate complete independence at the present stage are not at all in the majority, but that, two, there is extensive resentment toward the ethnic policies of the central government. So, where does this resentment come from? The main sticking point is that it derives from the duplicity of the authorities toward the autonomy of ethnic minority regions. The mouth says yes, the heart says no, so they have not released their grip at all to allow the Uighurs and the Tibetans their 'high degree of autonomy.'

Not only has this been a long-standing criticism by opposition figures of the Chinese Communist Party policies toward ethnic minorities, the completely identical view has in fact also been held within the high echelons of the Chinese Communist Party itself. The individual who best represents this point of view is none other than the former General-Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Yaobang.

16 A writer now living in the United States, Wang Dan was one of the student leader of the 1989, Tiananmen Square Protests.

According to the book *Hu Jintao: A Biography* and Deng Liqun's memoir, when Hu Yaobang visited the houses of some local residents at the Anti-Imperialist People's Commune on the outskirts of Lhasa during his inspection tour of Tibet in 1980, he was astonished by the extremely poor living conditions of the Tibetan people that he could see for himself, and so he asked the administrator of Tibet to his face, "Have you thrown all the funds the central government allocated especially as aid to Tibet into the Yarlung Tsangpo river?" Referring to the disastrous effects of the ultra-left policies that had been implemented for many years by the authorities in Tibet, which relied primarily on the ethnic Han military personnel, he sadly remarked, "This is, totally, the colonial way!"

On 29 May 1980, Hu Yaobang addressed the general assembly of cadres from the Tibet Autonomous Region. He used the following six words to sum up the essence of his address: "tax free," "open up," "let go." By 'let go' he meant the recall of the bulk of ethnic Han cadres from Tibet to China proper in order to allow the ratio of ethnic Tibetan cadres to achieve an absolute majority. He said, "Within two to three years—in my opinion, the best would be two years—of the total number of State-transfer cadres (I'm not talking about the ones who are not transfer cadres) the non-transfer cadres should entirely be ethnic Tibetans and by the way the State-transfer cadres also include instructors, ethnic Tibetan cadres should constitute more than two thirds." As for the ethnic Han cadres in Tibet, he said, "We must make appropriate work arrangements for a planned, large-scale return to China proper. In this way, three sides will be satisfied: The central government will be satisfied, ethnic Han cadres will be satisfied, Tibetan cadres and people will be satisfied. If the three sides will be satisfied, why don't we get down to business and do this?"

After Hu Yaobang's recommendation was put forth, it suffered a vigorous backlash from the hardliners within the Party, particularly from the ethnic Han cadres who had been working in Tibet for a long time and who were even more strongly opposed. One after the other, they expressed their view that once the ethnic Han cadres were withdrawn from Tibet, the separatist forces were certain to increase. Consequently, Hu Yaobang's policies were not adopted by the then housekeeper of the Chinese Communist Party, Deng Xiaoping.

We can actually already see here the formation of a huge interest group around the Tibet policy, capable of using nominal stability to defend its own interests. And stability, to the Chinese Communist Party, is like a

sacred ancestral tablet of sorts; the moment they whip it out, all the other positions have to give way. Of course, we have all seen by now the results of that rejection of Hu Yaobang's recommendations in the name of stability. The situation in Tibet has certainly not become more stable.

I have sought out this bit of history in order to prove that in fact even within the Chinese Communist Party they have already realized that there is a problem with their ethnic minority policy in so far as it has not been able to effect a high degree of autonomy, and that they have already tried to make improvements in regard to this issue. But, the kind of enlightened policy proposed by Hu Yaobang was doomed not to be adopted by the Chinese Communist Party, which only deems the 'leftist' views as orthodoxy.

Now, with the Xinjiang and Tibet problem growing ever more severe by the day, it might perhaps be necessary to reconsider Hu Yaobang's ethnic minority policy.

HAS TIBET ‘BELONGED TO CHINA SINCE ANCIENT TIMES?’

Chen Pokong¹⁷

March 2011

The road taken by the Dalai Lama in renouncing the struggle for Tibetan independence has its origins long ago. Confronting reality, he has conceded that at present “Tibet is a part of the People’s Republic of China.” Yet the unforgiving Chinese communists insist on maintaining the foregone conclusion that the Dalai Lama equals ‘Tibetan Independence and insist that the Dalai Lama concedes that ‘Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times.’ The former amounts to forced labelling, the latter to forcing someone’s hand.

‘Tibet has been an inalienable part of China since ancient times,’ claims a Chinese Communist Party White Paper, without adding an exposition. But can this verdict hold water after all? We need to take stock of history from the start.

In Earliest History Whose Sovereignty Was Greater?

We can summarize the complicated historical relationship between Tibet and China by dividing it into four stages. During the 7th century of the Common Era, the period of Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo’s rule, Tibet gained unprecedented strength. Both the king of Nepal and the emperor of Tang dynasty China presented princesses to Songtsen Gampo in 641 to serve as imperial concubines, using this peace-making marriage policy to contain Tibet’s expansion.

If one uses this kind of relationship by marriage to maintain that Tibet has since that time been a part of China, couldn’t it then also be said that from that time onwards China has been a part of Tibet?

Morover, the position of the Nepalese Princes Bhrikuti at the Tibetan imperial palace at that time was higher than that of the Chinese princess

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Wencheng, so, between Tibet, Nepal and China, who was Part of whom after all? The reality is that in that era the three nations were all independent sovereign States with their own respective governments.

The continued external expansion during the reign of King Trisong Deutsen and occupied China's capital Chang'an on one occasion in 763. For Tibet to withdraw its troops, China was forced to pay tribute to Tibet. The two countries later erected stone pillars in 783 along their border to serve as boundary markers, pledging not to plunder each other's territory, 'not to raise troops against each other, not to invade each other.'

If the fact that China and Tibet historically had a relationship by marriage is used to prove that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times,' couldn't we then also say that the Xiongnu, the Turks, and many other nations on China's western frontier regions and in the north that were related to China by marriage alliances have been a part of China since ancient times? Or could we say that some of the European countries whose princesses and princes have historically intermarried, such as England, France, Germany, Austria, and Holland (there are princesses among them who even became queens of other countries), have 'since ancient times' been a part of another country?

In the 12th century, as the Mongols destroyed numerous Asian and European nations including China, their armies also entered Tibet, but because the Mongol ruler Kublai Khan was a devout Buddhist, he appointed 'Tibetan Chogyal Phagpa as the Supreme Teacher (Imperial Preceptor) and honoured Buddhism as the State religion. Tibetans and Mongols established a priest-patron relationship¹, with the Tibetan chogyal (Dharma King) acting as the spiritual advisor to the Mongol khan, and the Mongol Khan acting as the protector of the Tibetan chogyal and his territory. It is obvious that within the domain of the Mongol empire, the status of Tibet was greater than that of China. Tibet still had autonomy, while China was subjugated and perished. If we stubbornly want to insist that the Mongol empire (Yuan dynasty) is a Chinese dynasty, well then, from the Korean Peninsula in the East to the Danube in the West, to the Arctic Ocean in the North (including Russia) and the Pacific Ocean and Persian Gulf in the South (including numerous nations of Southeast Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East)- has it all been a part of China since that time on?

In the 14th century, the Chinese overthrew Mongolian rule and restored China by establishing their own Ming dynasty. After Mongolia shrunk

back to the north of the Gobi Desert, the Tibeto-Mongolian priest-patron relationship continued as before, while there was no relationship of mutual subordination or affiliation between China and Tibet and therefore no priest-patron relationship. As for the Ming dynasty's bestowal of titles on the supreme teachers of various Tibetan sects, it is comparable to the conferral of orders or medals by governments and parliaments of one country on the leaders of another - it falls into the category of cultivating friendly contacts and winning somebody over by diplomacy. The reality is that China, Tibet, and Mongolia were all independent sovereign States, each one with its own government ruling its own affairs.

The honorific title of the Dalai Lama was originally given by the Mongol Khans. In 1578, the Mongol Altan Khan first bestowed this title on Sonam Gyatso, the head of Tibet's largest school of Buddhism, the Gelugpa. Mongolia and China had nothing to do with each other at the time; China had already entered the late Ming Wanli reign.

