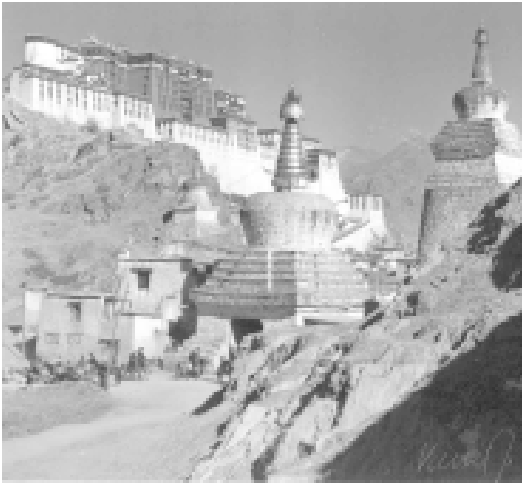


Fall of a Nation



The People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded on October 1, 1949. Immediately, *Radio Beijing* began to announce that "the People's Liberation Army must liberate all Chinese territories, including Tibet, Xinjiang, Hainan and Taiwan". The Tibetan Foreign Office responded to Mao Zedong, on November 2, 1949, that, "Tibet has from the earliest times up to now been an independent country whose political administration has never been taken over by any foreign country; and Tibet also defended her own territories from foreign invasions."¹ The Foreign Office communique also demanded the return of its Amdo and Kham territories annexed by China's earlier governments. Copies of this document were sent to the governments of India, Great Britain and the United States. However, these governments advised Lhasa to enter into direct negotiations with Beijing as any other course of action might provoke military retaliation by China.

Meanwhile, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) marched through Eastern Tibet and circulated a 10-point document, instructing Tibetans to cooperate with China in "liberating" their country from foreign imperialists. This struck the Tibetan Government as a curious claim since there were fewer than 10 foreigners in the whole land at that time.

The Tibetan Government decided to send a delegation, consisting of Tsepon Shakabpa and Tsechag Thubten Gyalpo and five assistants, to negotiate with the PRC in a

third country—possibly the USSR, Singapore or Hong Kong. China suggested Hong Kong, to which the Tibetan Government agreed; its delegates were directed to discuss the contents of the Foreign Office communique to Chairman Mao and to raise the issue of the threatening Chinese radio announcements still being made about an imminent “liberation of Tibet”. The delegates were instructed to secure an assurance that the territorial integrity of Tibet would not be violated.

When the group reached Delhi and applied for Hong Kong visas, the British refused—arguably to avoid antagonizing the Chinese Government by stamping visas on passports issued by the Tibetan Government. So, in June 1950 the Tibetan Government instructed its delegates to hold negotiations in Delhi. The Chinese disagreed and suggested that the Tibetans should leave for Beijing after preliminary talks with their new ambassador to India, due to arrive shortly in Delhi.

During preliminary talks in Delhi, the Chinese Ambassador, Yuan Zhong Xian, demanded that the Tibetan delegation accept a three-point proposal: i) Tibet should be recognized as part of China; ii) Tibetan national defence would be handled by China; and iii) Tibet’s political and trade relations with foreign countries must be conducted through China. The team were then to proceed to China in confirmation of the agreement.

The Tibetan Government instructed its

delegates to reject the Chinese proposal, particularly the contention that Tibet was part of China. But, by the time this response reached the delegates on October 23, 1950, China had already taken Chamdo, Eastern Tibet’s provincial capital, and was poised to march further into Tibet. On October 7, 1950 Commanders Wang Qimei and Zhang Guohua had led 40,000 PLA troops in an eight-pronged attack on Chamdo. The Tibetan force, numbering 8,000 troops, engaged the PLA in fierce encounters. By October 19 the Tibetans had fought 21 battles and lost over 5,700 men.² Chamdo fell to the PLA and Kalon Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, the provincial governor, was captured.³

Deplored by India

The Chinese aggression came as a rude shock to India. In a sharp note to Beijing on October 26, 1950, the Indian Foreign Ministry wrote: “Now that the invasion of Tibet has been ordered by Chinese Government, peaceful negotiations can hardly be synchronized with it and there naturally will be fear on the part of Tibetans that negotiations will be under duress. In the present context of world events, invasion by Chinese troops of Tibet cannot but be regarded as deplorable and in the considered judgement of the Government of India, not in the interest of China or peace.”⁴ A number of countries, including the United States and Britain, expressed their support for the Indian position.

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Back in Lhasa, the Tibetan Government decided to appeal to the United Nations for mediation. It wrote to the UN Secretary General on November 11, 1950, pleading for the world body's intervention. The letter said, in part: "Tibet recognizes that it is in no position to resist the Chinese advance. It is thus that it agreed to negotiate on friendly terms with the Chinese Government... Though there is little hope that a nation dedicated to peace will be able to resist the brutal effort of men trained to war, we understand that the United Nations has decided to stop aggression wherever it takes place."⁵

The Tibetan National Assembly convened an emergency session and requested the Dalai Lama, then only 15, to assume full authority as head of state and move his government temporarily to Dromo (Yatung), near the Indian border, so that he would be out of personal danger. At the same time, the Tibetan Foreign Office issued the following statement: "Tibet is united as one man behind the Dalai Lama who has taken over full powers ... We have appealed to the world for peaceful intervention in (the face of this) clear case of unprovoked aggression."⁶

On November 17, 1950 the Dalai Lama assumed power at a formal ceremony and wrote to Mao Zedong: "The relationship between Tibet and China has deteriorated during my minority. Now that I have taken responsibility, I wish to revive the past harmonious relationship between us." The

Dalai Lama asked Mao to release the Tibetan prisoners of war and withdraw Chinese troops from Tibetan territory.⁷

On that very day, El Salvador proposed that the aggression against Tibet be put on the UN General Assembly agenda. However, discussion before the General Assembly was shelved when the Indian delegation asserted that a peaceful solution that was mutually advantageous to Tibet, India and China could be reached between the parties concerned. A second letter from the Tibetan delegation to the United Nations on December 8, 1950 brought no change in the situation.

Ngabo, now a captive of the Chinese invasion forces, sent two successive messages to Lhasa, requesting negotiations with China in Chamdo and offering his services as a negotiator. This, Ngabo's letter advised, was the best means of preventing a military takeover of the rest of the plateau.

Having lost Eastern Tibet, and lacking active international support, the Dalai Lama and his government appointed a three-member delegation, headed by Ngabo. The two other delegates—Khenchung Thubten Legmon and Sampho Tenzin Dhondup—left Lhasa for Chamdo with a five-point proposal to hand over to Ngabo, the leader of the delegation. The proposal demanded the return of Tibetan territories in Kham and Amdo, and the withdrawal of Chinese troops from there. The PRC, on the other hand, wanted to discuss the "peaceful liberation" of the remaining areas of Tibet.

Obviously, there was no common ground for negotiation. The Chinese and Tibetan governments then decided to hold fresh negotiations in Beijing.

