

TIBET TODAY

Current Conditions and Prospects

by
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Current Conditions and Prospects"

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Introduction

This spring marks the tenth anniversary of China's post-Mao Tibet policy. With it, Tibet has reached a critical juncture. The present moment represents a threshold equal in importance to the invasion of 1950 or the Tibetan revolt itself in 1959, yet there is considerable confusion surrounding Tibet's current status. What are the actual conditions in Tibet today?

In 1979-80, as a first step in rapprochement between Beijing and Dharamsala, seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile in India, three fact-finding missions toured Tibet. Visiting over 500 towns and cities in eleven and a half months, they emerged with 10,000 slides, forty hours of film and the first documented evidence of the destruction that had occurred since the revolt's suppression. This is the legacy of China's rule 1949 to 1979:

- 1.2 million Tibetans dead — one sixth of the population.
- 6,254 monasteries destroyed, their art and statuary either melted into bullion or sold for foreign exchange on the Hong Kong and Tokyo antique markets.
- 60% of Tibet's voluminous philosophic, historic and biographic literature burned.
- The nation vivisected: two-thirds of its original territory appended to the contiguous Chinese provinces with only Central Tibet and parts of Eastern Tibet remaining as the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region.

- Amdo, previously Tibet's northeastern province, now called Chinghai, converted into the planet's largest gulag, capable of interring, by some estimates, up to 10 million prisoners.
- One out of ten Tibetans imprisoned and at the close of the seventies, 100,000 in labor camps.
- Over a quarter million Chinese occupation troops stationed on the Tibetan plateau, have underwritten two decades of political re-education meetings, 14 hours of daily labor, no freedom of movement, no education or health services to speak of and two five-year periods of nation-wide famine.
- Finally, entire mountainsides have been clear-cut of their forests and Tibet's unique wildlife, including once great herds of gazelle and wild ass or kiang, as well as flocks of bar-headed geese and brahmany ducks, obliterated.

In sum, a 2,100-year-old civilization was essentially destroyed in a mere twenty years.

China's strategic, economic and political goals in Tibet have remained unchanged since the invasion: transform the region into a military bastion domination central Asia; exploit its vast natural mineral, animal and forest reserves; covert its people into the socialist, specifically Han, mold. What changes is policy, and under the current moderate line, no less than its radical precursor, Tibet's destruction is continuing; it is, in fact, escalating.

Chinese Population Transfer

In the wake of the wide-scale riots which greeted the exile government's fact-finding missions, China has forfeited its effort, pursued in the early eighties, at compromise with the Dalai Lama and Tibetan refugees. Where the earlier policy saw a wooing of the Tibetan leader in the hope that he would return to stabilize the region, the reconstituted goal has been founded on a cessation of all dialogue. In its place, the PRC has adopted a final solution for Tibet: the rapid sinocization within ten to twenty years of the country and with it the demise of the Tibetan race itself as a meaningful entity.

The current policy began in January, 1983. Reversing its 1980 promise of an 85% withdrawal of all Chinese personnel in Tibet, the CCP, by June of that year, had dispatched 50,000 new settlers to the plateau. By September, the Beijing Review reported calls for wide-scale immigration to Tibet; age and home leave incentives guaranteed, with bonuses at eight and twenty-year increments for all immigrants. By May, 1984, 60,000 were en route. A year later, the figure had reached 230,000 from 20 provinces across China.

Today, the best estimates for Chinese immigration to the one autonomous region, eleven autonomous districts and two autonomous counties into which Tibet has been parcelled are as follows:

In the bulk of Amdo, now known as Chinghai Province, there are 2.5 million Chinese to 700,000 Tibetans. The same ratio holds for the rest of Amdo appended to Gansu and Szechuan Provinces where more than a million Tibetans are living. Amdo's most important city, Labrang Tashikiel, is 75% Chinese. Longyang, site

of the PRC's largest dam, on the Manchu River, has a population of 90,000; Golmo, Tibet's rail terminus, 120,000, practically all Chinese. In the Dalai Lama's birthplace, Taktser, there are now forty families, only eight Tibetan. Where are all the Tibetans? An increasing number have been forced to leave farming and become drokpa, or nomads. In other words, they are landless.

The eastern half of Kham, Tibet's eastern province, now incorporated into Szechuan and Yunan Provinces, has three million Chinese to 2.5 million Tibetans. Once again, the fertile river valleys are the prime targets of the Chinese settlers, with Tibetans forced off arable land up to the high nomadic pastures. Adjacent to Szechuan, where 100 million Chinese live, Kham's demographic profile is far from stable.