Tibeto-Manchu Relations Were Priest-Patron, Not Subordination

In the 17th century, when the Manchu Qing dynasty abruptly rose to power, in response to the request by the Manchu Qing emperor Tibet forged the priest-patron relationship with Manchu Qing emperors in 1639, starting with the Fifth Dalai Lama. At that time, Ming dynasty China was still not subjugated. The Tibeto-Manchu priest-patron relationship was formed chiefly due to the Manchu Qing attempt to offset Mongol influence. The Tibeto-Manchu priest-patron relationship was similar to the Tibeto-Mongol priest patron understanding, but the Tibeto-Manchu relationship was weaker than the Tibet to Mongol pact. The status of the Manchu Qing Resident Ministers was equal to that of diplomatic envoys of other countries who resided in Tibet. The Manchu Qing emperor and the Tibetan Dalai Lama mutually conferred honorific titles on each other. In 1644, after the Manchu Qing destroyed neighbouring countries, including China, the Tibeto-Manchu priest-patron relationship remained unchanged.

During the 18th century, Tibet asked for assistance from the Manchu Qing emperor on the basis of the Tibeto-Manchu priest-patron relationship in order to resist invasions by the Gorkha kingdom and Nepal and quell domestic strife. The Manchu Qing imperial forces consequently entered Tibet on three different occasions and withdrew after they accomplished their missions.

In the aftermath, during the reign of the Manchu Qing Qianlong Emperor, new 'reparation regulations' were issued regarding Tibet, in effect the Manchu Qing emperor's recommendations for improvements to his Supreme Teacher, the Dalai Lama. Among these suggestions there was a clause recommending that the succession of leading Tibetan reincarnated tulkus, such as the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, be determined by drawing lots from a Golden Urn. The responsibility to determine succession, however, still rested with the Tibetan Government and Tibet's senior lamas. The Tibetan authorities took the Manchu Qing emperor's recommendations into consideration, but in actual practice they sometimes used the Golden Urn to draw lots, and at other times they did not. For instance, the 10th, 11th and the 12th Dalai Lamas were determined by lots drawn from the urn, while the 9th, the 13th, and the 14th Dalai Lamas were identified by indigenous traditional methods, not by drawing lots.

In modern history, the Manchu Qing, Nepal, and Great Britain all tried to intervene in Tibet's internal affairs, either by invading the plateau or by assuming the stance of a protector nation. Each separately exerted a certain degree of influence, and formed a special relationship with Tibet, but none ever essentially changed Tibet's independent, sovereign status.

In 1908, the Manchu Qing first thought of a scheme to wrest political power from the Dalai Lama and dispatched troops to invade Tibet. The 13th Dalai Lama immediately announced that he was terminating the Tibeto-Manchu priest-patron relationship and went into exile, first in Mongolia and China, and from 1910 in India. In 1911, the Chinese population overthrew Manchu Qing rule and restored ethnic control by establishing the Republic of China. In 1912, Tibetans defeated the Manchu Qing troops within their borders, forced their surrender, and then drove the Qing army and all other Chinese out of Tibet. The exiled 13th Dalai Lama returned from India soon thereafter and reaffirmed that Tibet was an independent sovereign country.

Analogous with the circumstances under Mongol rule, if we want to regard the Manchu Qing empire and dynasty as Chinese, well, then are Korea, Vietnam, and even Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and the Ryukyus (which were at the time all vassal states of the Manchu Qing, with far closer relations with the Manchu Qing than Tibet had) all inalienable parts of China 'since ancient times'? Especially, to use the Treaty of Nerchinsk between the Qing and Russia, signed in 1689 during the reign of the Kangxi emperor as the norm, during the hundred some years after the treaty Russia annexed 1,500,000 square kilometres of the Qing territory, which had to be reclaimed in the name of Republican China.

Mongol and Manchu Influence Had Nothing To Do With Sovereignty

If we take the Manchu Qing to be a Chinese dynasty, then, when Mao Zedong under pressure from the Soviet Union recognized Mongolian independence (from the Manchu Qing to the Republic of China, Mongolia was either a part of the Manchu Qing empire or Of China), the nature of his action must of necessity be qualified that of a traitor. For the same reason, the agreement that Jiang Zemin signed with Russia, demarcating the Sino-Russian border and formally recognizing Russia's historical annexation, must be even more so qualified as an act of treason. After all, in dealing with historical matters, one cannot have double standards.

If we use the historic influence that Mongolia and the Manchu Qing empire, at different times, extended into Tibet to justify that Tiber has been a part of China since ancient times,' (not to mention that Mongolia and the Manchu Qing do not necessarily equal China), can we also say that since Nepal had extended its influence into Tiber in the 18th and 19th centuries 'Tibet has been a part of Nepal since ancient times'? Great Britain's influence extended into Tibet in the 19th and early 20th centuries; can we say, 'Tibet has been a part of Great Britain since ancient times'? Or, since Mongolia, Russia and Japan extended their influence into China, can we say, 'China has been a part of Mongolia since ancient times,' 'China has been a part of Russia since ancient times,' and 'China has been a part of Japan since ancient times'?

It is said that after the Chinese toppled the Manchus and restored their country, the President of the Republic of China, Yuan Shikai, sent letters to the governments of Tibet and Nepal inviting them to join the Republic of China, but both governments tactfully declined. During the two World Wars and the peripheral wars, Tibet remained neutral.

Rumour has it that Wu Zhongxin, as the representative of the Republic of China, 'presided over the enthronement ceremony of the 14th Dalai Lama' in 1940, but the reality is that Wu Zhongxin's diplomatic status was the same as that of the representatives from British India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, who had all been invited merely to attend the celebration and the ceremony. The Dalai Lama's reincarnation had already been confirmed in 1939 by the Regent of Tibet and the Tibetan National Assembly, the year before the enthronement ceremonials.

The Free World Calls China's Dispatch of Troops to Tibet 'Invasion'

In 1949/50, Communist China sent troops to Tibet. In independent and sovereign Tibet this was naturally classified as 'invasion.' At the time, with the exception of communist countries, most nations including India, Nepal, Great Britain, the Philippines, Thailand, Nicaragua, Ireland, Salvador, and the United States of America, issued statements on different occasions - including at the United Nations - denouncing the Chinese Communist 'invasion of Tibet.'

The position of the Chinese Communist Party itself regarding Tibet has differed over time, and it has been inconsistent. The Chinese Soviet Republic Constitution, promulgated by the Chinese Communist Party in Jiangxi in 1931, stipulated: 'The Soviet government of China recognises the right of self-determination of the national minorities in China, their right to complete separation from China, and to the formation of an independent state for each national minority.'

In 1934, Chinese communist troops passed through the territory of Tibet and received provisions and lodging from the Tibetan populace. Referring to it, Mao Zedong said, "This is our only foreign debt." Since at that time Mao Zedong acknowledged that Tibet was a foreign country, he would have to acknowledge some 16 years later that Chinese communist troops' 'advance into Tibet' was really an 'invasion of Tibet.' One cannot approach history with double standards, nor can one approach reality with double standards.

Under the pressure of their huge army bearing down on Tibet's borders, the Chinese communists forced the Tibetan Government to sign a surrender with the 'Seventeen-Point Agreement,' but a few years later, Chinese communists themselves reneged on the agreement by destabilizing Tibet's autonomous status and causing a popular uprising in Tibet. This forced the 14th Dalai Lama to flee into exile in India, where he immediately declared that the 'Seventeen- Point Agreement' was invalid and that Tibet was reverting to its origin independent and autonomous status.

Chinese communists took over Tibet and turned it into 'a part of the People's Republic of China: With the passage of time, this gradually became a fait accompli. Starting from the 1970s, the Dalai Lama has been proposing the Middle Way Approach, no longer seeking independence for Tibet. When Premier Deng Xiaoping met with the Dalai Lama's Special Envoy

in 1979, he promised that, on the issue of Tibet, “apart from independence, everything else can be discussed.” This made the Dalai Lama feel that it would be possible to recover a high degree of autonomy for Tibet and made him even more firmly determined to pursue his peaceful dialogue path.

Faced with the assumption that ‘Tibet is a part of the People’s Republic of China,’ various countries started changing their position, either giving their tacit approval or openly recognizing this as a fact. Today’s positions that sympathize with the fate of Tibetans, show concern for the protection of Tibetan religion and the safeguarding of human rights, and call on Chinese communist authorities to resolve the Tibetan issue through dialogue with the Dalai Lama, do not at all imply that these countries ‘support Tibetan independence.’