The new five-member Tibetan delegation to Beijing, led by Ngabo, was authorized to table a five-point position statement, demanding the return of Tibetan territories up to the eastern border city of Dhartsedo and repatriation of all Chinese civilian and military personnel from Eastern Tibet. The delegation was instructed to refer all-important matters back to the government in Dromo and expressly not given plenipotentiary authority to conclude an agreement.⁸

17-Point Ultimatum

On April 29, 1951 negotiations opened in Beijing with the presentation of a draft proposal, containing 10 points, by Li Weihan, leader of the Chinese delegation. This document held the same demands made earlier by China in Eastern Tibet. The Tibetan team rejected the Chinese proposal and pressed its own government's position. Negotiations dragged on for nearly a month and finally, on May 21, China presented a draft of what came to be known as the "17-Point Agreement"; this was strikingly similar to the 10-point document, which the Tibetan delegates had rejected earlier. However, China stated that the terms, as they now stood, were final and amounted to an ultimatum. The Tibetan delegation was

addressed in harsh and insulting terms, threatened with physical violence, and members were virtually kept prisoner. No further discussion was permitted and, contrary to Chinese claims, the Tibetan delegation was prevented from contacting its government for instructions.⁹ It was given the choice of either signing the "agreement" on its own authority or accepting responsibility for an immediate PLA advance on Lhasa.

When the Tibetan delegates signed the "17-Point Agreement" on May 23, 1951 without being able to inform their government, they stressed that they were signing only in their personal capacity and had no authority to bind either the Dalai Lama or the Tibetan Government to the "agreement". This did not deter the Chinese Government from proceeding with a high-profile signing ceremony and announcing to the world that an "agreement" had been concluded for the "peaceful liberation of Tibet". Even the seals affixed to the document were not those of the Tibetan Government; they were improvised in Beijing and merely bore the personal names of the delegates.

Entitled the "Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet", amongst the 17 points of the "Agreement" were clauses authorizing the entry into Tibet of Chinese forces and empowering the Chinese government to handle Tibet's external affairs.

It also guaranteed that China would not alter the existing political system in Tibet and not interfere with the established status, function, and powers of the Dalai Lama or the Panchen Lama. The Tibetan people were to have regional autonomy and their religious beliefs and customs were to be respected. Internal reforms in Tibet would be effected after consultation with leading Tibetans and without compulsion.

Soon after the signing ceremony, the Tibetan delegates met Chairman Mao Zedong, Premier Zhou Enlai and other Chinese leaders. Zhou responded during this meeting to Ngabo's earlier letter, demanding the reunification of Tibetan areas in Kham and Amdo under the existing Tibetan administration. While stating that the existence of historical differences among different Tibetan regions meant that this was not the opportune moment for reunification, Zhou agreed that the Tibetan areas could unite after some years through mutual consultation among the concerned groups.

On May 27, 1951 *Radio Beijing* broadcast the full text of the "Agreement". This was the first time the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government heard of the document. The reaction in Dromo (where the Dalai Lama was headquartered at that time) and Lhasa was one of shock and disbelief. However, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government withheld public repudiation of the "Agreement" in order to prevent more bloodshed.

The Tibetan Government sent a message to its delegates in Beijing, reprimanding them for signing the "Agreement" without consulting the government for instructions. The delegation was told to send the full text of the document and wait in Beijing for further instructions. In the meantime, a telegraphic message was received from the delegation to say that the Chinese Government representative, General Zhang Jingwu, was en route to Dromo, via India. It added that some of the delegation members were returning home, via India, and that Ngabo was journeying overland to Lhasa.

On his arrival in Dromo, General Zhang Jingwu set out to pressure the Tibetan Government to radio its acceptance of the "Agreement" to Beijing. From September 24 to 26, 1951 the Tibetan negotiating team addressed the National Assembly in Lhasa and gave a detailed account of the circumstances surrounding the signing of the "Agreement". Lhawutara, in particular, said that the negotiators were willing to accept any form of punishment for signing the "Agreement" without approval from the government.¹⁰ The Tibetan National Assembly, while recognizing the extenuating circumstances under which the delegates found themselves forced to sign the "Agreement", asked the Kashag (Tibetan Cabinet) to accept it if China accepted certain conditions. The Kashag, in turn, told General Zhang Jingwu that it would radio its acceptance, provided China agreed to the following conditions:

- ❑ The powers and functions of the Military-Administrative Commission, which China proposes to set up in Lhasa, should be defined vis-à-vis the powers and functions of the Dalai Lama;
- ❑ Only a limited number of PLA troops should be stationed in Tibet; the responsibility for defending the important borders of Tibet should be entrusted to the Tibetan Army;
- ❑ All the Tibetan-inhabited areas should be united under the Tibetan Government; Chamdo and other areas of Kham should be returned to the Tibetan Government.

General Zhang responded that the question of uniting the Tibetan areas should be decided after conducting a referendum among the “Tibetans in Sichuan, Gansu, Yunnan and Qinghai”.¹¹

Soon 20,000 PLA troops arrived in Central Tibet and occupied the principal cities of Ruthok and Gartok, and then Gyantse and Shigatse. Now the whole of Tibet was virtually under the PLA’s sway. From this position China refused to reopen negotiations and Tibetans and the Dalai Lama had effectively lost the ability to either accept or reject any Tibet-China “Agreement”. The best course, the Dalai Lama now decided, was to cooperate with the Chinese Government in implementing the “Agreement” so as to make the most of what it promised to Tibetans.

On October 24 the Kashag acquiesced to

the phrasing of a telegram which General Zhang had drafted on behalf of the Dalai Lama. The telegram, addressed to Mao Zedong, expressed the Dalai Lama’s support for the “17-Point Agreement”. Four days later, Zhang Guohua and Tan Guansen led a large PLA contingent into Lhasa. Thousands of additional troops followed soon after.

Famine Fuels Anger

The absence of transport facilities between Tibet and China meant that the Tibetans had to surrender their precious foodgrains to feed the escalating occupation army. Food prices soared 10-fold, affecting the livelihood of poor Tibetans, “whose share of food and daily necessities has been ruthlessly whittled down”.¹² This raised the first spectre of famine in Tibet’s history, fuelling the population’s smouldering rage over the annexation of their country.

The angry populace snapped Chinese power and telegraph lines, threw rocks at the residences of Chinese officials, and spat on and beat up stray Chinese personnel. Posters were pasted up at night denouncing the occupation of Tibet and telling the Chinese to “Go Home”.

On March 31, 1952 the mass movement, Mimang Tsongdu (People’s Assembly), was born. On the following day, 1,000 members of Mimang Tsongdu picketed General Zhang’s house and shouted slogans for Tibetan independence and the withdrawal of the PLA. The Chinese general blamed the two

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Tibetan prime ministers and “foreign imperialists” for inciting the people, and so pressured the Tibetan Government to ban Mimang Tsongdu and force the two prime ministers to resign.

By now, there was no doubt in the minds of China’s leadership that Tibetans looked upon the “Agreement” with sheer contempt. On April 6, 1952 Mao Zedong said, “(N)ot only the two Silons (i.e. prime ministers) but also the Dalai and most of his clique were reluctant to accept the Agreement and are unwilling to carry it out. ... As yet we do not have a material base for fully implementing the Agreement, nor do we have a base for this purpose in terms of support among the masses or in the upper stratum.”¹³

The communist ideologues promptly set out to erode the powers and position of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government: First, the existing political and regional divisions were exploited and institutionalized to create rival centres of power. Backed by the PLA, the new organs of control effectively usurped all powers from the Tibetan Government.

