

CHANGING PHASES OF CHINESE POLICY IN TIBET SINCE 1950

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Submitted by

S. Bokato Sema

**CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES
Centre for South Central Southeast Asian and Southwest Pacific Studies
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067
2000**

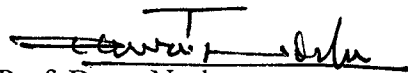
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School of International Studies
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
New Delhi-110067



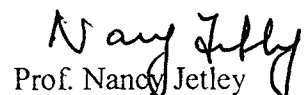
CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled "THE CHANGING FACES OF CHINESE POLICY IN TIBET SINCE 1950" submitted by S.Bokato Sema, Centre for South, Central, Southeast Asian and Southwest Pacific Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi, for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any other University.

This may be placed before the examiners for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.


Prof. Dawa Norbu

(SUPERVISOR)


Prof. Nancy Jetley

(CHAIRPERSON)



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Chapter I

Introduction

Ever since the Communist's take over of Tibet in 1950 the question of political identity of Tibet has posed a persisting problem and has endured to catch the attention of concerned sympathisers, political leaders, international lawyers and academicians especially political scientists. The Tibetan's plight had, to a good extent received international attention and it has found for itself the platform in many national, regional and international institutions on the issues of human rights, self-determination, autonomy and so on. It is quite remarkable that the prospects of a final solution has not yet seem to unfold in these five decades between then and now. In short Tibet (i.e., TAR, Kham and Amdo) is still under the controversial political umbrella of China and the silent official deadlock still continues.

Today Tibet represents a special illustration of a nation without a state. The Tibetan imbroglio is marked by a saga of a continuing resistance movement with eventful eruptions time and again by the people who feel the need for restoration of their right to exist as a people and nation, bestowed with the right to decide their destiny. These past five decades marks the period of Tibetan struggle for these rights ever since the Communist China occupied it in 1950.

Viewed from another angle, today, Tibet is a classic instance of a peripheral national minority, superimposed within a larger multi-nation

Chinese State, which has a dominant civilization and centralising tendency. Here, Tibet seeks to maintain its distinct cultural and ethnic identity against the backdrop of a mammoth Han-Chinese culture which seeks to homogenise its identity by swallowing up all minority nationalities (be it in Tibet, Xinjiang, Manchuria, Outer Mongolia etc) by means of dilution and assimilation – social and cultural. Here, one can observe the twin policies at work in parallel – firstly the politico-ideological force of a communist state and at another level the Han cultural hegemonisation seeking to steamroll all other cultural identities for all important goal of one homogenised Chinese nation state in the long run. The Tibetan case is not just a quest for freedom and self-determination embodied in a state-like political entity but also one of a struggle for survival of a people and culture – in other words a nation.

To stretch back to the historical antecedent before the 1950 take over of China over Tibet will be relevant albeit as a passing reference. Tibet has a distinctly rich and vibrant national culture designed by thousands of years of historical experience. It indeed has a place of pride in the Himalayan stretch with its distinct Buddhist religion – an import from ancient India, yet shaped in its own cultural space and time – two thousand years. Tibetan life and culture revolve mostly round this religion which has been a wellspring for their outlook and sustenance. The Tibetan societal (social) structure is also unique in its own ways. It had a structured kind of a society comparable with a feudal set up marked by distinct features. The institute of Lamaism (that too graded further) and the continuance of the aristocracy and the commoners continued

for hundreds of years. The relation between the three distinct classes were largely seen as symbiotic with each class playing a complementary role and these distinctions were rarely seen as exploitative by Tibetan commoners.

Also in the political realm, Tibet has hundreds of years of recorded historical relationship with neighbouring political entities. There was a time when Tibet was said to have a consolidated Tibetan Empire way back from 630-842 AD, where it existed side by side with the Tang dynasty of China (618-907 AD). From 842 till the dominance of the Mongols in 1247, Tibet knew no central authority. Again down the years, as in 13th century the Tibetan Shakya Lamas established a political-spiritual relationship known as the Cho-Yon (Patron-Priest relationship) with the then Mongol empire when the whole of China was under it. Tibet is said to have been a dependent state under the Mongol Yuan (1260-1368) and Manchu Ching (1644-1911) dynasties. But it existed outside the Chinese influence during the native Chinese Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It is noted that its relationship with Yuan and Ching had no bearing on Tibetan life or national identity. One notable fact is that after the Mongol Yuan Empire, Tibet and Manchu China also began to develop a 'Cho-Yon' relationship from 1639 that continued till mid 18th century. This unique symbolic relationship where the Dalai Lama was the spiritual teacher and guide of the Manchu Imperial which was complemented by the latter's support and protection. This relationship had no western parallel and also defines current international legal concepts. The concepts of subordination of one party to the

other were non-existent.¹ This relationship is misinterpreted by Communist China to gain ideological justification that Tibet was historically under China.

Also what can largely be seen as the spiralling effect of the 19th century great game in Central Asia led to a series of British expeditions in Tibet around the meeting points of the two centuries (19th and 20th century). As a result of the vicissitudes of changes in the international and national political landscape, Britain found herself as a guarantor of Tibetan self rule, thereby curtailing the claim of the then weak China over Tibet – which continued from 1912 till around the time of dismantling of its British India empire.