Since history is so complicated that even the opinion of Chinese historians is not unanimous, why not put aside the controversy and seek a common ground? ‘Set aside historical controversy,’ ‘face the reality’ ‘turn to the future,’ and ‘consider everything by looking ahead’ - these words are all catchphrases originally used by the Chinese Communist Party. So why not employ them when it comes to the issue of Tibet?

Since 2002, the moderation of the Dalai Lama’s position has reached a level that could hardly have been imagined: Using the Chinese Constitution to realize Genuine Autonomy for Tibet. It is reasonable to say that, having come to this point, the dust could be allowed to settle over the Sino-Tibetan impasse. As the issue of independence does not exist, either within China or abroad (no one advocates it internally, no lobby supports it externally), so long as both China and Tibet adhere to the spirit of ‘looking ahead,’ the world-affecting problem of Tibet can be easily solved. Zhongnanhai is indeed wasting time splitting hairs, turning a Tibetan issue that can absolutely be solved into an insoluble one.

Beijing is overconfident and conceited about its own might. To this day, it has refused to enter into a substantive dialogue of any kind with the Dalai Lama. It is merely playing the game of deliberate procrastination, intentionally blocking the way to peaceful Sino-Tibetan consultations. It is conspiring to completely distort Tibetan religion, culture and tradition, and fully Sinitize the Tibetans, turning the entire Tibetan region pro-communist red.

The ancients said: 'Those who don't take what Heaven offers, instead receive its punishment.' Chinese communists are going against the Will of Heaven. Will they be able to get away with it? We have to wait and see.

SERFDOM IN TIBET: WHO'S PACK OF LIES:

Chen Pokong

18 March 2009

In order to prove the legitimacy of their rule in Tibet, Chinese communists have been describing Tibet before 1959 as a 'feudal serfdom,' exaggerating that it was 'darker than the Middle Ages in Europe.' They have self-proclaimed the Chinese communist military conquest and rule over Tibet as 'liberation of serfs?' To this end, this year they have even instituted a special so-called Serfs' Emancipation Day¹ in the belief that the Chinese Communist Party calls all the shots and has the final say when it comes to this period of history.

I have consulted relevant material in Tibet, China, and other countries, and visited Tibetans who lived in Tibet before 1959, including the 70-year-old Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, Samdhong Rinpoche. I have discovered that only the Chinese Communist Party refers to old Tibet as 'serfdom;' all other historical material, and the descriptions of Tibetans themselves in particular, differ completely.

Tibetan population before 1959 was roughly composed of farmers, herders, handicraftsmen, monks, and nuns. Of the common lay Tibetans, after one excludes the monks and nuns who lived in monasteries, 60% were farmers, 30% were herders, and 10% were handicraftsmen. Tibetan land at the time separately belonged to the government, the monasteries, and private individuals. Landless farmers and herders depended on rented land for livelihood. Regardless of whether one calls those who owned land in Tibet feudal lords or landlords, their relationship to those who rented their land was no different from the circumstances in other countries at that time.

As a matter of fact, if one compares the plight of Tibetan farmers and herders in the middle of the 20th century to those of Chinese farmers and herders of the same period, their status was similar, but the level of freedom enjoyed by the Tibetan farmers and herders and their living conditions were somewhat better. The reason being that at the time China had just gone through the chaos of war, the burden of which lay heavily on the farmers' shoulders, and their livelihood could not improve overnight. Within the

borders of Tibet, however, it had been all peace and calm (the Tibetan government had pursued a neutral policy and did not get drawn into either the World War or the peripheral conflicts). The populace lived in peace and worked happily, giving the impression of a bucolic pastoral. The share that Tibetan farmers and herders who rented land owed the landowners, including duties and taxes, barely amounted to 2% to 4% of their annual harvests, and they could be exempted when struck by natural disasters.

Before 1959, there were no famines in Tibet, and certainly no records of people dying from hunger. After Chinese communists took over Tibet, they forced their full works, such as the bloody land reform, communes, Great Leap Forward, Cultural Revolution, etc. onto Tibet as well. Moreover, large quantities of grain were transported to China's interior. At critical times, there was nothing left to plant. At the end of the 1950s and the beginning of 1960s, Tibet experienced a large-scale famine-for the first time in its history.

When the former Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress, the 10th Panchen Lama, went there to inspect the situation, Tibetans kneeled in front of him, in tears, to beg: "Don't let the living beings starve! Don't let Buddhism perish!" Because of this experience, he wrote a 70,000-character petition to Zhou Enlai, then Chinese Premier, in which he said honestly: "In the past in Tibet, because of wide-spread Buddhism, there was a good custom among all the people, whether noble or lowly, to help the poor and give alms. Even those who begged for food could eke out a living. Nobody ever died of starvation... Today people are dying en masse. They run out of food and die straight away. In some cases entire families have been wiped out." Full of grief and indignation, he wrote: "Previously, those who begged for food in Tibet at least had a bowl. Today, those who beg for food don't even have a bowl." Because of this petition, The Panchen Lama, whose status in Tibet is second only to the Dali Lama, was suddenly thrown into prison by Chinese communists and locked up for ten years!"

According to the former Tibetan law, those who had land had no right to drive out the tenant farmers, and had even less right to use corporal punishment on tenant farmers. If a common person committed a crime, the landlord or feudal lord had no right to penalize them. They had to be brought to the government for legal procedure. Before 1959, there were fewer than 100 convicts within Tibetan borders. After Chinese communists took control of Tibet, they set up prisons and labor reform camps everywhere, locking up tens of thousands of prisoners, especially

large numbers of political prisoners. That persevering in religious faith would suddenly reduce one to a prisoner was totally unimaginable in old Tibet.

The old Tibetan government was consisted of one half secular officials and one half monks. Secular officials were picked from hereditary aristocracy, the same as was done in China a little earlier, or in other countries. Family background was not taken into account for the monks among the officials, and a large number of them came from farming and herding families. There is a saying in Tibet that goes: “If the son has ability and wisdom, the Gaden throne has no permanent master.”² What Tibet had in place was not “the union of political and religious rule,” but “the integration of state and church.” This was a unique characteristic of Tibet as a Buddhist nation. Precisely because the country was founded on Buddhism, what the officials and people attached great importance to were the flexible values, such as compassion, kindness, honesty, support of the weak and assistance to the poor, which were incompatible with the vicious politics such as usury, abuse, cheating, reliance on the strong, and mistreatment of the weak.

The Chinese Communist Party has invented terms like “serf-masters” and “serfs,”³ and concocted stories about “skinning” and “eye gauging”-deliberate exaggerations to scare people, that have nothing to do with Tibet’s reality. On the contrary, it is the cruelty of the Chinese communists themselves that can be rated the worst in the world: Zhang Zhixin’s throat was cut,⁴ Zhong Haiyuan’s organs were removed,⁵ Li Julian’s lower jaw and tongue were pierced by bamboo sticks, ⁶ Gao Zhicheng suffered extreme sexual abuse⁷...

When we consider that Chinese Communist Party forges and falsifies even Chinese history (e.g. the history of the War of Resistance against Japan), it is not at all surprising that it would forge and falsify the history of Tibet. Leaders like Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping rehabilitated the cases of “miscarriage of justice” created by Mao Zedong, but this was limited to cases within the party. When it comes to history, the so-called “bringing order to chaos” and “setting the record right” campaigns also merely revised the part regarding the internal mutual slandering of Chinese Communist Party leadership cliques. The main part of history that deals with issues like the nation, ethnic groups and the people has not been changed one bit. In other words, Chinese Communist Party has stayed in power to this day on the basis of Maoists lies.

Ordinary people have limited time. Their knowledge is limited too. It is even harder to get ordinary people to understand and compare vast amounts of historical data. Crafty dictators use this to allow ordinary people to only have to remember the theories and slogans that repeatedly pass by their ears a thousand, ten thousand times, until at long last they get used to them. The Chinese Communist Party superstitiously believes in a Nazi-type theory that if a lie is repeated a thousand times, it becomes the truth. Admittedly, all sorts of backward things existed in Tibet before 1959. Like all other countries, Tibet too needed renewal and development. In fact, from the early 20th century on, namely, from the time of the 13th Dalai Lama, Tibet's political reform was on the official business agenda, and its direction was the system of constitutional government, as was becoming prevalent in the world.