The figures for the Tibet Autonomous Region are most telling. In what the PRC itself labels Tibet, there are now more than two million Chinese settlers to 1.8 million Tibetans. In Lhasa, there are 150,000 Chinese, 50,000 Tibetans. Shigatse, Tibet's second largest city, is also predominantly Chinese. Chamdo, the third-largest city in Tibet, is more than half Chinese. Gyantse, the fourth-largest city, still retains a Tibetan majority but virtually all the medium-sized villages have either an equal number or more Chinese living in them.

All told, excluding the People's Liberation Army, there are 7.5 million Chinese to six million Tibetans in Tibet — 1.5 million more Chinese already live in Tibet than Tibetans. This is the very means by which the PRC has overcome opposition in every other major minority area. In Manchuria that ratio is about 35 to one, Mongolia five to one. In Eastern Turkestan or Sinkiang, there

are now 15 million Chinese to 7.5 million Eastern Turkistanis. The influx promises to negate the cause of Tibetan self-determination. Rendering internal resistance negligible, it will reduce the efforts of the Dalai Lama and exiles to quaint, unrealistic claims by the turn of the century. Within two to five years, however, a point of no return may well be crossed in Tibet itself. The infrastructure that China is currently building will then be ready for a truly massive migration to commence, far surpassing Mao Tse-tung's 1952 projection of 10 million Chinese in Tibet. As a recently returned Western aid worker commented, "Tibet is finished."

While China's reforms began primarily as a means to improve international opinion and placate the Dalai Lama, they have proved their true worth in supporting the present policy. Tibetan discontent has been superficially appeased; Chinese immigration facilitated. Briefly, what have the reforms been?

Reforms

Since 1977 the quality of life in Tibet has changed considerably. The daily political meeting, now held under the auspices of newly created shangs, or people's organizations, has been reduced to two hours once a week. Only one member per family need attend and rather than thamzhing or struggle session, absenteeism is punished by a \$2 fine. For the first time since the revolt, freedom of movement has returned. Previously people living in adjacent sections of Lhasa had not seen each other in almost twenty years. Now, permission for travel outside a ten mile radius is required, but readily given. Leaving Tibet however, is not so easy. Dispensation is granted on a one-time only basis: family members remain behind as guarantors of the

individual's return. After much agitation, the Chinese have permitted Tibetan street names to be placed above those in Mandarin in major cities — nevertheless only in sections visited by tourists. Tibet has received television and though principally filled by mainland broadcasts, it has given the country its first glimpse of the outside world. Finally, the prison population has decreased significantly.

Economically, the reforms have been more sweeping. There has been no famine reported in Tibet since the start of the eighties — though malnutrition remains endemic. In 1980 the autonomous region imported over 30,000 tons of food and the per capita income was \$75 making it one of the poorest areas on earth. To amend this, three years after taxes were suspended, communes were disbanded and with them production quotas, work points and the ration system. Land was distributed to individuals on a fifteen year deed, livestock for five to ten years. Tools were made available for lease from local collectives and free-markets implemented. In June, 1984, tax exemption was extended to 1990, while gradually land deeds were upgraded from thirty to forty years — double the length of those in the rest of the PRC. By 1985 the average per capita income had improved 40% to \$110 per annum. Nonetheless, according to some accounts 70 of the autonomous region's 75 counties still have incomes below \$63 a year per person — a third of the national average. Where improvement has taken effect however, the common Tibetan, besides having enough food, can now manage a change of clothes, proper bedding, often a radio or bicycle and among the most affluent, in the cities, a television or motorbike. In 1986, state subsidies — currently running around \$300 million a year — still accounted for 98% of Tibet's budget.

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The most visible area of reform has been in reviving Tibet's culture, utterly proscribed heretofore. By September of last year the Chinese government claimed 160 monasteries had been restored with more than 400 others still in progress. A year earlier China Daily reported that 200 tons of "relics" had been salvaged from the mainland and returned to Tibet. Thirty-two tons, gleaned from five provinces were, in fact, trucked back to Tibet, according to the lama who located and shipped them. At the three principal monasteries in Lhasa — Drepung, Sera and Ganden, there are now 900 monks. One to two thousand more exist nationwide. Dialectical debate, the principal means of instruction, is practiced and a number of pecha or scriptures are gradually being re-published. Photographs of the Dalai Lama, though collected from visiting Tibetans at the border, are permitted and on his last visit to Tibet, the Panchen Lama was allowed to lead Monlam Chenmo — the Great Prayer Festival — in Lhasa, for the first time since 1964.