It is indeed an irony that what is seen as a historically enriching experiencing in retrospect i.e., Tibet relations with different ruling dynasties of China has, in this case turned out to be the very excuse which seem to provide a backbone of a claim as a historically sanctioned fact (of Tibet being a part of China by means of its historical interpretation). Here Tibet sees herself as a victim of misinterpreted history by China. But this seemed not to be a surprise considering that China had always coveted Tibet as the ‘treasure house’ of the western region.² Around 1949-50, for the communists a convenient moment and an ostensibly justifiable claim to Tibet merged and they grabbed the opportunity. Tibet was taken over.

Now a question can be thrown up as to whether Tibet has all but herself to blame for being-ill prepared to face the 1950 showdown. The answer seems

¹ Zahiruddin Ahmad, Sino-Tibetan relations in the Seventeenth Century, *Serie Oriental Roma* 40, 95-98, 157-59 (1970).

² Tsering Shaka, *Dragon in The Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947*, London: Pimlico Publishers, 1999, p.1.

to be in the affirmative. In a way Tibet's 'strengths' were its weakness. Tibet's strong adherence to its uniqueness, its spiritually centered life, the state of its rich and yet orthodox, self-contained culture and its refusal to look outside, interact and learn from others when the opportunities were unfolded before it were all in a way responsible for making her the prisoner of present history. It was widely recognised by scholars that Tibet was an independent state between 1911 and 1950.³ Even the last official Chinese representative in Tibet, Shen Tsung-lien, conceded that since 1911, Lhasa has for all practical purposes enjoyed full independence.⁴ The period 1912-50 of relative peace and independence in all spheres could have been a period of reflection and action. Tibet, after all by then, had come in touch with the realities of changing international and regional situations and therefore should have realised the need to open and update its collective consciousness of the world outside political, economic, defence, international relations and thereby meet the needs and requirements of time. Sadly, the Tibetan masses repulsed and treated with disdain anything seen as progressive and materialistic. Had the pragmatic and visionary ideas of XIII Dalai Lama been given wings, Tibet could have come out some steps further out of its self imposed seclusion.⁵ Tibet should indeed have tried to make an effort to tune herself to the requirements of the time

³ Tsung-lien Shen & Shen-Chi Liu, *Tibet and the Tibetans*, 1973, p.62

⁴ Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet: 1913-1951*, 1989. Also *International Comm'n of Jurists, Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic*, 1960 p. 5-6 and Hugh Richardson, *A Short History of Tibet*, 1962, p. 91-182.

⁵ Dawa Norbu, *Tibet: The Road Ahead*, New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997, p. 61

especially in terms of defining her claim to statehood in terms of power (defence) influence and interaction (recognition by the comity of nations) and at least procure important elements of a working nation state. But Tibet failed to measure up to these attributes satisfactorily on almost every count, which perhaps deprived her of an international personality status.

Also the lack of generally acceptable parameters in the past to express the relationships between political entities in a way has blurred the modern scholars conception of the truest nature of Tibet's historical relationship with its neighbours. This formally undefined relationship which were more of gestures and symbols among respective leaders and rulers culminated into a political ambiguity when the western political concepts of State, nation, sovereignty, suzerainty etc were interpreted into the situation. This one reason of trying to define the historical relation between Tibet and China crystal-clear fitting the now universal western concepts is the cause for 1950 military occupation of Tibet by China and also the reason behind the continuing deadlock for dialogue as a result of reference to the historical past.

The post occupation period itself has witnessed many eventful instances between Tibet and China. The Communist China which had supplanted the Koumingtang government had sought to revive the power and glory of China's past and make it a strong, modernised state under the guide of Communist ideology. In these five decades the level of engagement between Tibet and China had coursed through different phases. It has witnessed two diametrically opposite pulls working at large – the quest of China to usher in changes in the

name of revolution, 'progress' (and 'progressive outlook') and 'modernization' in Tibet as elsewhere and the Tibetan people's hostility towards any imposition in their culture and way of life and their continuing resistance to oppose anything Chinese – its people or culture.

It is as if the Chinese have reinterpreted what was to the colonial era the "white man's burden" as the burden of the Han Chinese to educate, uplift and liberate the ignorant and oppressed Tibetans in their (Chinese) own terms, whims and fancies.

It was a paradox that the Communists who took over Tibet posed themselves as the self appointed saviours and liberators of the common Tibetans from the clutches of the Western imperialists and their agents in Tibet in the form of its 'local' government which was plotting to resist it.

The Chinese tried to paint a positive picture of China during this phase of indoctrination by ostentatious show of awe and grandeur and the of party's "progressive" work and making tall promises of a rosy future for those Tibetans who seized the opportunity offered. They also took to cultural bashing of Tibetans culture while lavishly pronouncing the highest praise for the Chinese culture. It is ironical that the mass in Tibet, especially in the days of heady maosization in a way, were 'forced to be liberated (and free!) – very close to Rousseau's contradictory phrase.