In 1961, after only two years in exile, the young 14th Dalai Lama began to draw "the draft democratic constitution for future Tiber." In it, there was an article that went as far as to stipulate: "The National Assembly, by majority of two-thirds of its total members, upon consultation with the Supreme Court, can dismiss the Dalai Lama, and his authority shall be exercised by the Ruling Council." After that, the democratic process among the Tibetan community in exile unfolded step by step: representatives and the parliament were elected by the people; from 1990, the government is no longer appointed by the Dalai Lama, but, rather, elected by the parliament; from 2001, the Chief Minister (Prime Minister or Premier),⁸ is chosen through direct elections by the people. In the midst of their exile, Tibetans have completed their political reform and established a relatively perfect system of democracy and constitutional government.

In contrast, within Tibet's borders controlled by Chinese communists, not only was this the most terrifying and the darkest era of bloody land reforms, communes, Great Leap Forward, Cultural Revolution, etc. (much more terrifying and darker than the Dark Ages in Europe), but when the Tibetans petitioned peacefully in 1989 and 2008, they met with Chinese Communist Party's brutal repression and murder. To speak of democratization is completely out of the question.

Chinese Communist Party Inc., while disobeying the Gods and ruthlessly and brutally pursuing absolute rule and racists policies, is proclaiming to the world by the irrefutable evidence of its bad conduct and utter defeat: only because of the half-a-century long domination by the Chinese Communist Party can a contemporary "serfdom," semi "serfdom," or quasi "serfdom" be said to exist in Tibet.

1 *Translator's note: Serfs Emancipation Day is the name used by Chinese authorities in English language publications. On January 19, 2009, upon proposal by Pang Boyong, Deputy Secretary General of the Tibetan Regional CCP Congress Standing Committee, the Tibetan legislature adopted March 28, the day on which the Tibetan government was declared illegal by China in 1959, as an annual holiday in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, officially called "The Day Commemorating the Liberation of Millions of Tibetan Serfs" in Chinese.*

2 *Translator's note: Elsewhere, it reads: "If the mother's son has knowledge, the golden throne of Gaden has no ownership." The golden throne of Gaden signifies the highest position in the hierarchy of the Gelugpa School of Tibetan Buddhism.*

3 *Translator's note: In Chinese, the terms are "slave farmer" and "slave-farmer lord."*

4 *Translator's note: Zhang Zhixin, (1930-1975) was a Chinese Communist Party member; who became famous for criticizing the idolization of Mao Zedong and the ultra-left. She was imprisoned for six years (1969 to 1975) and tortured. In 1975 she was brought to the Shenyang execution grounds where she was bound, impaled and executed by decapitation.*

5 *Translator's note: Zhong Haiyuan was a primary school teacher in Jiangxi when she was imprisoned in 1978 for speaking in support of a colleague accused of counter-revolutionary activities. She was sentenced to death, so that her organs could be harvested, when the son of a high-ranking military official needed an urgent kidney transplant.*

6 *Translator's note: Li Julian was imprisoned between 1969 and 1972, and again from 1974 to 1977, when she was sentenced to death for her counterrevolutionary positions.*

7. *Translator's note: Gao Zhicheng (1966-), a well-known human rights defender; has had several brushes with Chinese authorities. In an Internet article entitled "Dark Night, Black Hood and Kidnapping by Dark Mafia - My Account of more than 50 days of torture in 2007," he wrote about being electrocuted, having his genitals pierced by toothpicks and other kinds of torture suffered at the hands of secret service officers.*

8 *Translator's note: The office of Political leader, or Sikyong, was known as Kalön Tripa prior to September 2012.*

THE TIBETAN QUESTION: EMPIRE, IN THREE PARTS

Tang Danhong¹⁸

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‘Their language, maps, and intentions converged
on a new territory, gradually turning into a
“homeland”.’ Edward Said

An Anti-Imperialist Anti-Colonial Paradox

‘Beyond the Nine Provinces¹ lie barbarian states. ‘Behind the Yashan Mountain, it is no longer the Central Kingdom (China); since the end of Ming dynasty, this is no longer the land of the Hua-Xia [the Han Chinese].’ ‘Expel the Tartars and restore the Chinese nation.’ These celebrated phrases reflect the concept of China, national identity and ethnic sentiments held by ethnic Han Chinese (historically, the Hua-Xia people of the Central Kingdom), as well as their sorrow over their subjugated nation and ambitions to restore it.

What the Hua-Xia Chinese saw as ‘barbarian states’ and ‘Man, Rong, Di and Yi barbarians,’ the nations that lived on the periphery of China’s central plains - including Tibetans (Zang), the people of East Turkestan (Xinjiang Muslims) and Mongols (Inner Mongolians) all had civilizations stretching back thousands of years that had established rich and powerful empires and were an integral part of world history. They all had their own views of their own histories, concepts of their nations, national identities and ethnic sentiments, and they did not accept being vassals, did not accept being deprived of their sovereignty by other groups, and did not accept being colonized.

From ancient times, however, China considered itself to be at the core of all lands under heaven. When it was strong, it demanded that the nations on its periphery recognize its sovereign position by way of paying tribute,

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China ‘considered itself to be at the core and this was when it was strong, conferring ranks and titles, and other such methods. It must be stressed that but it still allowed the Hua-Xia (the ethnic Han Chinese) to pile on a very serious imperial complex. ‘The Celestial Empire that all nations come to’ is not just glory of the rulers. That people from the boundless lands ‘under heaven’ come to your big domain is not just a reflection of the ruler’s awe-inspiring might. In this respect the ruler and the slave, the one who wields power and the one who seizes it have always thought alike. ‘The Great Unification’ is the central image in Han

Chinese politics and it is linked with dreams of power, prosperity, and greatness. But in reality, doesn’t wanting to be so powerful, so prosperous, and so great in the final analysis point toward hegemony of the world?

Some 200 years after the Manchu Qing dynasty subjugated their Hua-Xia Chinese nation, the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 ‘expelled the Tartars and restored the Chinese nation.’ The restoration established the Republic of China, with the Han Chinese assuming political power. In his second lecture on the Doctrine of Nationalism, Dr. Sun Yat-sen said: “For several thousand years China has suffered under political oppression, to the point of complete subjugation. This has happened twice, once under the Yuan dynasty, once under the Qing dynasty.” This means that the revolutionaries still remembered the ideas of Central Kingdom’ and ‘Hua-Xia,’ and that they viewed the Mongolian Yuan dynasty and the Manchu Qing dynasty as foreign occupying regimes.

Here, I should also call your attention to the fact that the peripheral ‘barbarian States’ such as Tibet (Xizang) always made a very clear distinction: ‘Tibet is Tibet, China is China.’ They did not think that Tibet was a part of China, nor did they think that Tibet was a part of the Manchu Qing empire. In the eyes of Tibetans, homologous with the unified tax system (tributary system) of the Mongol Yuan dynasty and the Manchu Qing dynasty, there is a system of Tibeto-Mongol and Tibeto-Manchu relations that have nothing whatsoever to do with the Hua-Xia Chinese (the ethnic Han Chinese). Namely, we are talking about three distinct relationships: Tibeto-Chinese (Han), Tibeto-Mongol, and Tibeto-Manchu.

Before the Xinhai Revolution, not only did the educated circles and politicians feel the threat of Western imperialism caused by the decline of the Manchu Qing power, they had written quite a few articles about nationalism and imperialism. They understood the concept of imperialism

and were quite familiar with the tactics and methods empires use in colonial expansion. The scholars and politicians of that time had no problem in seeing the Manchu Qing as an empire. A Complete Atlas of the Great Qing Empire, with the Map of Eastern and Western Hemispheres, was the most popular atlas with one of the largest print runs of any at the time. Article 1 of the 1908 Draft Constitution clearly stated that the ruler of the Great Qing Empire was the emperor, for all time to come.

Anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism were also the main theme within the theoretical framework of Chinese educated elites and political figures during the period between the Xinhai Revolution and 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party established the government. So they should have been quite aware that the Mongol Yuan and the Manchu Qing were both exemplary empires as they both undertook military expeditions from far away to occupy the lands of others and impose political and economic control on the territory of others. Be it Hua-Xia China, Tibet (Zang), or East Turkestan (the Muslim Xinjiang), all were victims of Manchu expansion and external warfare. It should here also be brought to the attention of ethnic Han readers that while the later Han Chinese mentally internalized the foreign Manchu Qing regime as their masters, the Tibetans, Eastern Turks and Mongols never abandoned themselves to slavery, nor did they ever see the Manchu Qing empire as their country.