The collective reaction of Tibetans to these changes has been one of immense relief. Coupled with fear of a return to the old policies, it has resulted in a desire to remain inconspicuous and complacent. This is precisely what China had hoped for.

Portraying its intent as solely beneficent Beijing claims that its immigrants are "skilled labor" sent to develop Tibet for the Tibetans and then leave. Reports from every area however, indicate the opposite. Rather than being "engineers" and "contractors" as they are termed, the settlers are young, poorly educated men, encouraged to intermarry and settle down in small business or farming. They are drawn by the prevalent unemployment in China proper, interest-free loans that

need not even be repaid, guaranteed housing and jobs and the dream that Xizang, or the Western Treasure House, will prove their El Dorado. Incentives for educated professionals include three-year renewable contracts featuring double the mainland's salaries, five working hours a day and home-leave every eighteen months.

What do these new immigrants think of Tibet? They hate it. It's cold, barren, barbaric. There are no vegetables, no rice paddies and in central Tibet barely any trees. You can see them coming in with bags of cabbage on the buses and literally brawling for tickets out. But rather than indicate an eventual slackening in immigration, this phenomenon is a transient one. As they have in every other border region, the Chinese colonizers will one day make the Tibetan highlands home. And when they do, like other pioneers, they will be tenaciously possessive of what they consider theirs.

Unemployment

What effect has the influx had on Tibetans? The immediate result has been massive unemployment. Automotive repairwork, tailoring, carpentry, masonry, the economic niches which raised the region's living standards in the early eighties, have vanished. Even construction jobs have been lost; 30,000 workers in Lhasa's 16 labor units were replaced by Chinese in 1985 alone. In urban areas, a solely Chinese economy has sprung up, including restaurants, beauty parlors and hotels. There is only one Tibetan-owned corporation in Tibet, Snow Mountain Ltd. The few other Tibetan businesses, mainly restaurants and petty trading outfits, cannot compete with their Chinese counterparts who rely on major start-up capital, wholesale purchases from the

mainland, and are able to pay the ongoing bribes to officials which have attended the free market reforms. As a tight-knit social and economic class, the Hui, or Chinese Muslims, in particular, have created a major challenge to Tibetan livelihoods. Hence, unemployment is rife, spawning a growing class of beggars.

What's it like if you're a Tibetan lucky enough to get a job removing debris from mining, doing road repair, sweeping or pig-feeding in a Chinese compound? You're likely to get one to two yuan a day — about 70 cents. What's your paycheck if you're a newly arrived Chinese immigrant? To begin with, you'll receive a guaranteed supplement of \$12 a month, issued, the government states, to meet your need for a healthier diet in the trying altitude. That's on top of free furniture, household items and clothing.

When you arrive at your job, you're a "professional from the mainland," so you'll be given a title, mainly denied Tibetans, such as "master stone-mason" or "master-carpenter." With the title comes the designated salary, far in excess of what a Tibetan receives. In many instances, overt economic discrimination exists as well. Jobs will be announced along with a \$2 application fee. Four or five hundred applications will be accepted from the legions of unemployed Tibetan youth, then it will be stated that only 20 positions are available. For the rest, there's no refund. Since the disbanding of the communes in 1983, farmers can keep whatever profit they make, nevertheless, it must be deposited in the People's Bank, where withdrawals are subject to State approval. Moreover, since 1985, a three hundred percent inflation rate, produced from shortages in basic commodities incurred by the influx, has been wreaking havoc for Tibetans.

The most visible sign of these discrepancies lies in the old-town/new-town look of modern Tibet. Virtually every Tibetan town is ringed by large Chinese suburbs. Typically, these consist of walled compounds containing new housing, with five to ten-story apartment buildings rapidly going up in Lhasa and the larger cities. Running water and enough power for heating is supplied. Workers bike or drive to offices and shops, also in Chinese sectors, conduct all business in Mandarin, and rarely venture into the Tibetan section. By any standards, these old towns are still, a decade after the Cultural Revolution, slums. Only those areas set aside for tourists, such as the new restoration village-style square before the Central Cathedral in Lhasa have been refurbished. The rest, throughout the country, are comprised of weather-beaten housing, riddled by leaks, generally unserviced by running water and where electricity does exist, despite Chinese statistics of 175 million kilowatt hours region-wide, it is rationed to Tibetans for only three or four hours each evening. On one of Tibet's most heavily travelled roads, between Lhasa and Shigatse, the point is well illustrated — though electricity runs the length of the road, it is diverted only where new towns appear — Tibetan villages, without Chinese, are passed by.