Whenever there were any disapproval or sign of resistance to the spirit of revolution (termed as 'Splittists' and 'Reactionaries') it was swiftly and cruelly repressed. In the course of this period China put on images oscillating

between one of a benevolent anti-imperialist, liberalizing and progressive state while on the other extreme a to-be-dreaded, awed, feared and an invincible power. In other words if appeasement did not work then force and fear were to be applied in communicating with the Tibetans until they were assimilated by 'hook or crook' into the Chinese fold. A panorama of the four decades under study is attempted in the following pages.

At the heart of the Tibetan problem lies the ambitious effort of the communist forces that sought to stretch its wings of power and glory and establish a communist state ideologically, culturally and politically compact in all China. Tibet and other disputed areas like Xinjiang and Taiwan were to the enthusiastic communist, obstacles to realising these visions which could at best be tackled by a swift runover and incorporation by its forces followed by overall transformation in due course of time.

After what was largely a symbolic taking-over by the communist troops after bulldozing over pockets of opposing traditional Tibetan soldiers, China proposed what was known as 17 Point Agreement with Tibet. Seen as a transitional framework, to the Tibetan's it was an act of forced imposition under threat perception (under duress), as the Tibetan delegates who signed it remarked. What can also be cited, as a deliberate ploy to fracture Tibetan issue was evident in the way the composite Tibetan region was trifurcated as TAR (Tibetan Autonomous Region), Kham and Amdo. In the last two, the Tibetans were made minorities.

The first few years since 1950, did not witness any active and aggressive Chinese presence in Tibet (TAR). But gradually, the 'civilizing' and 'liberating' Chinese ideological missionaries began to filter in, making use of the institution of administrations and army. Few Tibetans were also employed to spread the communist ideology to indigenous Tibetans. This was a clear sign of Mao's policy of injecting the minorities with the ideas and culture of Han majority stream-lining their identity, albeit with the use of concepts of 'liberating' and 'modernizing' cliches. To get the desired results the over-zealous cadres used every means – threat perception, coercion, destruction of traditional structures that was seen as an obstruction towards this nationwide revolution. The very identity and life style of the Tibetans was threatened let alone the question of independence.

With the division of Tibet overriding its natural boundaries particularly from 1952 onwards the Chinese authorities in Tibet sought to reduce the role of religion and its exponents in Tibetan's social, cultural and political life around which their life and existence revolved. The cadres also sought to opt for suppression of any form of complaints or popular resentments rather than giving it consideration. In 1954, there were two factors which aided the Chinese's desire to bring about consolidation – physical as well as political. The first one was the successful completion of two important roads between Tibet and China. The second one was the diplomatic victory that China gained when in the same year, through the Indo-China Panch Sheel Agreement China's sovereignty over Tibet was expressly recognised by India. With these,

the gradual clipping of powers of the Tibetan local administration by means of shrewd political-administrative maneuvers was witnessed through which China was able to spread and deepen its political tentacles in Tibet (TAR).

The increasing resentment over the acts of commissions and omissions as practiced by what is seen as the occupational Chinese Authority in Tibetan inherited area rose to an unbearable degree and finally precipitated into an uprising in Lhasa in 1959. Pockets of largely disorganized Tibetan rebels which assumed the backing of the Tibetans population at large challenged the establishment of Chinese authority. The revolt of 1959 was not a well-planned out operation oriented to over throw the Chinese presence in Tibet. Rather it can safely be said that it was more of an outcome of an intolerable and futile expression against the Chinese policies in Tibet. This act of opposition posed before the Chinese authority, which also echoed the demand for Tibetan independence, was treated with outmost disdain and swiftly suppressed. It is of concern that in the process of suppressing the rebels, and punishing them, many people were either killed or prosecuted or humiliated on mere suspicion of being involved in the rebellion. Use of brute military force was complemented by use of propaganda, thereby branding the insurrectors as the "reactionary serf owner government" by the cadres, lending it a class character besides being branded as traitors to the "motherland". It can be said that the reaction of the Chinese authority over the rebellion was extreme, inflicting a large loss of men and property as well as cultural legacies. As a result of untold persecution thousands of Tibetans began to flee Tibet into neighbouring countries of India,

Nepal and other countries which expressed sympathy towards their cause and plight. It was in one of these great 'escapades' that the Dalai Lama XIV too, successfully crossed over to the Indian side of the border and was warmly accommodated at Dharamshala in India (Himachal Pradesh) the place where the present Tibetan Government-in-exile is situated. This overreaction was by the Chinese further intensified by disowning the provision of the 17-Point Agreement and calling for Tibetan integration within China, rather than guaranteeing genuine autonomy even under the limitation of the 17 Points Agreement. Looking back, the Chinese policy towards Tibet under Mao, was aggressive, marked by forced ideological proselytising unmindful of the wishes of the Tibetans for the sake of the mainland China, if not anything else.