In terms of colonial rule, the Manchu Qing empire was the most successful in its total occupation of Hua-Xia China and the thorough enslavement of the Hua-Xia Chinese people, whereby the Hua-Xia Chinese were completely stripped of the power to make decisions in political, economic, military, and diplomatic matters. The peripheral countries such as Tibet were never truly occupied militarily, and in political, economic and diplomatic matters the Manchu Qing remained uninvolved. This was very different in nature from the Manchu Qing rule in China. In colonial terms, they were at best protectorates.

If we make a contemporary lateral comparison, at the time when the Manchus moved their capital to Peking (Beijing) and incorporated China into the domain of the Manchu Qing State, Tibet, Mongolia, and East Turkestan were not within the Manchu Qing territory. At the time when the Manchus massacred the Hua-Xia Chinese, imposed apartheid and colonized them, Tibet, all parts of Mongolia, and the Manchu Qing State still had their separate governments and their mutual relations were going through a tangled and complicated stage, interwoven with military

conflict, alliance-making, exploitation, division, annexation, interference and resistance.

In the final years of the Manchu Qing empire, ethnic Han political figures used Western nationalist doctrines to entice people to ‘expel the Tartars and restore the Chinese nation.’ It should thus not have been difficult for them to discern that Tibet, Mongolia, and Xinjiang were likewise colonies of the Manchu Qing empire. Even before the Xinhai revolutionaries, Tibetans assassinated the Chief Minister of the Qing stationed in Tibet, ignored the Golden Urn lottery (a method to select the Dalai Lamas and the Panchen Lamas imposed by the Qing), and violated the ‘29 Regulations for Better Government in Tibet’ laid down by the Qing as a way of opposing ‘the Tartars,’ giving rise to Tibetan nationalism, and rejecting interference by external political powers.

In its final days, the Manchu Qing dynasty signed a score of unequal treaties with the old-school Western colonial empire-par-excellence - Great Britain, selling out the interests of its Hua-Xia nationals, just as it signed several treaties with Britain regarding Tibetan affairs in an attempt to strengthen its position as a suzerain state viz-à-viz the ‘vassals’ by selling out the interests of Tibetan people. The treaties signed between the Manchu Qing empire and Great Britain were the sign of alliance between the two colonial empires and had the character of business transactions; their purpose was to share the ill-gotten gains obtained from the Manchu Qing colony, China, or its semi-colonial ‘vassals.’ The Tibetans answered this by resisting British invasions with their blood and lives.

The Manchu Qing dynasty was unable to truly impose control over Tibet in political, economic, diplomatic, and military terms. But in an attempt to extend its dominance to these domains and turn them from a protectorate into its sovereign territory, it sent Zhao Erfeng to pursue bloody expansion into Tibetan borderlands, assimilation by military force, and occupation of Lhasa, all of which is typical colonial behaviour. The people of Tibet resisted the carnage of the Manchu Qing invasion.

It is precisely the feeling of disgrace for being colonized by the Mongol Yuan and the Manchu Qing empires, and the threat of colonization by the West, that gave rise to Chinese nationalism and anti-colonialism. It is what made the ethnic Han intelligentsia and political figures of the late Qing period foment constitutionalism and revolution. But the Chinese people never understood that the anti-British resistance and Tibeto-Manchu

clashes that were occurring in Tibet at the same time were the expression of the same opposition to colonialism by Tibetans, regardless of whether the colonizers came from the West or from the East.

This double standard of the Chinese people when it comes to their anti-imperialist and anti-colonial attitudes persists to this very day. On the one hand, they see themselves as the victims of Manchu and Western imperialism and colonialism; on the other, they consider themselves the natural ‘beneficiaries’ of the empire, persisting in imperial control over surrounding ‘barbarian’ lands.

When the Republic of China was established in Nanjing, it was very clear what the identity of the Hua-Xia Chinese people was; during grand celebrations of the unification under the Republic, an official visit was made to the Ming Tombs in Nanjing and sacrifices offered to the founder of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, with a review of the Ming founder’s overthrow of the Mongol Yuan dynasty. It was hailed as a glorious achievement that enabled the Hua-Xia people to overthrow the ‘Yi and Di’ barbarians of the northeast and recover their sovereignty. The overthrow of Manchu rule and the establishment of the Republic of China can thus be regarded as the continuation of the Ming founder’s outstanding accomplishment. That being the case, the founders of the Republic ought not to have forgotten the shape of the Ming dynasty domain. Nevertheless, be it the constitutionalists or the revolutionaries, they all in the end seem to like better the Complete Atlas of the Great Qing Empire.

In the declaration he made when he took office, President Sun stressed that the lands of the Han Chinese, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Muslims, and the Tibetans were all joined in one country. How come he didn’t stress that Sichuan, Shaanxi, Shandong and Henan were all joined in one country, since those were the provinces of the original country?

History, at the very moment of the creation of modern China, while on the road to democracy and republicanism thus took a turn and went the ‘imperial’ way.

The last imperialist business transaction the Manchu Qing rulers made was with the Han Chinese who were seizing their power. The presentation of the cryptic Qing Emperor’s Edict of Abdication essentially related in dignified, high-flown and ostentatious terms how the power was to be transferred to the republican government, how the members of the royal/

imperial family were to be treated after-wards, etc. It also specifically emphasised that, 'the territories of the five nationalities-the Manchus, the Han Chinese, the Mongols, the Muslims, and the Tibetans-in their entirety are to still be joined in one great Republic of China.' There has been no final conclusion to the debate on who drafted and who wrote the Edict of Abdication, but the words such as 'vassals' and 'five nationalities' used therein resemble the parlance of those who were seizing power more than anything else. Because of the political necessity, the concept of the 'Chinese nation' [that comprises all nationalities] had already been created by Han Chinese scholars at that time.

At the time when various 'vassals' were resisting colonial Manchu Qing domination and striving to restore autonomy and independence, ethnic Han scholars and politicians used the anti-imperialist theory as the foundation for political action to redefine 'Chinese people.' They proposed that Tibetans, Muslims from East Turkestan, Mongols, Manchus, and the ethnic Han Chinese all have the status of 'Chinese nationals,' describing a utopia of a 'Republic of five nationalities.' Their intent was to create a Chinese republic of great unity that would bring together the boundaries and sovereignty of the Mongols, Manchus, Tibetans, and Muslims under one roof.

The constitutionalists and the revolutionaries on the one hand cooperated to overthrow the Manchu Qing empire, while on the other they made the emperor put the words, the territories of the five nationalities-the Manchus, the Han Chinese, the Mongols, the Muslims, and the Tibetans-in their entirety are to still be joined in one great Republic of China,' in his Edict of Abdication. The crucial question is who were the actors in this 'joining,' the subjects carrying out this action? Was it only the Manchus and the Han Chinese?

If the actors had included Tibetans, Muslims, and Mongols, there would be no Tibetan problem or Xinjiang problem later. What did the Tibetans, the people of East Turkestan, and the Mongols, designated as 'nationalities,' think at this time? One of the characteristics of the imperial political discourse is indeed the absence of the voice of the colonized, the elimination of the historical perspective of the colonized, the negation of the rights of the colonized. Tibet, East Turkestan, Mongolia, and all that they contained - people of all generations, every household, and each individual that constituted their peoples and their histories, cultures, and lands, all the resources bestowed on them by nature, and all the entities of

their political power - were made inert, turned into assets, subordinated to an imagined authority, and written into a business contract between the Manchus and the Han Chinese. While in reality, this was indeed the time when the 'vassals' opposed imperialism and colonialism.

In 1913, the provisional President of the Republic, Yuan Shikai, sent the 13th Dalai Lama a comical 'reinstatement' telegram: 'Now that the Republic has been firmly established and the Five Races deeply united into one family, the Dalai Lama is naturally moved with a feeling of deep attachment to the motherland. Under the circumstances, his former errors should be overlooked, and his Title of Loyal and Submissive Vice-Regent, Great, Good, and Self-Existent Buddha is hereby restored to him, in the hope that he may prove a support to the Yellow Church and a help to the Republic.' But the Dalai Lama did not feel any attachment whatsoever to the 'mother-land.' He stated in his reply that he did not request his former title from the Chinese government, and that 'he intended to exercise both secular and ecclesiastic rule in Tibet.' Furthermore, the 13th Dalai Lama proclaimed, "We are a small, Buddhist, independent nation that enjoys peace and freedom." A year later, the Republic issued the Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China, asserting that, 'the territory of the Republic of China continues to be the territory of the former empire.' Let me emphasise; 'territory of the former empire.'