In 1984 the PRC launched 43 projects costing \$160 million to upgrade the autonomous region. Looking at how basic human resources are allocated in Tibet, it's plain that none of these endeavors, as China claims, is for Tibetans. Rather, they constitute the foundation for ongoing immigration.

Health Care

What happens if you get sick in Tibet today? If you're a Tibetan in Lhasa, you'd want to go to the best facility in the country, the People's Hospital. It has 262 doctors for 530 beds. Unless you're a cadre in Chinese employ, however, it's unlikely that you'll be admitted. This hospital is primarily for Chinese. Your hospital is the First Workers Hospital. It has 150 beds, no out-patient clinic and only 17 doctors. In Shigatse and Gyantse, you'd be admitted to the local hospital, but first which of the eight-odd class designations you possess will be checked and only then will your treatment — what ward you are placed in and what medicines you receive — be decided.

What about the countryside? Lhasa has an anti-epidemic station charged with combating measles, whooping cough, TB and flu throughout the region. The physician in charge is eager to start the nutritional program, though she complains her unit is too small. She has eighty doctors: one for every fifty-thousand people. Each of the TAR's 75 counties has a hospital, under which there are generally four so-called "regional hospitals," beneath which are clinics for every two thousand Tibetans. What are these facilities like? Take Da Tze County, population 21,000, not in a remote area but directly adjacent to Lhasa. The county hospital has only twenty beds. It has no operating table, no gynecological equipment, no disinfectants. The "regional hospitals" beneath it, are one-room facilities staffed by a single physician. There are no exam tables, no medicine cabinets, no phone. The doctor must be summoned in person, whereafter he'll visit the patient by bicycle or horse-drawn cart. Of the 18 local clinics in Da Tze County, practically none have even bandages or

syringes. At best, some antibiotic or TB medicine is available. As a result of the almost total dearth of modern health care in Tibet, Tibetans continue to rely on Tibet's traditional medicine, as they have done for over a millennium.

China adamantly denies the existence of forced abortion or sterilization in Tibet. It has supplied written statements to this effect directly to the Tibetan government-in-exile. In reality, the widespread practice of both, common during the Cultural Revolution but suspended in the late seventies, recommenced in 1981-82. For the masses, two children is the official limit. For the 40,000 Tibetan cadres, one. What is the fine for having a third unapproved child? 500 yuan, or \$200 — twice the per capita income. As this is unpayable, what actually happens to a woman giving birth to a third child? In Chamdo, three, four and five month old fetuses are routinely thrown out in the garbage bins and storm drains of the Chamdo Public Welfare Hospital. Since 1980 there have been an estimated 600 forced abortions there. At the Gyantse People's Hospital, which has a separate department for sterilization and abortion, the figure is eight procedure a day. Many of these children, as at Lhasa's hospitals, are already full term.

The scenario is identical across the country. A Tibetan mother arrives at the hospital to give birth. She is asked for her pass, issued by her local administrative unit, granting permission for the child. When it is not forthcoming she is allowed to go through labor, and often hears the newborn cry, only to revive and be told the infant died. The universal method is by injection. In many cases, the bereaved mother will then be informed that she has also been sterilized. In Amdo, Chinese health teams have been reported collecting mothers of

two children by the truckload for forced sterilization. They also operate directly in the fields. Finally, it is common knowledge throughout Tibet that all new medical procedures and instruments are employed on Tibetans first, in order for Chinese doctors to be trained in their use. These acts are not to curtail China's population. In thinly populated Tibet, they are clearly political in nature. Life expectancy in the PRC as a whole is 65 years. In Tibet, it's 40. The infant mortality rate in Tibet is one child in every six.

Education

As deprived of physical well being as the Tibetans are, their mental condition, particularly that of the younger generation, is even more disturbing. Whatever future Tibet may have lies in the education of its young. This is being systematically denied them.

China says there are 6,000 primary schools, 74 middle schools and three institutions of higher learning in Tibet. The third exile delegation, however, sent to investigate educational standards, encountered "school" after "school" artificially created from a few tables, chairs and assembled children prior to its arrival. Many children did not even know the Tibetan alphabet. This isn't surprising, as 70% of all Tibetans are still illiterate. China has admitted this. By way of remedy, it has sent 17,000 children to nine provinces for three years of schooling. Unlike the 1,200 Tibetan students in the four National Minorities Institutes, who, living in large groups, have maintained their identity, these children are being scattered in small contingents of 30-40. The plain intent is to sinocize them for cadre work in the future. And that is the intent, as well, of education in Tibet.