The period of exemplary punishment through public condemnation and humiliation by means of so-called convictions by 'special' trial courts compounded by confiscation of wealth and destruction of a large number of monasteries not only disrupted the common lifestyle but also led to the loss of life, property and cultural wealth. As the punitive measures died down, the more assertive policy of what was titled as "education of the masses", started again. A sense of sinicization of the people's mind through the use of communist ideologies started actively on mass scale at times using some Tibetan agents fine-tuned towards their policy to achieve their desired results. Revolutionary policies like "three strikes and two reductions" were to be fed to the populace. This economic policy with the sole objective of enriching the "motherland" even at the expense of abject hardship and poverty of the people was the order

of the day. This policy drew a strong feeling of antagonism. At another level to repeal any sort of popular uprising the Chinese ideologues and cadres attempted to sow the seed of cleavages in the Tibetan society between the nobility and the common Tibetans. The nobility who were the traditional rulers since centuries back were criticised and charged on the contention that they are the exploitative and manipulative class. Although this policy did not cut much ice, the Chinese continued to expound the materialistic interpretation of Tibetan society on Marxian lines. The Chinese also attempted to draw the mentality of the highly spiritually-minded Tibetans towards the pull of materialism by every means. The package of “Eat less, produce more”, were thrust forcefully on the Tibetan peasants and they were made to work hard to the point of exhaustion while they were only provided enough food to keep their body and soul together. This emphasis on extremely frugal living snatched away all forms of enjoyment and extravagance which previously marked the festive occasions. The produce was sadly enough reaped by the ‘motherland’. It is noteworthy that even the highly dignified Lamas were made to grovel-sowing seeds and toil just like commoners. Even the nomadic Tibetans of the plateau regions had to produce overly-charged share of their animals and livestock towards the Chinese authorities. This is all what the highly acclaimed and promised democratic reforms had in store for the minority group like Tibet in China.

The flow of Mao’s Cultural Revolution in Tibet had the orientation of Han culture. As a matter of fact the Cultural Revolution was a period of cultural

destruction for Tibet's unique culture. To carry out this mission the zealous Mao's cadres followed a systematic policy of looting the monasteries of its wealth, destroying thousands of them (placed around 6000 in all), thereby stripping and looting it of most of its valuable items. All those things that represented the rampart of the old system and any other form of sacred objects like altars and prayer flags were destroyed and indulgent people publicly persecuted. Even the currency notes of Tibet, the Tibetan names of the places, their dress etc were to be made obsolete as well as their language. Any propagation of old order and ideas befitted exemplary punishment.

Still again, after the climax of the chaotic Cultural Revolution the campaign for communization was revitalised in the late 1960's. Here, nearly 90 percent of Tibet's counties were known to have been set up. The communes seemingly under the principle of voluntariness and mutual benefit were practically a coercive and all-inclusive one. It is said to have caused famine from 1963 to 1973 - a period of ten years in Tibet, along with other stated factors. The idea of enforcing the growth of select crops like wheat in place of the traditional barley led to drastic results, and the sufferers were the people.

A broadened perspective of international dimensions over the period speaks of the shrewdness and continuity of China's policy as far as Tibet is concerned. In the international level China had made an ample effort to neutralise the foreign connection of Tibet. China successfully bargained non-interference from India under the Panch Sheel Agreement in the 50's, after which only they boldly intensified aggressive Chinese policy in Tibet. In the

60's CIA connection which is said to have lent covert aid in arms and training besides moral support to Tibetans was tactfully put to an end when in 1972 US-China summit, the meeting between President Richard Nixon and Mao Tse-tung liquidated all sorts of support US had for Tibet especially one extending beyond moral support by means of an agreement running on the lines of Panch Sheel.

The period from 1972 saw some signs of liberalization effort in China. The "four freedoms" were offered to Chinese citizens – freedom to worship, to buy and sell property, to lend and borrow with interest and to hire labourers or servants. Restoration of a few religious monuments in Tibet was witnessed. But noteworthy liberalisation actually took place only in the post-Mao era from 1979, onwards. It may be also added that after many years, the foreign visitors mostly journalists were allowed to visit Tibet, which was, prohibited during the Cultural Revolution. This marked the policy of openness which was inaugurated by Deng Xiaoping.

The period from 1979 onwards to the 80's, under the leadership of Deng Zaoping witnessed some elements of liberalisation and modernisation in Tibet. This new policy under Deng sought to bring about a socialist construction known as the "Four modernisation" which were agriculture, production, industrial production, military defense and science and technology. The brainchild of this venture was Deng himself. This reform programme labeled as "second revolution" affected positive changes in Tibet too. It was under Deng

that China, after its rethinking, sought to follow a path of benevolent treatment towards Tibet, which was seen as the victim of the extreme policies of the past.

Under Deng's special interest, Tibet during this period experienced a measure of calmness and freedom in practicing her religious and cultural freedom. The economic development which was noticed in Tibet too and this led to a relatively better living standard for the people of TAR. This period in the 80's also opened a space for dialogue. It is noteworthy that in 1979, for the first time, Beijing initiated a call for dialogue with the exiled Tibetan leader, Dalai Lama XIV, though the differing viewpoints rendered it impossible to find a feasible solution then. The Tibetan leader continued to initiate the possibility of a dialogue in 1987 (Five point peace plan) and in the Strasbourg proposal of 1988. But lately, and till today China had shied off from the negotiating table. In retrospect, China's benevolent overtures as shown under Deng reflects policy swings to ultimately quell the feeling of animosity and put on end to the "splittist" activities. In this respect the idea is not a complete break from Mao's original idea of one China, and Deng's policy, though one touching on moderation and pragmatism still follow the same framework of his powerful predecessor Mao.