Communist reforms were imposed on the people of Kham and Amdo; their way of life was forcibly changed and hundreds of religious and cultural institutes were razed to the ground. Tibetans in these areas reacted by taking up arms against the Chinese. Thousands of Tibetans died in skirmishes; many went to jail and were never seen again. The resistance gradually spread to Central

Tibet, culminating in the National Uprising in Lhasa on March 10, 1959 and the escape of the Dalai Lama a week later.

The “Agreement” was now in tatters; the Chinese had violated it by reneging on their promises to respect Tibet’s political system and to consult the local leaders of Tibet in carrying out reforms. Tibetans were convinced that the “Agreement” was merely a façade behind which China was bent on obliterating every vestige of Tibetan identity.

On April 18, 1959 the Dalai Lama issued a press statement in Tezpur, Assam in India, stating that the “17-point Agreement” had been signed under pressure from the Chinese Government. Then, on June 20, he issued another press statement from his new Indian headquarters in Mussoorie, in which he described the “Agreement” as having been forced upon Tibet by invasion, threat and deceit. The International Commission of Jurists stated that through this repudiation Tibet legally “discharged herself of the obligation under the Agreement”.

From Reforms to Economic Integration



Reforms and collectivization: 1956-1979

In 1956 the advancing People's Liberation Army of China introduced "democratic reforms" in some areas of Kham and Amdo. In 1958 the "reforms" were expanded throughout these two eastern Tibetan provinces. A year later, the central province, U-Tsang, was also subjected to "democratic reforms". Under this program, Beijing confiscated the property and possessions of aristocrats and other wealthy families.

The confiscation of private properties was followed by the herding of Tibetans into "mutual aid teams"; this Maoist experiment was supposed to bring economic development through the mobilization of a population that had hitherto remained immobile. By the end of 1962, 166,000 households in Central Tibet were marshalled into 22,000 "mutual aid teams".¹ Although this change did not end private ownership, a considerable amount of grain and animal products were seized as "patriotic public grain tax", "surplus gain sales" and "contribution of past grain reserves".

Such communist policies had the effect of dampening people's interest in production, resulting in a dramatic decline in food production, and famine became widespread. However, "mutual aid team" leaders exaggerated production figures and submitted false reports in order to impress their superiors. And these false statistics became the basis for determining the amount of taxation. The result was crippling for people's

livelihood and wellbeing. While these “reforms” were underway, in 1963 the authorities divided the populace into different classes. This was followed by the introduction of class struggle sessions (Tib: *thamzing*), during which people were forced to publicly accuse, criticize and beat each other. Any Tibetan who had worked in the independent Tibet’s government or had achieved prosperity or a high level of scholarship was categorized under the black hats of “landlords, money-lenders, serf owners” etc., and was tortured during “struggle sessions”. These struggle sessions resulted in more than 92,000 deaths.²

In 1965 the Chinese authorities phased out the “mutual aid teams” and introduced communes, putting an end to the very concept of private ownership. The populace was organized into communes and forced to work and eat together from “one big pot”. Every commune member worked an average of 15 hours a day or more (from 5 am to 9 pm). In addition, it was compulsory for every member to attend political education sessions at night. The work output of commune members was supervised by the leaders of the “production brigade”—a unit within a commune. Average work-points earned annually by each member came to 3,500 and each work-point earned about eight *fen* (100 *fen* = one yuan). So the annual income of each member was around 288 yuan (US\$35). However, maintaining a bare minimum standard of living at that time cost around 347 yuan (US\$42).

The authorities also instituted a policy of “he who does not work shall not eat” which badly hit households with infants, aged parents or infirm members. Thousands upon thousands of Tibetans had to survive on rodents, dogs, worms, grass, bark and leaves—whatever they could forage just to survive.

To make matters worse, Tibetans were ordered to turn 80 percent of their fields over to winter wheat to support PLA soldiers and Chinese civilian cadres. As a result, wheat output began to decline after some years of bumper harvests. This is because wheat is alien to Tibet’s soil; it depletes the earth’s nutrients far faster than the preferred native crop—barley.

The nomads were forced to lead a sedentary commune life and forbidden from roaming with their herds in search of seasonal pastures. In *Hungry Ghosts: China’s Secret Famine*, Jasper Becker writes:

The Golok warriors escaped on horseback to the mountains or to India but the women and children remained and were forcibly settled into communes. In 1958, the tribe was brought together to live in a city of tents in Qinghai laid out in straight rows and traversed by streets named “Liberation Road” or “Beijing Road”. Instead of roaming in small groups over the thin pasture, which grows on a bleak plateau 12,000 feet above sea level, the herds of each family, usually numbering around a hundred yaks, were concentrated in one spot. There was no forage prepared and what pasture there was was soon eaten bare. Before long the animals were starving. Normally,

nomads slaughter animals in autumn when they are fat to provide food for the winter. Now no animals could be killed without the express permission of provincial authorities, hundreds of miles away, who made no allowance for the customs of the herdsmen. By early 1959, the animals had either died of starvation or were so thin that their emaciated bodies could provide little sustenance.³

Famine became widespread in Tibet's rural hinterland between 1968-1973, with the populace trying to survive on an annual intake averaging five or six pounds of butter, 10 pounds of meat and four or five *khel* (one *khel* = 25 to 30 lbs) of *tsampa*. More than 340,000 people starved to death.⁴

Economic liberalization: 1980-1985

The death of Mao Zedong in September 1976 and the subsequent emergence of a new leadership in Beijing resulted in positive changes in Chinese policies. The Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, held in December 1978, rejected the principles of the Cultural Revolution and mass mobilization as a means of achieving political and economic objectives. The plenum made sweeping changes in CCP's policy toward minorities and decided to create an environment conducive for natural "acculturation" of the minorities, instead of forced assimilation. In Tibet, this policy translated into improving socio-economic conditions to encourage the return of the Dalai Lama. In April 1980 the

Central Committee of the CCP convened the First Tibet Work Forum in Beijing to review and liberalize religious and economic policies. A month later, members of the newly established Party's Working Committee on Tibet—headed by Party Secretary Hu Yaobang—visited Lhasa City. Hu immediately introduced a six-point preferential policy to improve social and economic conditions.

The new policy called for the decollectivization of agriculture and animal husbandry, suspension of taxes (on agriculture, animal husbandry, industry and commerce) for two years, subsidies to peasants and nomads, and promotion of Tibetan culture, including language. It also called for the repatriation of 85 percent of Chinese cadres back to China. As a result of this policy switch, there was a relative improvement in the quality of life for both the rural and urban populations. Also, for the first time, there was growth in the production of Tibetan-language publications—more than 30 different titles were produced in 1981.

However, a major portion of grants and subsidies—earmarked for farmers and nomads—were used by State-owned enterprises for capital investment, which failed to produce significant results due to rampant corruption and mismanagement. Two Chinese economists, who went to Tibet in 1984 on a fact-finding mission, reported:

In 1982 the highway authorities in Tibet exaggerated their engineering costs and obtained 1.01 million yuan from the national treasury at

one stroke. In 1981, the Shigatse education office appropriated a sum of half a million yuan for the repair of school furniture. Two years later government auditors discovered by chance from the 37.16 yuan balance that the original half a million had not even been entered in the books but had disappeared. ...And how much of the central government subsidies has been squandered in this manner is everybody's guess.⁵

The two economists further commented that “the increased scale of capital construction would push up the grain requirement further in the years to come”.⁶ This is because more capital construction means more Chinese “technicians and skilled workers” and more grain requirements to feed them, which is naturally an added burden on the Tibetan peasantry.