The Qing Emperor's Edict of Abdication has been used by Chinese scholars to this day to prove 'legitimacy.' Some write: 'Qing Emperor's Edict of Abdication constitutes an important document that legitimizes the transfer of imperial sovereignty to the Republic... It means that the vast nationality areas in border regions that were formerly under imperial jurisdiction are thus naturally legitimately brought under the jurisdiction of the Republic.' Ha, ha, empire, empire! I'm a bit amazed that the scholars of the Celestial Empire so grandiosely used this word 'empire' - the conquest of foreign lands by military force, military control, political interference, economic plunder, cultural assimilation, no right of assembly - as all but the most important proof. How can the suffering of Tibetans, Muslims, and Mongols prove 'legitimacy'?

The 'Chinese nation,' and the 'Republic of five nationalities,' was fundamentally the design by the Hua-Xia (ethnic Han) Chinese at the beginning of the 20th century for the future of the above-mentioned areas. Those were political concepts that served in the construct of China.' Apparently, apart from the excitement of the Han Chinese, the idea of a

‘Chinese nation’ did not elicit approval from the other four ‘nationalities’ that constituted the ‘nation.’

Neither Tibetans nor the people of East Turkestan (the Muslims) or the Mongols accepted the hypocrisy of the ‘republic of five nationalities. Having expelled the ‘Tartars’ - the Manchu Qing Imperial Resident in Tibet (the amban) and 3,000 Qing troops - from Tibet, the 13th Dalai Lama formally declared that Tibet was an independent nation, thereby making explicit Tibet’s sovereignty and its status of an independent State. In actual terms, Tibet was independent until 1949. Independence movements in Xinjiang twice led to the establishment of the independent East Turkestan Republic; Outer Mongolia was independent, even the Manchus established their own state, Manchukuo.

But the later outcome for the ‘vassal’ states turned out to be very bizarre. In the early stages of the Manchu Qing empire, various Mongol tribes gave up fighting and ‘surrendered and agreed to pay allegiance,’ but they later became independent due to intervention by the Soviet Union. The Chinese Communist Party denounces the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) for ‘most shamefully...considering Outer Mongolia to be a dependency of the Republic of China.’ The Republic of China ‘lost “sovereignty” over Outer Mongolia’ and the lost territory to this day fills Chinese nationalist patriots with bitterness and grief. Eight years of anti-Japanese resistance, adorned with a halo of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, achieved victory, and the Manchus were completely assimilated.

The Chinese Communist Party claims that it ‘recognizes the right to self-determination of the national minorities within China’s borders’... ‘each small and weak national minority having the right to break away from China and establish its own independent state.’ A People’s Daily editorial published on 24 February 1950 said, ‘Mongolian Independence is indeed a birth of a new country under the principle of self-determination... It is a matter in line with the principles of heaven and earth. At the same time, Xinjiang, which had been resisting all along, and Tibet, which had never been truly controlled, were ‘liberated’ and admitted into the ‘big family of the motherland.’

Tibetan author Drolma Kyab, whom China threw into prison because of his book *Himalaya on Stir*, wrote: ‘According to the “Seventeen-Point Agreement” Point 1, “The Tibetan people shall unite and drive out the imperialist aggressive forces from Tibet; the Tibetan people shall return

to the big family of the Motherland - the People's Republic of China"...? Before 1951, Tibet was an independent country. Two foreign powers had entered Tibet. One of them was British. The other Chinese. All along, led by their own weak and incompetent government, the Tibetans themselves were vigorously engaged in repelling both. In the eyes of the Tibetans, both invaders were imperialists.

At the time when, one by one, colonies all over the world were gaining independence in the wake of World War II, the 'anti-imperialist' and 'anti-colonialist' Chinese, while feeling victimized by imperialism and colonialism, used 'backwardness' - this archetype of imperialist reasoning - to bestow onto themselves the archetypal colonial status of those who bring progress' and 'liberation', to occupy Tibet and East Turkestan. A magnificent turn-about to become masters of the 'Chinese nation.' The New China is a 'multi-ethnic state' born of great unification, whose territory by far exceeds the [ancient] 'Nine Provinces' and 'Hua-Xia' lands. The Tibetans, the people of East Turkestan, the Mongols, and the Manchus all became its 'national minorities.'

The evolution of terminology, such as the 'Man, Rong, Di and Yi barbarians,' 'barbarian states,' 'vassal dependencies,' 'nationalities,' and 'national minorities,' is nothing but the history of imperial expansion. But its course was the bloodiest in the transition from 'vassal dependencies' to 'national minorities.' When the present-day Han patriots bend over to examine the map of their beloved domain that includes 'Chinese Tibet and Chinese Xinjiang,' I ask them to please also notice the shocking numbers of people of other nations who were killed; men, women, old people, children.

Some of the distinctive features of imperialism and colonialism are: Subjugation of foreign nationals, occupation by military means, political domination, economic plunder, cultural assimilation, enslavement of human dignity, and unequal trade, which are used to benefit the colonizer. Contemporary China conforms to all those features.

1 Translator's note: 'Nine Provinces' is a term used in ancient Chinese histories to refer to territorial divisions during the Xia dynasty, and has now come to symbolically represent China.

2 Translator's note: Zhao Erfeng (1845-1911) was a Chinese general and the last Qing dynasty official appointed to serve as amban in Tibet in March 1908. He led bloody military campaigns throughout Eastern Tibet (Kham) and eventually reached Lhasa in 1910,

earning himself the nickname 'Zhao the Butcher.'

3 Translator's note: Sun Yat-Sen, the founding father and first president of the Republic of China.

4 Translator's note: This is the English translation that has been widely used in books and other literature.

5 Translator's note: Elsewhere, the text in English is rendered: 'We are a small, religious, and independent nation.'

6 Translator's note: Drolma Kyab was given a ten-and-a-half-year prison term. He was awarded the 'Liu Xiaobo Courage to Write Award 2012' by the Independent Chinese PEN Centre, an official affiliate of PEN International.

7 Translator's note: I.e. the Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (1951).

EASTERN HISTORY AND WESTERN CONCEPTS

Wang Lixiong¹⁹

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During the Qing dynasty, Tibet pledged allegiance to Peking, but for most of the time and on most issues this was nominal. On the surface, the Qing Imperial Resident in Tibet [amban] occupied an important position. In reality, the rulers of Tibet, with distinctive tact, cunning and patience, used the figurehead Imperial Resident in Tibet to maintain virtual independence.

In terms of State power, it is not that the Qing dynasty was incapable of conquering and controlling Tibet; rather, it didn't need to. The Qing dynasty's purpose in installing the Imperial Resident in Tibet was, above all, to maintain a token dominance over Tibet, not to govern it in any concrete way. This was not a result of some winner-vs-loser struggle for dominance; it was probably what both sides at the time mutually sought, what was satisfactory for both sides, and was thus the most natural and rational outcome.

This can be viewed as a political relationship, but it is difficult to explain it by solely employing contemporary concepts like sovereignty and suzerainty. In Western thinking, 'big' is juxtaposed with 'small;' 'big' is a clear fact that must be explained and established through accurately defined particulars, just like sovereignty must be defined by borders. In Eastern thinking, however, 'big' is more akin to a creative concept, which could be destroyed if one becomes a stickler about 'small.' As a result, 'small' is often abandoned in the pursuit of 'big.'

In the worldview of ancient China, China was at the centre of the 'whole world under heaven.' The Chinese intense feeling of cultural superiority viewed all other ethnic groups such as the 'Yi,' the 'Di,' and the 'Man' to be 'barbarians' from 'states outside the pale of civilization.'¹ So long as the 'Yi,' the 'Di,' and the 'Man' 'barbarians' expressed allegiance to and reverence for the Chinese dynasty, the dignity of 'the central empire' was satisfied. Everything else was details that they did not need to excessively worry about. In addition to govern by non-interference' was the traditional

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philosophy of imperial rule, which would rather let those ‘states outside the pale of civilization’ govern themselves. That is why the borders of ancient China were always very fuzzi.