In this dissertation an effort is made to project this swings of policy imposed by China, within the first four decades (1950-90) in the light of the important historical events. The important periods taken as phases – five in number are treated as separate chapters (Chapter II to VI). In a way the five

phases also projects five different faces of China witnessed in Tibet. The chapters are as follow:

- I. Introduction
- II. Honeymoon Period (1951-58)
- III. 1959 Revolt and Chinese Response: State Violence
- IV. Cultural Revolution and Maosization of Tibet (1967-1976): The Chinese Cultural Policy.
- V. Deng Xiaoping's Liberal Reforms (1976-83): Economic Policy, and
- VI. The Period of Dialogue: (1978-90) Conclusion

A comparative study of four phases is also stressed upon to show, if at all, the extent of the perspective policy shifts in China's efforts to quell these disturbing pinpricks in Tibet and her efforts to contain diplomatic embarrassment and a tainted image outside.

Chapter II

Honeymoon Period (1951-1958)

The threshold years of the second half of the 20th century for Tibet was among the most momentous period of her history. This period sealed the fate of a nation which had hitherto possessed a high degree of essences of a working state albeit with rudimentary forms. This decisive period was marked by highly intricate if not confused and complex chain of facts and perceptions at work. It is also responsible for sowing the continuing contention and confrontation that exists till today. A capsulated picture of the events before the 17-Point Agreement was signed, as represented in the following lines seems not only helpful but also inevitable.

Tibet on the eve of the take-over by communist China's PLA (People's Liberation Army) was marked by a feeling of widespread apprehension and uncertainty. The Maoist's Communists forces (PLA) had, by 1949 driven the imperialist backed Kuomintang regime virtually out of all its strongholds in China to Taiwan and only pockets of its vestiges existed. Communism had won the day in China.

I. Tibet in Retrospect—The Immediate Antecedent to 1950 Takeover

The new regime which was riding high on its victory guided by communist ideology also visioned a strong, centralised consolidating power which would revive the height attained in imperial glorious past and at the

same time be a reckoning nation in the comity of nations. The PLA which was the engine behind this victory against the republicans (or nationalists) was to be used further to consolidate all these regions which Communist China claimed to be a part of China but then existed outside its political domain then – Tibet and Taiwan being examples of it. The Communist leaders were aware of the continuing contentious interpretations of the historical co-existence between Tibet and China under the Kuomintang. Yet it has to be understood that Communist China sought to integrate this peripheral region (Tibet) into its fold more enthused than its former regime (nationalists). They were ready to use force if need be for that end. To the Chinese Communists, Tibet was a part of China in need of liberation from both foreign imperialism and its own exploiting classes.¹ A retrospective look at the eventful period sound less convincing that Communists interests in Tibet as the Chinese claim was to liberate, educate, democratize and modernize the oppressed Tibetans from the yoke of “feudal serfdom”. In fact, the primacy of the geo-political domination and long term economic interest in the Tibetan plateau seemed to be the driving factor for the Chinese in Tibet. The belief that for Han Communists these unuttered interests was primary and defined its policy towards its inhabitants was indeed reinforced more strongly by subsequent historical events. The term “secondary imperialism” had been rightly used to describe Chinese action in Tibet.²

¹ Warren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations*, Colorado: West View Press, 1996, p. 279.

² Owen Lathimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 193.

To concretise their hold over Tibet, the Chinese were looking out for some elements of legitimacy to make their intrusion seem as something less than a naked act of imperialism, to which it was in theory opposed to. They sought to rest their legitimacy on the historical claim of its predecessor that Tibet was an integral part of China.

The historical Tibet-China relationship as far as Tibetans saw it was nothing more than chains of often symbolic gestures running on patron-priest nature of relationship. The driving point to them (Tibetans) is that Tibet had been a free political entity in actuality during the period under contention. The immediate policy that the Communists felt that it needed to pursue was to consider the possibility of persuading the Tibetans to accept the Chinese claim by making some concessions which will save them the express condemnation of being seen as outright aggression both within Tibet and to the international community which will mar the image of this new regime.

What was Tibet's immediate political status before the Communists set foot on it also needs to be understood in the light of the times. The inter-war period (between the two world wars) was a period in the immediate history where Tibet existed as a free political entity. From 1912 onwards, Tibet was placed under the coincidental patronage of the British and could exercise its independence within or without in its geo-politics. Tibet had its own government the Kashag which comprised the interest of the people. It is of course another question whether it had the capacity to act as a vehicle for progress or was just an institution to perpetuate the slow moving society. The

more important question would be as to why Tibet failed to impress upon China and more so other nation states about its existence as an independent political entity. Firstly, it has been noted that Tibet has all but herself to blame for the shortcomings that led to its bondage.³ Tibet indeed could have made use of this opportune time to endow itself with the attributes identified with modern nation state as contrast to her highly spiritualised institutions which is hardly identifiable with the philosophy, form and content of the conventional government of the nation states. Tibet basically was backward looking with other worldly outlook, isolated and a forbidden land. It was opposed to any form of change even if it were progressive. The visionary and realistic outlook of Dalai Lama XIII and other progressive minded aristocrats could not be attained.⁴

When the victories of the Communists were imminent and its possible repercussions on Tibet anticipated, Tibet began to tremble. Her army like other institutions was rudimentary in all respects and possibly only the mythical invincibility of Tibetan soldiers stood by its side. Tibet tried to avert this impending doom by all means. She tried to open herself up to the international community to which it had shied off previously, to garner support. It tried to appeal to the UN for recognition, looked to India, Britain and America for all possible help to safeguard its separate identity but to no avail. Apart from the three mentioned countries the rest of the world knew very less about its

³ Dawa Norbu, *Tibet: The Road Ahead*, p.61.