In Tibet, only 44% of the school children are Tibetan. Of these, only one in five completes primary school. The rest are withdrawn by their parents, out of necessity, for field work.

The child who does manage to finish school, though, hardly emerges with what could be considered a proper education. Chinese and Tibetan children are segregated. Chinese classes often outnumber Tibetan ones and, as Chinese officials are uncompromising in regard to their own children's educational standards, they invariably receive the best teachers and facilities. The Tibetan child studies Mandarin, Marxism, maths and physical education. Within this system, the recently granted permission to study Tibetan language has, practically speaking, proved useless. As a Tibetan student's second language, it eliminates the all-important study of English. That is taught exclusively to Chinese, who can then go on to higher technical training dependent on it at university level. In addition, in Tibet itself, textbooks, exams and future employment are based not on knowledge of Tibetan, but on reading and writing in Chinese.

The higher you go in the educational system, the more plain this becomes. In 1979, Chinese publications claimed that 600 students from Tibet were enrolled in institutes of higher learning. They neglected to mention that out of these, only one in ten were actually Tibetan. In 1984, of the 2,000 student's in Tibet's own three top schools, two-thirds were still Chinese. How about the University of Tibet itself, newly built in Lhasa? A Chinese guide will proudly point out that twice as many Tibetans attend the University as Chinese. What he won't say is that more than half of them have been forced into the so-called Tibetan Studies Department or

the study of Tibetan Medicine. That means only one Tibetan out of every six students at the University of Tibet gets a modern education. There are 16 students studying English at the University. Two are Tibetan. There are approximately 17,000 Chinese students in American Universities. There are three Tibetan students in the United States from Tibet. They all came out under delicate circumstances and none had the support of the Chinese government. China itself, last year, produced its first Tibetan Ph.D., a thirty-eight-year-old "former serf," now a cultural anthropologist.

So what has become of Tibet's best and brightest young men and women? Those not lucky enough to get an accounting job in a Chinese office or employment as a phys-ed instructor in a primary school are literally on the streets. For the first time in Tibet's history, there is a "lost generation." They're bitter, depressed and, with all opportunity denied them, lazy. China has fostered this underclass mentality by the introduction of video parlours and the wholesale importation from Szechuan of rot-gut liquor. Called san jiu and bai jiu, these fluids are used by less impressionable Tibetans for fuelling propane stoves. Chinese administrators in Lhasa frequently point to derelict Tibetan youth by way of explaining their unsuitability for employment. Not only is the immensely sophisticated scholastic and artistic heritage of Tibet unknown to the Chinese, it is now unknown to the Tibetans. Among the 1.2 million dead were the majority of Tibet's intelligensia. How capable are those remaining, particularly in the monkhood, of resurrecting Tibet's unique identity?

Religion

To begin with, it should be made clear that only a handful of the hundreds of monasteries being rebuilt in Tibet have been financed by China. The majority are being reconstructed by Tibetans who pool labor and capital, then apply to the Bureau of Religious Affairs for permission to build. On completion, though, the same bureau takes over the reopened monastery's administration. It sets a quota for monks, who must be 18, politically "correct" and, according to various reports, as uneducated as possible. It then appoints the abbot and sets the daily schedule. An "abbot" in Tibet today often does not hold vows. He monitors his monks through a network of informers, reports regularly to the Chinese, and sees that following the designated study period in the morning, the rest of the day is relegated to enterprise. What is the endeavor at hand? Tourism.

Making a business of belief is, in fact, the highest aim of religious "freedom" in Tibet. Not only do the admission and photo fees charges commercialize faith, they intentionally demean the monks, particularly in the eye's of Tibet's younger generation who cannot help but view them as parasitical. The phenomenon is exemplified at Kum Bum, Amdo's largest monastery. There, visitors are required to buy six tickets after which they join hundreds of Chinese tourists who are smoking, playing radios and gaily following the large painted numbers over the six Lhakhangs or temples that are on display. You can pose for a photo with an old monk or dress up first in one of the ubiquitous imitation Tibetan robes for rent, that have become the emblem of Chinese tourists in Tibet. Meanwhile, the actual monks, who are combined janitorial and acting staff for this living diorama, struggle before doors open in the morning and

after they shut at night to debate and memorize for the seven-class, 20-year curriculum leading to the doctorate degree in Gelugpa monasteries.