In early 1984, the CCP's Central Committee convened the Second Tibet Work Forum, initiating a new phase of economic reform to boost Tibet's development. Apart from opening Tibet to the outside world, the new policy encouraged state-owned enterprises, individuals and China's richer provinces to invest in businesses on the plateau. Realizing the huge potential for tourism in the economic development of Tibet, the Forum approved 43 projects to develop infrastructure for tourism. Contracts for the projects were given to State-run companies from Chinese provinces and cities. This resulted in a sharp increase in Chinese population in the “Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)”.

More than 60,000 Chinese “peddlers and craftsmen” from over 20 Chinese provinces and cities arrived in May 1984 alone to work on the “43 projects”⁷; 50,000 Chinese workers had migrated to the plateau one year before.⁸ At least 10,000 Chinese households—mainly from neighbouring Sichuan and Gansu provinces—settled in the “TAR's” few urban locations in 1984; another 30,000 Chinese households arrived in 1985. This overwhelming increase in the inflow of Chinese settlers, particularly entrepreneurs and petty traders—led to inflation and loss of employment and business opportunities for Tibetans.

Integrating Tibet into China: 1986-2001

China's Seventh Five-Year Plan (1986-1991) initiated a policy to integrate “hostile border regions”, including Tibet, into China's economy. The Plan saw the western border regions as providers of energy and mineral resources to the central region, where most of China's energy and defence industries are based. In return, the backward western regions were to receive “skilled” settlers with technical, managerial and business know-how. This would ultimately help open up local markets for finished goods from China's affluent coastal regions. The then Communist Party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang said:

Our goal is to seek common prosperity for all nationalities, but this cannot be achieved simultaneously. For the time being, the western region is to supply raw materials for the development of the

eastern region and, in return, will market its goods produced in the western region.⁹

The strategy for implementing the integration policy was revealed in Deng Xiaoping's remark during a visit to the United States in 1987. Deng said: "Tibet cannot develop on its own... It should seek help from fraternal provinces and municipalities [in China]... We need to get large numbers of Han comrades into Tibet so that they can impart scientific and technological know-how, share their scientific management expertise, and help Tibet train scientific, technological, and managerial personnel to speed up its economic development."¹⁰

Beijing's new economic directive led to a steady escalation in Chinese population transfer to Tibet, causing food shortages and rampant unemployment among Tibetans. Sixteen labour units of Lhasa Municipality replaced their 30,000 Tibetan employees with Chinese migrants.¹¹ The ousted Tibetans were told to go to the villages and look for jobs. Fine old Tibetan houses in Lhasa and neighbouring towns were demolished to make room for new Chinese-style concrete highrises. These new colonies were allotted to Chinese economic migrants who were also given preferential treatment in starting business enterprises.

In the winter of 1989, a high-level CCP politburo meeting was called in Beijing to review its policy on Tibet. The meeting decided to speed up the economic integration of Tibet into China, tighten security

mechanisms on the plateau, and bring better-educated and skilled Chinese Party cadres to govern the region—from village to regional level. It also decided to abandon any remaining hope of the Dalai Lama returning.

This was a major shift in policy, having significant impacts. It was to usher in a new era of unprecedented repression on Tibetans and attacks on the Dalai Lama.

Taking a cue from this policy decision, another meeting—held on May 12, 1993 on the outskirts of Chengdu—decided on steps to make it demographically "impossible for Tibetans to rise as in the case of Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang".¹²

On May 24, 1993 Lhasa City witnessed its first large-scale economic protest as over 1,000 Tibetans took to the streets to demonstrate against the increase in food prices, medical charges and school fees. A month later, nomads from the "TAR's" Sog County and other parts of Nagchu prefecture ransacked Chinese shops. And, in the same year, economic protests were reported from the region's rural areas of Nyemo, Meldro Gyama, Phenpo, and Chideshol. Despite the protests, the Chinese authorities passed a new trade-license regulation in the "TAR" in November 1993, allowing Chinese settlers to engage in wholesale or retail trading of whatever commodities the State had decontrolled.¹³

From July 20 to 23, 1994 the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee and the State Council convened the Third Tibet

Work Forum. The meeting decided to ruthlessly suppress “separatist” movement, undermine the influence of the Dalai Lama, reform Buddhism to suit the need of socialism and take necessary measures to win the hearts of the next generation of Tibetans. It also decided to “open Tibet’s door wider to inner parts of the country” and encourage the migration of “traders, investment, economic units and individuals” from China to the “TAR”.¹⁴ In order to facilitate the implementation of the new policy, Beijing launched 62 new projects in the “TAR”, funded mainly by provinces and cities of China. These, and the 43 projects introduced earlier in 1984, were focussed solely on “hard infrastructure” such as highways, dams, power stations, and mineral extraction, rather than on “soft infrastructure” like health, education and human capacity building.¹⁵ Only nine of the 62 projects were devoted to the improvement of school education and health care services; the remaining projects were focussed on capital construction. Similarly, 20 out of the 62 projects were concentrated in Lhasa City alone and the remainder in the vicinity of a few urban towns such as Shigatse, Chamdo, Gyantse, Nyingtri, and Markham.

The immediate impact of this biased development was a growing income disparity between the predominantly Chinese population in urban centres and the predominantly Tibetan population in rural areas. Between 1991 and 1996, the average annual income of rural dwellers in the “TAR”

increased by only 50 percent to 975 yuan, while that of urban residents spiralled by 250 percent to 5,030 yuan. There was a parallel increase in the income gap between the predominantly Chinese employees of State-owned enterprises and the predominantly Tibetan employees in the informal sector.

From June 25 to 27, 2001, the CCP’s Central Committee and the State Council called the Fourth Tibet Work Forum in Beijing. The meeting reinforced the policy decision taken at the Third Work Forum in 1994 and vowed to accelerate Tibet’s economic development—which in effect means economic integration—to bring lasting stability in China. To facilitate this, the Forum decided to improve Party building in Tibet, bringing in cadres from China with “both abilities and political integrity” who can strengthen the Party’s grasp at all levels. It was also resolved to launch new campaign to educate the people on the “four outlooks” and “two theories”. The four outlooks are the Marxist outlook on the motherland, nationality, religion and culture; and two theories are materialism and atheism. The Forum decided to launch 117 projects with direct State investments totaling 31.2 billion yuan (US\$ 3.7 billion).

To sum up, China’s development policies in Tibet, particularly from the mid-1980s, have been aimed at the integration of Tibet into China in order to make it indistinguishable from any other Chinese province.

Unending Night of Repression



The Nightmare Period: 1949-1979

An internal Chinese military document states that from 1952 to 1958, the People's Liberation Army crushed 996 rebellions and killed over 10,000 Tibetans in the northeastern region of Kanlho.¹ Golog, another Amdo area, saw its population halved from an estimated 140,000 in 1956 to about 70,000 in 1964.² Referring to this area, the late Panchen Lama told Beijing's leaders: "If there was a film made on all the atrocities perpetrated in Qinghai Province, it would shock the viewers. In Golog area, many people were killed and their dead bodies rolled down the hill into a big ditch. The soldiers told the family members and relatives of the dead people that they should celebrate since the rebels had been wiped out. They were even forced to dance on the dead bodies. Soon after, they were also massacred with machine guns."³ The Panchen Lama specifically pointed out in his 1987 speech that "in Amdo and Kham, people were subjected to unspeakable atrocities. They were shot in groups of 10 or 20."