But the most important ‘big’ thing of primary concern for the small and weak nations on China’s periphery was their safe existence and practical benefit. To that end, the question of dignity could be left a bit fuzzy. This too is an Eastern way of thinking. Not that they didn’t think that dignity was important; rather, they treated it as a valuable natural resource that could be exchanged for practical benefits. The nominal Tibetan allegiance to China to a very large degree originated in this kind of need. China of the Qing era enabled Tibet to break away from the rule of Mongol Khans that it had been under since the Yuan dynasty; it assisted the Gelugpa sect to assume a leading position, and helped the religious authority headed by the Dalai Lama to achieve victory over the secular power struggle. Peking even bestowed on Tibet generous rewards, provided essential arbitration, and guaranteed foreign defence.

Tibet obtained so many benefits, and all it had to come up with in return was a superficial posture of allegiance to China. That kind of allegiance is really like a game of pretend, allowing the emperor of China to gratify his mental perception that he was ‘the overlord of all lands under heaven,’ without Tibet losing its essential independence as a consequence. In the opposite scenario, an insistently unyielding attitude might have offended the emperor of China; a huge punitive military expedition might have been sent into Tibet, its ruler might have been dismissed, and the people would have ended up in utter misery. What the sensible choice was, given these comparative gains and losses, is really quite clear.

As a result, neither China nor Tibet has ever in history used the modern notion of sovereignty when recognizing and stipulating their mutual relationship. The Western concept was established in the service of a global international order, it was accepted and approved in the East, and it wasn’t until the turn of the 19th into the 20th century that it entered Sino-Tibetan relations, when both parties became intensely aware of it and began to strive for it. Many of the spurious conclusions and hopelessly tangled disputes originate in the inflexible super-imposition of Western concepts on Eastern history.

1. Translator’s note: Various peoples bordering ancient China were generally classified in four groups, according to four directions: the Dong Yi “Eastern Yi Barbarians,” the Nan Man “Southern Man Barbarians:” the Xi Rong “Western Rong Barbarians.” and Bei Di “Northern Di Barbarians.”

TIBET HAS NOT BEEN A PART OF CHINA SINCE

ANCIENT TIMES

Zhu Rui²⁰

25 October 2009

The long history of Tibet, just like the histories of India, Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Russia, and any other independent nation, has its own development trajectory. At the same time, because it borders with China, it is inevitable that there should be instances of collision with Chinese history. However, ever since the 1950s when China occupied Tibet with military force, the Chinese version of history has been continuously broken down and revised to serve the claim that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times so that the complete colonization of Tibet may be achieved. Among the revisions, there are the following representative periods:

The Tsenpo Kings of Tubo (Tang Dynasty)

The most striking colour picture in Chinese middle-school history textbooks at the end of the 20th century was that of the Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo and the Chinese princess Wencheng. It appears as if, apart from this page, the history of Tibet is a blank space. It looks as though with the Tang Dynasty - some 1300 years ago - because of the marriage of the princess everything Tibetan, including its territory, starts belonging to China. There is no mention of the fact that Songtsen Gampo already had four royal consorts before Princess Wencheng (a Tibetan royal consort, a Zhangzhung princess, a Tangut Xixia princess, and the Nepali princess Bhrikuti Devi).

Chinese humanities exam candidates also know this Tang-barbarian ‘intermarriage’ history by heart. This is because, they could be certain to gain points on this college entrance exam question more than on any other. So it is not at all surprising that our Chinese intellectuals today display such ignorance and prejudice when it comes to Tibetan history.

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As a matter of fact, Tibet was once a powerful state that threatened China. Particularly during the rule of the Tsenpo Kings in China's Tang Dynasty, Tibetan lands included not only Amdo, U-Tsang and Kham, but also Ladakh, Sikkim, plus the Dunhuang region of Gansu - something that we can commonly see from the Dunhuang murals. That is why while her tears flowed until they formed a river to carry the bridal party back to Chang'an, Princess Wencheng did not dare turn around to look back.

The stone stele erected in front of the Jokhang temple in Lhasa to commemorate the Tang-'barbarian' alliance clearly states:

'Tibet and China, the two States, will each guard the territories they presently control. All the lands to the east of the border will be China's, all the lands to the west of the border will be Tibet's... They will not plunder and sack each other, they will not raise armies to unseat each other, they will not encroach on nor scheme to confer each other's territory... In compliance with today's political decision, we will administer it as one, as we pledge the oath to this great alliance...'

After the true content of the stele's text was revealed to the world, Chinese communists continued rewriting the myth that Tibet has truly been a part of China since ancient times all the way to the Yuan dynasty.

Sakya Dynasty (Yuan Dynasty-Mongol Empire)

At the time when the Mongols invaded China and destroyed its ruling dynasty, Tibet was Mongolia's ally and became even more prosperous and powerful. Its religious leaders, such as Sakya Pandita and Phagpa, were honoured as teachers to the Mongol throne, and from this time on Sakya Monastery became the religious, political, economic and cultural centre of Tibet. For more than a hundred years, the Sakya dynasty oversaw a brilliant period of Tibetan history.

Mongol Prince Godan sent a letter to Sakya Pandita, which said, "In order to repay the kindness of my parents and the favour of Heaven and Earth, I requested a teacher who could instruct me in The Way and who could accept and reject the above, and in the process of selection I chose you... I could in the future allow your knowledge to illuminate the monks of the West."

Rather than saying that the Mongol empire ruled Tibet, it is more

appropriate to say that it supported Tibet. The antique merchants in Lhasa today still view Sakya as the precious place where they can often buy genuine ancient Mongolian treasures at low prices.

That the position of Tibetans was influential during the Mongol empire can easily be seen from the autobiography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile*:

‘At this time [after Kublai Khan invaded China], there was an interesting historical incident. Kublai Khan became a Buddhist and had a Tibetan guru. This lama persuaded the Mongolian leader to stop his practice of controlling the Chinese population increase by drowning thousands of them in the sea. In so doing, the Tibetan saved many Chinese lives.’

Phagmodrupa Period (Ming Dynasty)

We have to admire the tenacity of historians from within the Chinese Communist system who, unwilling to let go of the idea that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times, have pushed it to the Ming dynasty. Their reason is that the Ming carried on the Yuan style of State governance and that, furthermore, the Ming Yongle Emperor conferred titles on Buddhist leaders of various Tibetan sects.

The so-called conferral of titles is really just a pretty name for a mutual ceremonial bestowal of honorary titles. We also have to correct the fact that the style of state governance carried on by Tibet was that of the Mongol Empire, not of China. At the same time, Mongolians have practised Tibetan Buddhism all the way to the present.

Corresponding to the Chinese Ming dynasty, there was the period of Phagmodrupa rule in Tibet. The contacts between the two States were not many. Only because the Yongle Emperor was a devout believer in Buddhism, he invited Deshin Shegpa, the Fifth Gyalwang Karmapa, to Nanjing in 1407 AD. The Yongle Emperor and his empress requested the Karmapa to bestow Buddhist precepts, initiations and other teachings to them. In 1413 the emperor invited the head of the Sakya School, Sakya Trizin Ngabang Kunga Tashi to visit China. The same year, he also invited the founder of the Gelug School, Master Tsongkhapa, but since Tsongkhapa was unable to go himself, he sent his disciple Sakya Yeshe instead. According to the *Comprehensive History of Tibet*, the emperor and empress not only received him personally, but also held a grand

welcoming banquet and made several offerings to him.

During this period of Phagmodrupa rule, relations between China and Tibet (Tubo) were basically those of ceremonial contacts and amicable dealings. Just as His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned in his speech at the Sino-Tibetan Conference in Geneva on 6 August 2009: “For over a thousand years, the Tibetan and Chinese people have co-existed as friendly and harmonious neighbours with mutually enriching relations in the social and economic fields as well as in religion and culture. Occasionally, there were times when we fought each other. However, for the most part, relations between Tibetan and Chinese peoples were peaceful.”

The Ganden Phodrang Dynasty (Qing Dynasty)

What corresponds to the Qing Dynasty history in Tibet is the period of the Ganden Phodrang Dynasty rule, when the Dalai Lamas acted as the Dharma Kings and became the supreme religious and political leaders of Tibet.