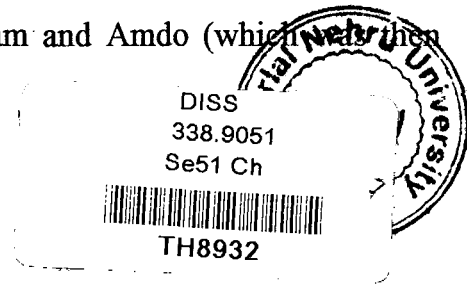
⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

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identity. Britain which gave up its British-India colony unilaterally passed on its old obligation to India regarding Tibet which newly born India was not willing to bear. America which had its interests for helping Tibet to oppose the spread of communism was advised against it by both Britain and India and could not afford to take any proactive policy in Tibet. All these potential supporters and sympathisers somewhat followed a hands-off policy. Under these desperate conditions, a last effort was to muster her own forces - ill equipped, ill-trained and inexperienced and not to speak of its undisciplined and uncoordinated force to resist the highly experienced equipped and disciplined PLA. It was only a matter of few months when the PLA occupied the eastern part of Tibet with least casualties in October 1950.

The communists PLA before they set foot in Tibet knew that Tibet was a delicate problem. Its adversary, the nationalists contributed their bid of anti-Communist image in eastern Tibet by highlighting its anti-religious ideology of the communists, which will, uproot their life and identity.⁵ The communist therefore had to follow a still more cautious policy in dealing with Tibetans. The communists therefore firstly tried to follow the policy of appeasement especially in winning over the ruling elite before they could display their positive image to Tibetans at large to this end. They created opportunities to broadcast their liberal religious policies and the common programmes in eastern Tibet region of Kham and Amdo. It may be recalled that the Chinese were able to consolidate some support in Kham and Amdo (which then

⁵ Summary of World Broadcast, (BBC), 1950, No. 51, p.7.
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outside the Tibetan government's administration) and were actually building up military strategy around Tibet as an alternative step in case of the need to use military means.

With the failure of an expected solution between Tibet and China in New Delhi between the two groups of delegations (Tibet and China), China began to take a more coercive posture. The Tibetans were threatened with a harsher deal if China was to be forced to use force. Great tension prevailed among the people and the Tibetan government. The communist had hinted upon the use of mighty strength of PLA (which it probably could have used) when it learnt of Tibet trying to get tactics from foreign sources. At the same time the Tibetans were offered with a final proposal – the 17-Point Agreement. After serious discussions, the Tibetans finally opted for negotiations which at that time was perceived to be the best step.⁶

II. The 17 Point Agreement:

After a span of around a year since the Chinese invasion of Chamdo, many proposals come about from the Chinese side. The 17 Point which was ultimately accepted by the Tibetan delegation headed by Ngapo, a Shapas. The document was titled as “Agreement of the Central people's government and local government of Tibet on measures for peaceful liberation of Tibet.” The agreement came about in the light of the inevitableness of circumstances where

⁶ Ibid., p.15.

the Tibetans were left with no option but to accept the 17-point proposal.⁷ They realised that by any measure the 17-Point Agreement would be better than any imposed framework following a military occupation of the rest of Tibet. At first, reluctant, if not bitterly opposed to the agreement, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government (Kashag) were compelled to ratify the agreement in the event of the helplessness they found themselves in. All efforts to get external help be it from US, UK, India or even UN to repulse the impending aggression came to naught. It was after prolonged deliberation, the National Assembly (of Tibet) ratified the 17-Point Agreement on October that was earlier signed in May 23, 1951 in Beijing.

The 17-Point Agreement was a broad framework encompassing the guidelines that dealt with the implicit nature of Tibet's relationship with China. It outlined the special as well as common guarantees by the State for Tibetans as well as the rules regulations and obligations in running the administrations in Tibet.

The first two points concerned the obligatory need for Tibetans and the Tibetan government (local government) to 'return to the Motherland' (PRC) and thereby aid in driving out the foreign powers (imperialists) from Tibet and in consolidating the national defence. The third article dealt with the assurance to the Tibetans regarding their right to exercise the natural regional autonomy as formulated in the common programme of the Chinese Political Consultative Conference. The third, fourth and fifth articles guaranteed the status quo in the

⁷ Sakhya Tsering, *The Dragon in The Land of Snows*, Pimlico Publishers, London, 1999, p.45.

political system of Tibet as well as the relative “status, power and functions” of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Erdeni. The sixth point concerned with the safeguard of religious beliefs, custom and Lama monasteries as well as their income. The eighth point promised a gradual merger with the PLA to later become a part of the national defence of PRC.