The assault on Buddhism's essence, its highly rationalist ethos, is especially targeted at the masses. Prior to 1959 Tibet was the most religious nation on earth, not only because one-quarter of the male population was in the clergy but because it preserved the entire corpus of Buddhist literature and liturgy, received piecemeal elsewhere in Asia. With that came one of mankind's oldest monastic and academic traditions. But today, in Tibet, Buddhist teachings and initiations are proscribed: prostrations and reciting mantras are permitted. As a result, a nation-wide facade, like that in the monasteries, has been created. The symbols survive, the substance is gone. The effect is to make Tibetans look like a backward, superstitious race bowing down in blind faith before demonic idols - exactly what the Chinese Communist Party wants for both internal and external consumption. Only the Tibetan Buddhist Association, dependent for its effectiveness on constant intervention by the Panchen Lama, is engaged in re-printing scriptures.

Beijing's intent is most apparent in the recent law banning the discovery of incarnate lamas, the holders of the faith, after 1959, as well as in May, 1986 edicts, prohibiting lamas from abroad from visiting. Finally, as regards the state of the rest of Tibet's ancient culture, last December's double bill at the newly-opened Tibetan Dance and Drama Theatre in Lhasa sums it up well enough: a Kung Fu movie and "The Life of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen."

Prisons

On September 1, 1985, China celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Tibet Autonomous Region's founding. A year of preparation concluded in a half-hour ceremony after three bombs were found, one in the post office and two at the site of the celebration, Triyue Trang Stadium. In 18 hours of overnight labour, a cardboard-and-wood grandstand was built below the Potala for Li Peng, Hu Qili and the other dignitaries. The parades and entertainment events, for which the city had rehearsed flag and flower waving for months, were cancelled, the ceremonial dispensation of 90,000 digital clocks and 10,000 meters of silk eschewed. After the celebration and a brief sporting event, only the fireworks display, in which the PLA set off explosives around the Potala, went on.

Is China frightened of Tibetan dissidents? Prior to the anniversary, 12,000 troops were trucked to Lhasa from Kongpo, 3,000 from Nagchuka. Police from the surrounding districts were assembled for plainclothes work. Two hundred Public Security Bureau intelligence specialists were flown in from Beijing. After banning the previously invited foreign press, many of the foreigners in Lhasa were sent out, the city itself was sealed, checkpoints were established on every major thoroughfare, a 9 to 7 curfew was imposed and 90 suspected dissidents were arrested for interrogation. Despite underground leaflets scattered on the street, faeces smeared on the doorknobs of Chinese officials and the three bombs that didn't go off, nothing else happened. China's reaction was huge: the Tibetan underground's acts miniscule. The explanation for the latter lies in one word: prisons.

It's extremely difficult to get an exact figure on the prison population of Tibet. The best estimate, however, reveals that in the Autonomous Region's 75 district and five divisional prisons alone, there may well be between ten to twenty thousand Tibetan inmates. How many of these are political prisoners? Given prevailing conditions in Tibet, one could make a case for all of them. Those arrested for anti-state activity, though frequently labelled as common criminals to obscure their status, number roughly three to four thousand.

The chief prison in the autonomous region is Sangyip, just north of Lhasa. In Sangyip's Brigade #5 there are two thousand Tibetans, the overwhelming majority, political dissidents. Tasungkhang is Sangyip's solitary confinement wing. It is reserved almost exclusively for counter-revolutionaries. There are about 400 there right now. In Drapchi Prison, a few minutes drive from downtown Lhasa, the inmate capacity is roughly 1,500; again, as these two prisons are for offenders from all over Tibet, Drapchi is for political prisoners. The five divisional prisons, with capacities around 200 each, are also for political prisoners. How can this be ascertained? Because a political crime, no matter what it's called, frequently carries a heavier sentence than theft, rape, or even murder. Those with longer sentences are sent to the large, central prisons. In the past, prison terms for dissidents were generally ten to twenty years. Today, the average term begins at eight years.

Life in Tibet's prisons is characterized by unremittant labor, regular interrogation sessions in which the prisoner is beaten, ineffective medical care, borderline rations of black tea and barley and an ongoing death toll, resulting from harsh conditions. Prisoners sleep on the floor, are chained at night and only have bedding if

family members donate it. Informants keep inmates wary of one another and even when a prisoner's term expires he will often not be freed. Instead he'll become a *lemi-ruka*, a part-time prisoner. He lives in a compound outside the prison, is permitted to go home one day a week and for the rest, continues in hard labor on whatever project he's detailed to. He's got a permanent "black hat," as the Chinese call it, on his head.