Disregarding the level of reception accorded to the Fifth Dalai Lama by the Shunzhi Emperor and disregarding the protection and support given to the 13th Dalai Lama by the Empress Dowager Zixi and the Guangxu Emperor, let's turn our attention to the Qing Imperial Resident Ministers of Tibet that the Chinese communists put so much stress on. They too were merely symbolic, and the relations between Tibet and China could be at best described as a student teacher relationship (between the Chinese emperors and the Tibetan religious leaders).

All Qing Imperial Resident Ministers in Tibet were imperial relatives and people with powerful connections who had violated the law. The book *Bayonets to Lhasa: The British Invasion of Tibet* describes in some detail how the Qing Resident Minister in Lhasa, amban You Tai, made it his chief business to deceive both China and the Tibetan Kashag government in order to line his own pockets. When the British invaded Tibet he went as far as to pour oil on burning fires and wine and dine the British, causing resentment and contempt among the Tibetans who gave him the nickname “Bag of Lies.” He was later pretty much reduced to being a beggar, relying on loans to survive.

The last Resident Minister of Tibet, amban Lian Yu, petitioned the court to propose that Tibet should be turned into an administrative province of

China, resorting to lies in order to request that troops be sent to Tibet. As a result, Zhao Erfeng and Zhong Ying jointly led an army of less than 2000 troops, burning, killing and plundering their way into Lhasa (Zhao Erfeng did not make it to Lhasa himself), in an open violation of the promise made by the Empress Dowager Zixi and the Guangxu Emperor. The 13th Dalai Lama fled to India.

But the Qing troops went on to steal, loot and kill each other shamelessly in front of Tibetans. It was because of this that when the Xinhai Revolution erupted in the Water-Rat Year of the Tibetan Calendar (1912 CE), Tibetan laymen expelled the scattered remnants of the defeated Qing army and on December 14 of the same year signed the “Agreement of the Chinese and the Tibetans.” All Chinese officers and their family dependents had no choice but to leave Tibet. In 1913, on the Eight Day of the First Month of the Tibetan Water-Ox Year, the 13th Dalai Lama issued a proclamation of Tibetan Independence:

“...A few years ago, the Chinese authorities in Sechuan and Yunnan endeavoured to colonise our territory. They brought large numbers of troops (1800 men) into central Tibet on the pretext of policing the trade marts. I, therefore, left Lhasa with my ministers for the Indo-Tibetan border... I am now in the course of driving out the remnants of Chinese troops from Do-Kham in Eastern Tibet. Now, the Chinese intention of colonizing Tibet under the patron-priest relationship has faded like a rainbow in the sky...” (Excerpted from *Tibet: A Political History* by W.D. Shakabpa.)

The Ganden Phodrang Dynasty (Republic of China)

On the 29th Day of the 12th Month of the Tibetan Water-Rat Year (11 January 1913), Tibet and Mongolia signed the “Treaty of Friendship and Alliance,” concluded between the governments of Mongolia and Tibet at Urga. Its main content is the following: “Mongolia and Tibet, having freed themselves from the dynasty of the Manchus and separated from China, have formed their own independent States... Article 1. The ruler of Tibet, Dalai Lama, approves and recognises the formation of an independent Mongol State, and the proclamation, in the year of the pig and the ninth day of the eleventh month, of Chjebzun Damba Lama of the yellow faith as ruler of the country; Article 2. The ruler of the Mongol people, Chjebzun Damba Lama, approves and recognises the formation of an independent Tibetan State and the proclamation of the Dalai Lama as ruler of Tibet....” (Excerpted from *The Independent Status of Tibet* by Michael C. Van Walt)

Van Praag.) On the Third Day of the Seventh Month of the Tibetan Wood-Tiger Year (July 3, 1914) Tibet and Great Britain signed at Simla in India the “Simla Convention,” which stipulated [that the signatories will]: “... Recognising also the autonomy of Outer Tibet, engage to respect the territorial integrity of the country, and to abstain from interference in the administration of Outer Tibet (including the selection and installation of the Dalai Lama)...”

In the Tibetan Fire-Monkey Year (1917), a conflict erupted between the military forces of Tibet and Sichuan. In the Tibetan Earth-Horse Year (1918) Tibetan forces attacked Chamdo (Kham) and took back Barkam, Zhag'yab, Samye, Gonjo, and Dege. On the Third Day of the Eighth Month of the same year (19 August, 1918) Liu Zanting opened formal peace negotiations with Eric Teichman, and the Kalon Lama, Chamba Denda, in Kham and signed a “Ceasefire Treaty” in 13 articles that was transcribed in three languages, Chinese, English, and Tibetan, and whose main stipulation was the following:

“... [It is agreed that] as soon as this agreement is accepted... the districts of Riwoche (Leiwuchi), Enta(h), Chiamdo (Changtu), Draya (Chaya), Markam-Gartok (Chiangka or Ningching), Gonjo (Kung chueh), Sangen (Sangai or Wucheng), Tungpu (i), Tengko (k),**** Seshu (Shihchu), Derge (Teko), and Beyu (Paiyu), and the country lying to the west of them, shall be under the control of the Tibetans; no Chinese troops or civil or military officials being permitted to reside therein... the Chinese troops stationed on the south and north roads shall not cross to the West of the Yangtze and Yalung rivers respectively...”

The fact that Tibet was independently signing treaties with neighboring states can be traced back to 1684, to the treaty signed between Tibet and Ladakh, followed by the 1842 treaty between Tibet and Kashmir, the 1856 treaty between Tibet and Nepal, the 1904 treaty between Tibet and Great Britain. Not only that, before 1959, Tibet had its own government, state flag, state anthem, army, law (the Ten Virtues Law), weights and measurements, currency, calendar, language, script, and an education system of the first rate by its own accord.... Tibetans, when they went abroad, carried Tibetan passports! But this is the information that we cannot fully learn about from the Chinese communist media and textbooks. Do you know why? Because it is sufficient proof that Tibet has not been a part of China since ancient times!

After the death of the 13th Dalai Lama a conflict erupted between two regents, Reting Rinpoche and Taktra Rinpoche. Reting Rinpoche, in his fervent attempt to seize back political power, sent a monk from his faction to China with a letter and gifts for Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek), requesting support from the Guomindang (Kuomintang). He expressed that, once he received help to take the power back, he would change the close relationship of the Taktra regime with Great Britain and take orders from China. However, the Guomindang lacked power to take any practical action. During the time when Shen Zonglian, the head of Guomindang's office in Tibet held his position, he personally experienced the relations between the Tibetan Kashag Government and the Embassies of Nepal and India to Tibet, which were by far better than those with China. He proposed to change the present state of affairs between Tibet and China and sent a telegram to Jiang Jieshi proposing to start with rectifying Xikang (Eastern Kham): "...Xikang, in light of its location and historical relationship is most closely connected to Tibet, whose influence is likewise the greatest. Presently, the post road between Xikang and Tibet is cut, so that a letter has to be mailed via India, not to mention anything else. The central authorities ought to thoroughly rectify Xikang, replace key officials and choose persons with ability to strengthen institutions, which could make a difference vis-à-vis Tibet." "Jiang Jieshi got Dai Chuanxian and Chen Bulei to cable Shen Zonglian back, telling him to maintain the status quo and not to cause trouble or change anything. The telegram said, 'It is important that you do nothing; be of great service without meritorious deeds,' among other things."

("Political Activities in Tibet," by Chen Xizhang.)

However, during the 1950s, an invasion by the communist regime caused Tibet the loss of its independent status. Not only that, the countries surrounding Tibet and the whole of Asia were caught in a tense stand-off.

History is made up of facts that have already occurred. It is not a nightmare of inflated ambitions, nor an expression of one's wishful thinking. It is even less something that can be changed with an audience at a high place or a map. On the political map of the world drawn by China, until the end of the last century Sikkim was still an independent country arising in the midst of the Himalayas, but this could not change the fact that it had become a part of India long before. There's something else: on the maps of the Republic of China, Mongolia has always been a part of China, with the obvious result that is easy to see for all: we are merely fooling ourselves.

I Translator's note: Upon Mongolian independence in 1911, the capital was most often referred to as Uрга in western languages, from the Mongolian word meaning 'palace.' When the city became the capital of the new Mongolian

People's Republic in 1924, its name was changed to Ulan Bator; which literally means 'Red Hero.'

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