The ninth point touching on spoken and written language and school education of the Tibetan nationality assured gradual development in accordance with the actual conditions in Tibet. The tenth point regarding the improvement of Tibetan agriculture, livestock raising, industry and commerce as well as people’s livelihood was to be realised in a step by step process.

The eleventh point allows the provision for the Tibetan (local) government to direct the reforms as and when felt needed by the people. The twelfth point assumed condonation to the so called pro-imperialist and pro-Kuomintang in the past and their assured continuance in office if they restrain from their earlier conspiracies.

The thirteenth point obligated the PLA to abide by all these mentioned policies and not in any way to act arbitrarily against the people. The fourteenth point passed all the external affairs of Tibet including trade and commerce to the Central People’s Government which shall be guided by concern for development, equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect for territory and sovereignty. Under the fifteenth point it is notified that administrative committee and military headquarters would be set up in Tibet under the Central

People's Government which will also have a space for Tibetan participation through selection to execute put this 17-Point Agreement.

Under the sixteenth article, all the expenses accruing out of the establishment of various administrative and military headquarters were to be funded by the 'Central People's Liberation'. The seventeenth and the last point conveyed the immediate entry into force of the 17-Point Agreement.

At the face value the provisions of the 17-Point Agreement seemed accommodative of the Tibetans interests, needs, sensibilities and values. It apparently carried the potential to contain the overlapping interests and wishes of both China and Tibet. But these broad outlines by themselves are by and large 'vague' and like any other such contracts were likely to be misinterpreted and manipulated at the level of implementation.

The agreement was later alleged to have been signed under duress as contended by the delegates.⁸ But it is also a fact that the Kashag and even the Dalai Lama gave approval to it. Perhaps more than just the inevitableness, the Tibetans thought that the 17-Point clauses had given ample guarantee to Tibet's autonomy within China where the monastic and aristocratic communities felt that their traditional privileges as well as Tibet's culture and way of life would be safeguarded. They optimistically expected the Chinese to exercise only a symbolic claim over Tibet and sincerely honour the pledge without manipulating this broadly defined outlines.

⁸ Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People*, New York: Potala Press, 1983, p. 87.

Also there were groups in Tibet who felt that the agreement could foster a state of peaceful co-existence between communist China and Buddhist China. Yet at the back of it all, it is also to be taken note that the common people were largely in the dark about the nature and content of the Agreement except the information that an agreement has been reached with the Chinese. To the common people who had immense faith in the traditional political and spiritual institutions that the agreement that was forged was accepted unquestioningly and expected was accepted to be the best interest of all under the helplessness rendered by the situation. Beyond this feeling of passive acceptance if not ignorance about it is true to say that what mattered most to them was the safety and perpetuation of their simple way of life and culture, and they were little bothered with the questions of international legal status.⁹ The 17-point agreement for one thing ended the independence that Tibet enjoyed since 1912 and Tibet was wedded to the communist China. This was the first formal agreement between Tibet and Communist China. It set the legal basis and to some extent the tone of Chinese rule in Tibet.

III. An Experiment for Co-existence: 1951-58

The seventeen-point agreement is a unique assurance given by the PRC to Tibet. It reflects the uniqueness of the relationship between China and Tibet which none of the other nationalities possess. Communist China as indicated, to a good extent understood the sensitivity and potential volatility of Tibet and

⁹ Dawa Norbu, 'Tibetan Response to Chinese Liberation', *Asia Affairs*, 62, (1975), p. 266-78.

felt the need to follow a restrained and cautious policy and not let its highly charged enthusiasm based on Marxist-Maoist change oriented ideology to stream-roll over Tibet in haste.

Under 17-Point Agreement, which was formally expressed as accepted (though reluctantly), China got the legal sanction which agreed upon Tibet being a part of China and set the tone for Chinese rule in Tibet.¹⁰ But at the same time its leaders understood that there indeed were many fundamental differences between the two societies which cannot be easily overlooked for all practical purposes. Besides China could feel even after the 17-Point Agreement that external shadows of international attention are cast on Tibet's terrain and any unanticipated flare up in Tibet will attract unwanted concern and eventually give China a tarnished image.

The theoretical Marxist ideal married with the cultural homogeneity (Han culture) which calls for dilution of identity of the minorities in China through cultural assimilation and political integration was the guiding light of Maoism in China. But it was also realised that the road to communism was a long one. The ultimate communist utopia had to pass through the intermediate phase of a socialist state. The highly 'backward' region like Tibet posed a problem for the Chinese. The Chinese communists also could foresee the possible counter revolution and disruption of progress if the programmes are seen as being forced upon especially in the light of the existence of so much a fear and distrust among the common people. Any semblance of change and

¹⁰ Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, p. 91.

progress has therefore to be introduced first by gaining the confidence of the people at large, imparting them the progressive knowledge and involve them in this transformation, however painstaking and prolonged the process may be. Perhaps because of this the Communist leaders thought it best to start by influencing the elite by dampening their fear of communism.¹¹ In other words they wanted to bring about a revolution from above – not with the masses for now.