It's frequently mentioned that there are approximately 1,500 jailed dissidents in the Soviet Union. The assessment of 3 - 4,000 political prisoners, it should be made clear, applies to only one-third of Tibet - the autonomous region. The Chinghai Gulag, home to millions of Chinese prisoners, undoubtedly houses many Tibetans as well. To date, Amnesty International USA has publicly adopted three Tibetan prisoners, including Tibet's most famous dissident, the Buddhist monk Geshe Lobsang Wangchuk, currently serving an 18-year term in Sangyip.

Tibet's present state is perhaps best described by a single comparison. The prisoner-to-guard ratio in the region's larger prisons is one soldier to every four inmates. Outside the prisons, there is one soldier for every ten Tibetans. As a result, many Tibetans feel that Tibet itself is one large prison.

Public executions of counter-revolutionaries have occurred regularly since 1959. Prisoners are brought before a large crowd, vocal cords tied so they can't denounce their captors, arms bound behind their backs. After their crimes against the people have been recounted, a bullet is delivered to the rear of the skull. When relatives collect their son or husband's body, they are charged \$5 for the bullet's expense. Though preva-

lent in China proper, as well as in Tibet, these spectacles serve as vivid reminders of the ultimate price of opposition.

The last wave of such executions, both public and within prisons, took place during the spiritual pollution campaign in 1983. At that time an estimated three to four thousand dissidents were arrested nation-wide and dozens executed. Last February in Lhasa, two Tibetans were executed for "serious economic sabotage," a frequently employed pretext for the punishment of political prisoners. Three more were sentenced to die and 30 were given terms at hard labor. If the current political climate worsens in China, one can expect an even more stringent crackdown in Tibet, where party cadres are characteristically covetous of control and eager to impose it. This they do, as they have since the invasion, through the army.

Military

Fifteen PLA divisions watch over Tibet. Including six elite Hri divisions, present to prevent revolt in the regular troops, the 200,000 soldiers garrison not just the border with India but every major town in the interior. They have converted the plateau, previously a buffer state between the globe's most populous nations, into a principal anchor of China's defense. Tibet's militarization includes 17 secret radar stations, fourteen major airfields, 20 airstrips, vast underground bases riddling the east and west sectors of the Himalayan front and behind them, the ultimate arbiter: one quarter of the PRC's 350-strong nuclear force, including 70 medium-range and 20 immediate-range missiles, based 165 miles north of Lhasa at Nagchuka. With an ICBM base in Kongpo Nyitri and another at Powo Tamo,, the PLA

today holds twenty of India's largest cities nuclear hostage from Tibet. India has paid a heavy price for Nehru's dream of "mutual co-existence." On the northern front as well, China has backed up its famous Lop Nor installation by a second nuclear base, less vulnerable to Soviet assault, outside Golmo in Amdo.

Perhaps it is also worth mentioning that the 24 S-20 Sikorsky helicopters, modified for high altitudes and mandated by the United States Congress for civilian use, recently sold to the PRC, were employed, illegally, to drop Chinese troops behind Indian lines during last year's skirmishes in Arunachal Pradesh. Despite six rounds of border talks to date, between India and China, the long Himalayan front remains highly unstable. Last November, a number of Indian jawans were killed in a skirmish north of Sikkim's Nathula-la Pass, and for the past year there have been increasing admonishments in Tibet's local shangs to prepare for war. There seems little doubt that a reenactment of the 1962 border war will soon take place. For this and the chronic instability that may ensue, the PRC's population transfer is immediately required.

The first achievement of the influx will be to relieve the PLA of its police duties in Tibet. It's 37-year investment, locking China's "back door" - its long western border - while driving a wedge between Asia's two other giants, India and the Soviet Union, will be secure, Beijing's original strategic goal attained.

Politically, the Tang or party's greatest deficit - failing to develop reliable Tibetan communists - will be obviated. The few figureheads currently in place, backed by local cadres, will see the modicum of influence they exert evaporate, as Tibet becomes a truly Chinese domain.

Development

The new Chinese community however, will have its greatest impact on Tibet's economic output. China's occupation has shown a profit in lumber as well — according to one estimate — up to \$80 billion gleaned from a millenium of Tibet's accumulated wealth. This stands against the \$2.7 billion the PRC often cites as its expenditure on the region. However, besides easily tapped and exhausted resources, there has been no other revenue. Tibet's budget continues to run almost 100% in the red. Wool remains the autonomous regions major export, as it has always been. The leather tanning factories of Kanze and Ngapa in Eastern Kham do a brisk trade in yak-skin bags, jackets and shoes. Lhasa has a farm equipment factory. Kongpo Nyitri, the planned industrial capital of Tibet, saw, paper, and woollen mills, a match factory and dairy plants. The rail-head at Golmo is the staging point for 80% of Chinese goods imported into Tibet. It moves nothing but medicinal herbs, blankets and slaughtered livestock out. What it hopes to be shipping and here is where Chinese immigration will help - is oil, uranium, gold, lead, chromium, and tungsten, in short, the 40% of China's verified mineral reserves recently found on the plateau and often cited as integral to the four modernizations. With a proper infrastructure and sufficient foreign investment, via the newly created Tibet Development Aid Foundation, China still sees a bright future in Tibet.