In Lhasa, the PLA operation to crush the Tibetan National Uprising of March 10, 1959 resulted in 10,000 to 15,000 deaths within three days. According to an internal PLA report, 87,000 Tibetans were wiped out in Lhasa and its environs between March and October 1959.⁴

In the following two decades, a massive number of Tibetans died in prisons and labour camps. Of the 70,000 Tibetans taken

to labour camps in the north of Lanzhou, the provincial capital of Gansu, in 1959-1960, only half survived.⁵ Of the 76 Tibetan prisoners sent to Zhangjiao Agricultural Labour Camp in Jiuquan, Gansu Province, in the early 1960s, only 21 survived.⁶

Amdo became China's biggest gulag with tens of thousands of Tibetan and Chinese prisoners who were put to road and railway construction, exploitation of mineral resources, building of nuclear research centres and to running of state farms for the People's Liberation Army. At least, 200,000 inmates starved to death.⁷

In an interview with the author of *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine*, a monk from Ngaba (now incorporated into Sichuan Province) said that two-thirds of men from his place were arrested and sent to labour camps, mostly at Guanxian near Chengdu; 70 percent died.⁸

At the Vebou labour camp, 10 hours' drive west of Siling City, 14,000 of the 30,000 inmates died; Tibetans constituted ten percent of the inmates.⁹ Similarly, of the 12,000 inmates in Shen Mu, 6,000 perished.¹⁰ Most of the deaths occurred during China's Great Famine (1958-1962), which killed more than 900,000 people in Amdo.

In David Patt's book, *A Strange Liberation: Tibetan Lives in Chinese Hands*, one survivor, Ama Adhe, reminisces on her life at the Dhartsedo labour camp in Kham (now in Sichuan Province). By the roadside the authorities opened mass graves and filled

them with corpses. "Every day," she recalls, "they would deliver nine or 10 truckloads of bodies to put there. Some days less, some days more. Usually, eight, nine, 10 trucks." Of the 300 women arrested with her, only 100 survived. The survivors were then made to walk to another prison, a gigantic lead mine. This camp, called Gothang Gyalpo, was teeming with Tibetan and Guomintang prisoners: "So many prisoners were working all over this huge lead mine, they looked like bugs, like ants going in every direction. There were thousands and thousands of them swarming over the mine. And, when I looked around, they were all Tibetan. And their physical condition was the same as at Dhartsedo, starvation. Many were leaning on walking sticks, otherwise they would not be able to hold up their heads." Only four out of the 100 she arrived with survived this second camp. In 1962, Ama Adhe's companions overheard the outgoing warden reporting 12,019 starvation deaths in three years.

Apho Gaga, a survivor of the Tsawa Pomda labour camp, stated that of the 8,100 imprisoned in 1959, only 370 survived by the end of 1961.¹¹

In U-Tsang, more than 10,000 prisoners died in Drapchi prison in Lhasa between 1960-1965.¹² In addition, thousands of Tibetans perished in the three major labour camps—a borax mine in Chang Thang (known to the Tibetans as Jhang Tsala-kha), Nachen Thang hydroelectric plant near Lhasa, and lumbering units in Kongpo, near India. A

survivor of the Chang Thang camp said in an interview that more than 54,000 inmates died of starvation and hard work between 1959 and mid-1961.¹³ N.J. Topgyal, a survivor of Kongpo's lumbering camp, stated that, "The Chinese use to pile up corpses and when they reached the size of a small hill the corpses would be set on fire".¹⁴ In her memoirs, *Sorrow Mountain*, Ani Pachen, a survivor of the three biggest prisons in the "TAR" writes:

The bodies of the dead were dumped in a ravine behind the monastery. The ravine became so filled that the Chinese started throwing the dead bodies into the Zhachu [upper part of the Mekong River] and Ngomchu Rivers. The vultures and the dogs were not able to eat all the bodies remaining in the ravine, and soon the carcasses began to rot. The stench of decomposing bodies was so powerful that for years people could not go near the ravine.¹⁵

Documenting the conditions of prisons and labour camps in 1962, the late Panchen Lama wrote:

The guards and cadres threatened prisoners with cruel, ruthless and malicious words, and beat them fiercely and unscrupulously... [The prisoners'] clothes and quilts could not keep their bodies warm, their mattresses could not keep out the damp, their tents and buildings could not shelter them from the wind and rain and the food did not fill their stomachs. Their lives were miserable and full of deprivation, they had to get up early for work and come back late from their work; what's more, these people were given the heaviest and

most difficult work... They caught many diseases, and in addition, they did not have sufficient rest; medical treatment was poor, which caused many prisoners to die from abnormal causes.¹⁶

Ani Pachen, who spent many years in the high security prison of Silthog Thang in Chamdo, describes her first impression of the prisoners in the following words:

As we drove up, there were people standing behind the wire fencing. When we got closer I could see that they had barely any flesh on their bodies. The skin of their faces was pulled tight, their eyes sunk deep in the sockets, their cheeks almost bone, like a skull. But it was their arms and hands that caught my attention. Thin like sticks, hanging limply at their sides. One man raised his head and looked at me. When I looked into his eyes, I felt a shock, for his eyes were completely blank, as if nothing but hollows on either side of his face. Others had eyes so large and liquid, it seemed the only part of them still alive.¹⁷

All in all, this was the darkest period in the entire history of Tibet. Sweeping massacres, appalling torture, bombardment of monasteries and the wholesale extermination of nomad tribes are the hallmark of these three decades. Some Tibetans say that the sky and earth changed places during this period. Others maintain that they experienced "hell on earth".

According to information compiled by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, over 1.2 million Tibetans died during this period.

A brief respite: 1979-1986

The new leadership, which came to power in the wake of Mao Zedong's death, set out to improve the conditions in Tibet in order to encourage the return of the Dalai Lama. In March 1978 the late Panchen Lama was released after 14 years of imprisonment and isolation. In 1979 Beijing announced a policy of liberalization and openness. A large number of Tibetan political prisoners, many of whom had spent about two decades in captivity and were resigned to seeing out their days in shackles, suddenly found themselves free men and women. Tibetans in Tibet and those in exile were allowed to visit each other. In addition, four fact-finding delegations from Dharamsala were invited to Tibet to see conditions for themselves.

In 1980 Chinese Communist Party Secretary Hu Yaobang visited Lhasa and recommended that the "Tibet Autonomous Region" should be allowed to exercise autonomy in the true sense of the word. For the first time since the occupation of the plateau, Tibetans gained a measure of breathing space. There was now real hope that the younger genre of Chinese leadership might be willing to undo the brutal legacy of their predecessors. Tibetans took advantage of the new political climate to call for more rights and freedoms.

However, it soon became apparent that ultra-leftist elements were still well-entrenched in Tibet and not ready to loosen the iron grip of the Maoist era. In May 1982, 115 Tibetan

political activists were arrested and branded as "delinquents" and "black marketeers". More arrests and public executions followed. By the end of November 1983, 750 political activists had been jailed in Lhasa alone.