There is also a substantial opportunity for Tibet's new urban communities to support themselves.

Tourism

In 1986, 30,000 tourists passed through Lhasa, up from 1,500 five years ago. Beijing's target of 100,000 a year by 1990 seems well within reach. 32,000 Chinese, half of Lhasa's workforce, are already working in the city's service sector, running hotels, transport, shops and restaurants. Six other towns have been targeted for the tourist trade and an air link has opened from Kathmandu.

A million and a half foreign tourists visited China last year, each spending an average of \$1,000. Next to Beijing and Xian, a fully developed Tibet will easily be the most frequented stop on the tourist route. There is little doubt that tourism will come to support much of the Chinese community in Central Tibet. Many Tibetans are gratified that foreigners are finally being permitted in. They are confident we will see the reality of Tibet and take out the message of its inalienable difference from China. Tibetan exiles are not so sanguine. As one of the community's more percipient members, Jamyang Norbu has recently written "A holiday in Tibet is subsidizing the eventual extinction of the Tibetan race."

His view holds that as Westerners exult in the most rarified air on earth, or marvel at the Potala, seat to the exiled Dalai Lama, or enjoy Tibetans' native kindness beside their nervous Chinese overlords, they are unwittingly engaged in a tragic parody. A communist regime, selling the supposedly antique society its creed has pledged it to erase has cynically compelled Tibetans to enact, through the tourist trade, their own demise. The opposite view holds that by going to Tibet, tourists will help its plight be known as well as encourage the Chinese to preserve, superficially at least, its heritage.

In either case, tourism has injected a new, plainly political ingredient, into Tibet's reality.

Whichever party line, moderate or radical, emerges from China's current transition, it is plain that Tibet's future remains in extreme jeopardy. Less dramatic perhaps than invasion or revolt, the demographic shift, via its impact on every aspect of Tibetan life, may nevertheless end Tibet's tenure as a distinct member of the human family. Barring a dramatic shift in China's internal stability, Tibetan's principal hope remains international opinion and whatever check it can provide on Chinese policy in Tibet.



The U.S. Tibet Committee

Founded in 1977, the U.S. Tibet Committee is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, staffed by volunteers. The Committee's efforts are directed to providing the public with accurate information of the history and culture of the Tibetan people, and to monitoring the present violations of Tibetan human rights under Chinese military occupation.

The U.S. Tibet Committee has sponsored numerous lectures, film and video presentations and other events. Including the annual observances of March 10th — Tibetan National Day — some of our other accomplishments are:

1977-1979 — Led a successful campaign to change the "Place of Birth" listing on U.S. passports of Tibetan-Americans from "China" to the Tibetan city of birth.

1979 — Held a Conference at Columbia University, "Prospects for Self Determination in Tibet."

1980 — Led a successful international cablegram campaign to the King of Nepal seeking amnesty for imprisoned Tibetan resistance leaders.

1981 — Expanded U.S. Tibet Committee from a regional to a national organization.

1982 — Published a report titled "Chinese Human Rights Abuses in Tibet" compiled by the USTC.

1983 — Led a nationwide letter campaign to U.S. leaders urging a halt to mass arrests and executions in Tibet.

1984 — Sponsored the 25th commemoration of the 1959 Tibetan National uprising and ensuing "Year of Tibet."

1985 — Coordinated membership efforts to encourage signatures on a Congressional letter to PRC President Li Xiannian.

1986 — Published "Chinese Population Transfer and the Survival of the Tibetan Identity," a report by Michael van Walt.

1987 — Held a sold-out conference, "Lessons from Tibetan History and Culture," at Columbia University, co-sponsored by the Southern Asian Institute; The Tibetan National Day observances in New York and four other cities;

— Dissemination of a 3-page update on human rights violations in Tibet to some 4,000 people attending performances of a dance troupe from Lhasa in New York and California in late March.

— Coordinated a nationwide letter campaign to the U.S. Congress urging the passing of House Bill #5219 which condemns human rights abuses in Tibet;

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