In 1986 Hu Yaobang was disgraced for his sympathy for Tibet and for the democracy movement in China. Around the same time, anti-Dalai Lama propaganda resurfaced with the venom and invective of the Cultural Revolution era. The hope and euphoria of the early 1980s were wearing out and the atmosphere in Tibet was, once again, becoming charged with bitterness.

Cycle of Protest and Imprisonment: 1987-'94

On September 21, 1987 the Dalai Lama announced his Five Point Peace Plan for resolving the issue of Tibet in an address to the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus. The Chinese government responded by launching a concerted media campaign to demonize the Dalai Lama. At the same time, the authorities were urging anti-Dalai Lama demonstrations by the populace of Lhasa. To further punish the Dalai Lama, 11 Tibetans were sentenced. Two of them received death sentences. Work Units and Neighbourhood Committees compelled 15,000 Tibetans to attend a mass sentencing rally in the sports stadium of Lhasa. These developments—particularly the anti-Dalai Lama campaign—served only to incense the Tibetan populace.

On September 27, Lhasa witnessed the first internationally-reported protest

demonstration against Chinese rule. The demonstration was led by 21 monks of Drepung Monastery, but was soon joined by around 100 lay people. As they reached the office of the “Tibet Autonomous Region” government, the police confronted and arrested all the monks, along with five lay protestors.¹⁸

On October 1, the Chinese National Day, 34 monks, including 23 from Sera Monastery, marched along the Barkhor street encircling the Jokhang temple, carrying the banned Tibetan national flag and shouting slogans for Tibetan independence. About 50 lay Tibetans joined the monks. As they were making the fourth circuit, security personnel started beating the demonstrators. All the monks, along with some 30 lay protestors, were arrested and taken to the police station at the southwest corner of the Jokhang.¹⁹ A crowd of about 2,000 Tibetans stormed the police station to release them. Police then opened fire, killing at least seven protestors.²⁰ Many demonstrators were subsequently arrested.

On October 6, 1987 there was yet another demonstration, this time by some 50 monks from Drepung Monastery. The monks went to the “TAR” government office and called for the release of their colleagues. They also shouted slogans for Tibetan independence. The police arrived within a few minutes. As the monks were arrested, they were viciously beaten with belts, sticks, rifle-butts and metal rods. The monks were released after two days. In the subsequent months, there were several

minor demonstrations in Lhasa.

In July 1988, Beijing’s security chief, Qiao Shi, visited the “TAR” and announced “merciless repression” on all forms of protest against Chinese rule.²¹ On December 10, 1988 there was a massive demonstration at the Jokhang, during which Chinese security personnel killed at least 15 demonstrators, seriously wounded over 150. Many more were arrested. According to a Western journalist, who was an eyewitness, one officer was heard ordering his men to “kill the Tibetans”.

Between March 5 and 7, 1989 Lhasa was again in turmoil, with demonstrators waving the outlawed Tibetan flag and demanding independence. Automatic weapons were fired during the crackdown—even into some homes. Estimates of the death toll varied from 80 to 400. The official Chinese figure was only 11. According to Tang Daxian, a Chinese journalist who was in Lhasa during this period, some 400 Tibetans were massacred, several thousand injured and 3,000 imprisoned.²² At midnight, on March 7, 1989, Martial Law was declared in Lhasa.

Over a year later, on May 1, 1990, China announced the lifting of Martial Law. However, the Australian Human Rights Delegation to China and Tibet in July 1991 observed: “Though Martial Law had indeed been lifted on May 1, 1990, it continues to exist in all but name”. Amnesty International, in its 1991 report, confirmed this, adding, “the police and security forces retained extensive powers of arbitrary arrest and

detention without trial”.

On April 10, 1991 the police arrested 146 “criminals” in a run-up to China’s celebration of the 40th anniversary of the signing of the “17-point Agreement” on May 23. This was followed by more arrests and public sentencing rallies. On the day of the celebration the whole of Lhasa was put under curfew.

Then, starting from February 1992, groups consisting of 10 Chinese personnel raided Tibetan homes in Lhasa and arrested those found in possession of anything deemed subversive; this list included photographs of the Dalai Lama, and tapes or books containing his speeches or teachings. Over 200 people were arrested. Despite the lessons of the bloody crackdown in March 1989, large numbers of Tibetans again took to the streets on May 24, 1993. Eye-witnesses, including tourists, estimate there were over 10,000 demonstrators massed that day. The demonstration, which continued over a period of two days, was once again quelled with brutal force as the demonstrators made their way home at dusk.

An increasing number of demonstrations were being reported from Tibet’s countryside as well. At least 240 Tibetan political activists were arrested in the rural areas of U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo during 1993. In Amdo alone, various sources stated that some 80 Tibetans had been arrested between July-September 1993.

Evidence of arbitrary arrests and

incommunicado detentions often resulting in disappearances, and summary executions, were cited in Amnesty International’s 1990 report. It stated that “over a thousand people, including prisoners of conscience, were arrested after Martial Law was imposed in Lhasa in March” and that “some of them were summarily executed”. It also pointed out that “evidences of persistent human rights violations in Tibet continued to come to light in 1989, including reports of numerous arbitrary arrests, long-term detention without charge or trial, and torture”. Incommunicado detention then was almost routine. Often it was left to the devices of the relatives of the arrested person to locate him or her.²³

In 1990, the President of the People’s Higher Court, said, “Leadership of the Party (CCP) over the courts is the basic guarantee for the courts to achieve their adjudicatory tasks.”²⁴ This means all acts and beliefs contrary to China’s Central Communist Party policy are grounds for suppression, regardless of established legal safeguards. To make matters worse, the State is not expected to inform prisoners of the grounds for their arrest or their right to legal remedies. Arrest warrants are rarely issued or produced. Grounds for arrest and imprisonment seem to be found in any kind of activity: many Tibetans are condemned to long periods of confinement for speaking with foreigners, singing patriotic songs, putting up wall posters, possessing copies of an autobiography of the Dalai Lama or some

video or audio cassettes, or for preparing a list of casualties during Chinese crackdowns on demonstrations, etc.

Amnesty International in 1992 expressed concerns over imprisonment of prisoners of conscience and of other political prisoners after unfair trials, torture and ill-treatment of detainees, the use of the death penalty and extra judicial executions. Constitutional and legal provisions in Tibet restrict the exercise of basic freedoms and lack human rights safeguards consistent with international standards.²⁵

“All such manifestations (i.e., demonstrations and political dissent) of dissatisfaction with Chinese rule—whether peacefully conducted or otherwise—are viewed by the authorities as constituting ‘illegal separatist activity’, and those who have led or participated in them have been punished with escalating force and severity. ‘Merciless repression’ remains, in Tibet, the order of the day.”²⁶

In its 1993 report, Amnesty International went on to state: “Arrests of Tibetan political activists continued. Over 200 political prisoners, including at least a hundred prisoners of conscience, remained held in Tibet. They included Buddhist monks and nuns detained for peacefully advocating Tibetan independence, and lay Tibetans allegedly found in possession of Tibetan nationalist material. Some were serving prison terms imposed after unfair trials, others ‘terms of re-education through labour’ imposed

without formal charge or trial.”

“Life-And-Death” Struggle :1995-2001

The overall trend of repression from 1987 to 1994 was largely a reflection of the State’s reaction to Tibetan resistance activities. This changed dramatically towards the end of 1994 when the authorities devised an array of pro-active measures to eliminate the roots of protest movements. This new wave of repression was implemented in the form of “anti-Dalai” and “anti-splittist” campaigns, as recommended by China’s infamous Third Forum on Tibet, held in Beijing in July 1994. The Forum advocated:

The struggle between ourselves and the Dalai Clique is neither a matter of religious belief, nor a matter of the question of autonomy, it is a matter of securing the unity of our country and opposing splittism...No one should be careless about it. This is a life-and-death struggle, and of course it is not an ordinary issue but an important issue. The Standing Committee of the TAR Congress and the judicial organs should carry out thorough investigations in order to find out problems in the ways we deal with our struggle against splittism, and seriously analyze those problems in the law. If there is anything not yet mentioned in the law, the judicial administrations should give their views quickly and establish laws and regulations to fight against the splittists so that the laws and regulations become more effective...

As “striking relentless blows” is one of the important elements of the Comprehensive Management of Public Security, the judicial organs

should organize local public security organizations to solve their own main problems by having focal places to deal with and focal points to solve. We must rely both on the relevant public security offices and on the vast numbers of masses in dealing with public security work.

This chilling directive was followed immediately by a dramatic escalation of repression throughout Tibet. New security measures were put in place to tighten control over the population. The neighbourhood surveillance system of the Cultural Revolution era was resuscitated with networks of informers in offices, work groups, schools, monasteries, apartment buildings and neighbourhoods. People were coerced into providing information about colleagues and neighbours on pain of losing housing, employment, education, a place in the monastery, etc. Telephone hotlines were set up to facilitate people informing on each other. During religious festivals, special security cameras are installed on pilgrim circuit routes and at other key sites.

In 1995 the authorities introduced a new strategy for intimidating political suspects. Used mostly in urban areas, this strategy involved detaining suspects repeatedly for short periods, often for about two days each week, during which time they were interrogated through the use of sophisticated torture techniques, which left no visible marks. Such techniques included exposure to extreme temperatures or making detainees stand in icy water in winter or sit in crippling

positions for long periods. The trend from the year 2000 has been to spirit away suspects to PSB guesthouses, where they are interrogated and tortured, often for four to 24 weeks. If the security personnel fail to elicit a confession, the suspect is released with strict warnings against disclosing the reasons or details of their disappearance.

This technique is used typically against people suspected of communicating information on the situation inside Tibet to the outside world. When the victims are released, they are sufficiently intimidated not to dare tell anyone about their detention lest they suffer another round of torture. In some cases the victims are so intimidated that they agree to become informers for the State.

In 1996, China's three major political campaigns of "Patriotic Education", "Spiritual Civilization" and "Strike Hard" adopted the Third Forum's objectives and stepped up repression even further. As with "Patriotic Education" and "Spiritual Civilization", the goal of the "Strike Hard" campaign in Tibet differs completely from that in China.

In China, the campaign was launched to combat official corruption and common crimes, such as murder, robbery, drug trafficking, etc. However, in Tibet, it became the cutting edge of China's "relentless blows" at separatism and the influence of the "Dalai Clique".

Addressing the inaugural rally of the "Strike Hard Struggle" on May 6, 1996, Raidi, Executive Deputy Secretary of the

“TAR” Communist Party, linked the campaign to the anti-splittist fight when he said, “Tibet is located on the frontline of the anti-separation struggle, and safeguarding social stability and the Motherland’s unity is the most important political responsibility.” He further stated that “paying great attention to this struggle to severely crack down on crimes is both an expression of whether or not we have a sense of the masses of people, and an expression of whether or not we attach importance to politics.”²⁷

To drive home the seriousness of this campaign, *Tibet Daily* on June 17, 1996 carried an article with the byline of Bai Zhao, President of the “TAR” Regional People’s Court, which urged upgrading the intensity of the “Strike Hard” struggle and said that severe punishments and death sentences must be meted out to those who deserve them.

Bai Zhao’s report boasted that in 1996 the court had handled a total of 2,126 criminal cases and that 1,726 detainees involved in 977 cases had been swiftly convicted at their first trial. The report further stated that 60.8 percent (1,049) of the detainees had been sentenced to more than five years imprisonment, or life imprisonment, or death (a death sentence with reprieve); 37.34 percent (645) to less than five years of imprisonment; 1.36 percent (24) had been released; and 0.43 percent (eight) had been declared not guilty.²⁸

Another report submitted by Bai Zhao in May 1998 said that the courts had tried 6,291

people over the past five years and had found 0.73 percent not guilty. The report revealed that more than half the detainees received sentences ranging from five years to death.

Political detainees are invariably tortured to extract confessions before the trial. The Dharamsala-based Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy has documented a variety of torture techniques or methods used on political detainees and prisoners. These include aerial suspension, hand and foot cuffs, electric shocks, exposure to extreme temperatures, attack by dogs, sexual assault, electric cattle prods applied to the private parts and sensitive areas, long periods of solitary confinement, urinating in the victim’s mouth, forcing victims to watch torture videos, keeping victims standing for long periods of time and deprivation of food, water and sleep.

In 1998, Amnesty International expressed concerns that torture and ill-treatment of detainees in prisons and labour camps remained widespread, sometimes resulting in death.²⁹ In 1999 Physicians for Human Rights stated that the frequency of torture—including psychological abuse, beatings, rape, use of electric cattle prods, and prolonged periods of starvation—suggested that torture was part of a widespread pattern of abuse.³⁰

Article 247 of the Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China stipulates that “judicial workers who extort a confession from criminal suspects or defendants by torture or who use force to extract testimony

from witnesses, are to be sentenced to three years or fewer in prison or put under criminal detention".³¹

However, such provisions continue to be routinely ignored in the face of political considerations. The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims observed in 1999 that despite the imposition of laws barring torture by prison personnel, as enshrined in Article 14 of the 1994 Chinese Prison Regulations, abuses such as extortion of confessions through torture, inflicting corporal punishment or maltreating prisoners, subjecting prisoners to indignity and beating up prisoners or failing to take action when other people beat up prisoners continue.³²

It must be pointed out here that China's growing sensitivity to international pressure has resulted in a number of changes in its repression strategy. One such change has been the decrease in death sentences to political prisoners. Instead, death sentences are handed down to common criminals during times of political tension in Tibet. This serves the purpose of implanting fear in the minds of potential political activists while at the same time reducing the risk of international condemnation. Instead of death sentences, the political prisoners suffer prolonged torture, leading to slow, quiet deaths or permanent injury or debilitation. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy has recorded 69 deaths since 1987 occurring in prisons or immediately after release from prison, either in hospitals or at the victims' residences.

This period is marked also by escalation in the enforcement of control over activities that provide the oxygen of inspiration to Tibetan nationalism. Restrictions on religious practices began to be enforced with greater severity. Searches of private houses for shrines and photographs of the Dalai Lama became more frequent. School children were threatened with expulsion if they were seen visiting monasteries and temples. Fresh orders were issued to Party cadres—with increasing severity—to withdraw and recall their children from Tibetan schools, monasteries and nunneries in exile. Bans were intensified on the celebration of emotive national festivals such as the Tibetan New Year, the Dalai Lama's birthday, Saka-Dawa, etc. In 1999 three Tibetans were arrested in Dram, the last Tibetan outpost on the border with Nepal, for performing the religious ceremony of offering incense to the deities to mark the birthday of the Dalai Lama on July 6.

Tibetans who have visited India are viewed as another source of "separatism". Returnees are suspected of "polluting the minds" of other Tibetans and foreign tourists. To deal with them, the authorities issued new border regulations on June 1, 2000 to control crossings without papers; this is aimed particularly at those returning to Tibet after studying or working in India.³³ The London-based Tibet Information Network (TIN) reports that returnees are subjected to harassment and interrogation by the authorities. Their families and friends are

targeted for house searches and questioning. A man from Amdo who was returning to Tibet after spending two years in India was detained at the border town of Dram and interrogated for 20 days, before being moved to his native village for further investigations.³² Many of the returnees are sentenced to imprisonment for two to three years.

In the year 2000 all tour guides who had studied in India were fired from their jobs. A new regulation required all tour guides to produce a middle school certificate from a school in China or Tibet, effectively excluding Tibetans educated in India from this profession. In the summer of 2000, the “TAR” Tour Guide Discipline Management Department carried out a massive investigation into 18 branches of tourist agencies in Lhasa to root out Tibetan guides educated in India. Following the investigation, 29 India-educated guides were expelled from their jobs in July 2000 in Shigatse prefecture alone.³⁵

In addition, the authorities became more stringent in implementing earlier strategies to drive political activists to a life of privation and isolation. Upon release, political prisoners are banned from returning to their jobs or to the institutions to which they belonged at the time of their arrest. Instead, they are compelled to return to their places of origin—in most cases to rural areas where the livelihood options are limited. On top of this, they and their families are placed under constant surveillance and ordered to report

frequently to the local PSB for further interrogation; they are not allowed to travel away from their villages without PSB permission. Monasteries and nunneries are not allowed take them back; government agencies and private enterprises are forbidden from employing them. Even starting a private enterprise is not an option since licenses must be obtained from the government. Friends and relatives are warned against associating with them or helping them. Those extending help may be accused of harbouring secret sympathy for “separatism” and sentenced accordingly.

In many cases, family members of political prisoners are subjected to economic and social hardship; they are expelled or demoted from jobs and their children are expelled from schools. To sum up, once a person is jailed for political activism, he and his family become virtual pariahs. Many former prisoners say that trying to lead a normal life after prison is far harder than the actual sentence. At this stage, the only option for them is to escape over the Himalayas and seek a new life in exile.

As a result of all these control measures, there has been no mass demonstration in Tibet over the past two years. However, the general sense of anger and alienation—though muzzled—is becoming ever more pervasive and intense. Monks and nuns, who form the bulk of political prisoners, know only too well that at the end of their prison sentences they will find the doors of their monasteries and

nunneries firmly shut against their re-entry. They share the lay political prisoners' knowledge that their record of political activism will disqualify them from getting employment and that they will be under constant surveillance. For all practical purposes, their careers, they know, are finished. Furthermore, they are constantly reminded of the increasing threat to the survival of Tibetan culture, religion and identity. This has induced a sense of despair, driving them to take greater risks to defy the authorities.

Almost all the torture victims of this period are detainees who have defied the prison authorities by reciting the banned Buddhist mantras, protesting the ill-treatment of inmates, showing allegiance to the exile Tibetan administration and the Dalai Lama, and expressing dissenting views against "political re-education".

In May 1998 at least 10 prisoners in Drapchi, Lhasa, were tortured to death for shouting slogans such as "Long Live the Dalai Lama" and "Free Tibet" during the visit of an EU delegation composed of Beijing-based ambassadors from Britain, Austria and Luxemburg. Karma Dawa, the leader of the protestors, was executed while the surviving protesters had their sentences increased by four to five years.³⁶

At the same time, political protests by one or two individuals in subtler forms have spread throughout the plateau. This—combined with the Chinese strategy of

arresting people on the slightest suspicion of political activism—has led to a three-fold increase in prisoners of conscience. Before 1993 political protests tended to be confined to 22 counties inside the "TAR" and nine counties outside the "TAR". However, since 1993 political protests have been reported from 31 counties in the "TAR" and 21 counties in other Tibetan areas.³⁷ This was an increase of 40 percent in the "TAR", and 130 per cent in the Tibetan areas outside the "TAR". Similarly, detention cases had also increased by 15 per cent from 500 to 600 in Lhasa City and by 250 percent from 100 to 350 in other "TAR" areas.

To deal with such an increase in rural unrest, "TAR" Deputy Party Secretary, Raidi, asked for the "Strike Hard" campaign to be implemented among the rural masses. On January 1, 1998, he said, "The agricultural and pastoral areas have gradually become the frontline in the struggle against separatism ... after encountering repeated defeats, the Dalai Clique has in recent years changed the tactics of its scheme by shifting the focus of separatist activities to the vast agricultural and pastoral areas".³⁸ In the same year, the authorities started installing loyal cadres in key political positions in rural areas. Raidi, in his public address on November 15, 1998, stated that, "Rural grassroots officials are the key force for uniting and leading the masses in an in-depth struggle against separatism, stabilizing the farming and pastoral areas." The Tibetan edition of the *People's Daily* reported on July

15, 1998 that the “TAR” had “rectified 650 township and town party committees and 3,602 village party branches” since 1995.

In addition, the authorities have expanded the network of prison complexes in Tibet. In 1997 a new high security detention and interrogation facility was built in the northeastern suburbs of Lhasa. According to Tibet Information Network, this facility was to accommodate detainees suspected of political disloyalty and former leaders who were said to have made serious mistakes, particularly concerning political matters. Also, Lhasa’s Drapchi and Sangyip prison complexes were expanded in 1998. Before 1993 political prisoners were largely confined to the prison network in Lhasa and other major administrative towns. But now, detention facilities in almost all counties and townships house political prisoners.

However, the intensification of surveillance and control mechanisms has ensured that reports of human rights violations in Tibet do not filter out to international monitoring groups. Today the outside world knows little about the number of political prisoners in Tibet. Chinese propaganda claims that there are only a hundred prisoners detained in Tibet for “endangering State security”.³⁹

Tom Grunfeld, author of *The Making of Modern Tibet*, on the other hand, stated in April 2000 that “there are as many as a thousand political prisoners, mostly clergy who peacefully demonstrated against Chinese

rule”. Grunfeld also stated that in recent years, China’s hardline faction has fostered increased repression in Tibet... “encouraged increased ethnic Chinese migration into Tibet, tightened security in monasteries, obstructed religious practices, and forced monks and Tibetan officials to undergo ‘patriotic’ retraining. As a result there has been rising animosity toward Chinese rule and increased expression of Tibetan nationalism.”⁴⁰

Echoing Grunfeld, a Tibetan official in Lhasa told a prominent Chinese writer that, “It is a mistake to believe that there is more stability now than during the period of disturbance in the late 1980s. In those years, people involved in disturbances were mainly monks and a few misguided youths. But today officials, intellectuals and workers have all turned into the opposition. The stability that we see now is just superficial.

If the machinery of repression fails one day, it is certain that many more people than in the 1980s will participate in disturbances.”⁴¹