The Chinese leaders possibly thought that when the Tibetans come to witness and enjoy the progress the Communist China had attained, it will gradually be attracted towards this material pulls and soften their religious orthodoxy. This perception led China to follow a posture of non-interference and isolation from Tibet's public life in the first few years while at the same time paving the way for change through road construction, engagement of trade with Tibet and spreading positive propaganda in less than subtle way. The strategy of active engagement with Tibetan upper class and rather passive attitude towards the commoners did not yield the anticipated result of creating a positive and conducive environment because of many reasons.

One reason is that the common people at large won't buy the propaganda that the Chinese Communist is in Tibet to 'liberate' Tibet. And yet in spite of the 'lack of appreciation' by Tibetans for many of China's 'concerned' efforts, and a generally apprehensive and hostile posture, it can be said that Chinese cadres in TAR had been more tolerant and patient in preparing

¹¹ Ibid., p. 35.

the ground for socialist transformation in this honeymoon period. They did not take any extreme or overtly coercive measures to carry their programmes however, intriguing they might at times have been otherwise at times. Some of their notable policies during this honeymoon period can be headlined as under: -

The Road Constructing Venture:

The Chinese soldiers began to spread out to the western and northwestern Tibet. These foot soldiers (infantry) set before them the task of setting up strategic posts around Tibet which ran parallel with the policy of linking up Tibet's different parts and with China as well by roads. This indeed proved to be a particularly wise decision on the part of the Chinese. Tibet's vast expanse running in hundred thousand miles, its hostile and largely barren terrain was a big challenge to the Chinese. The Chinese realised that if China was to exercise any real authority in Tibet firstly the physical handicap should be overcome. Otherwise China's presence in Tibet would probably not have been very different from the precious symbolic relationships. China then had to its advantage a strong disciplined PLA and enthusiastic and patriotic cadres who could dare to embark this large mammoth task. China realised that by linking Tibet motorable road transport and communication will flow easily, and with it the process of progress will set in. Also Tibet's security from within and without is secured by this. The process was set to motion very soon. Tibetans especially youth were lured to labour for working in this road and airfield construction venture by offering them high amount in silver dollars.

These labourers who were in thousands were at the same time fed with propaganda about the good will of CCP and Chairman Mao towards Tibet.¹² It is also related that the PLA soldiers appeared well disciplined and particularly conspicuous for their lack of misconduct towards the populace. Especially many young people were convinced of the goodness and magnanimity of the Chinese yet the old and the perspicacious had skeptical reservation about the whole thing and had inkling that the portents are dangerous.¹³

Here Mao's great leap forward was seen to be at play and 'progress' seen as synonymous with road construction. The highway project especially as two networks – the Chamdo-Lhasa Highway and their offshoots were constructed which served the strategic purpose with different networks. This foresight did proved fruitful especially in the 1962 war with India. What China could not achieve in the past i.e. the domination of Tibet materialised with the help of these link-roads.

IV. The Problem of Rise in Prices, Shortage of Food and Pressure on Environment:

The mass exodus of PLA soldiers and cadres in Tibet in the early 1950's involved in progress and security of Tibet gradually began to create problems on Tibet's fragile ecosystem and had economic and social repercussion. For instance the increasing demand of more food crops to sustain the increased

¹² Dawa Norbu, *Tibet: The Road Ahead*, p.106.

¹³ *Ibid.*

population disrupted the economic and ecological sustainability. The want of construction materials, fuel and other basic necessities tend to put a pressure on the sparse economic resource of Tibet. Despite their prohibitions against “taking a single needle and thread from the people,” the first PLA units to enter Tibet were forced to rely upon local resources for food and transport. The Chinese presence caused immediate and long lasting food shortages and inflation of food prices creating hardship for Tibetans, especially for the lower classes whose favour the Chinese had hoped to cultivate.¹⁴ The majority of the Tibetans who had assumed a hostile and skeptical posture towards the Chinese pressure to disturb their very life style and livelihood. The high prize the Chinese offered for the goods from the Tibetans to the clergy engaged in trade also in a way set off a visibly widening disparities and at the same time leading to price rise in Tibet. The Chinese also could feel the strain of huge economic investment it was making for progressive purposes. The cost of maintaining a large army was also taxing. The Chinese took remedial steps to check the outflow of money to Tibet and also to divert trade with India to China proper through regulation of trade across the border with India. Goods from China could now flow easily through the help of the roads and Chinese goods found good market in Tibet and many Tibetans began to develop a taste for things Chinese and even made efforts to emulate them.¹⁵ This shows that through the Tibetans at large had a negative perception probably arising out of fear

¹⁴ Warren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, p. 367.

¹⁵ Foreign Office (London), 371-99659: MR. 16 August, 1952

attributed to the past engagement yet especially the young and the appeased aristocrats were convinced to believe that being Chinese carried positive images – progressed, cultured, disciplined etc.

V. The Cost of Propaganda:

One remarkable fact about the Chinese in Tibet is an all round attempt to build up a positive image that will appear appealing as well as acceptable. There probably were active efforts to set up public utility services like hospitals, roads, modern education system etc. But it also served other unrelated purposes. The network of link road which was held synonymous with 'progress' was also produced a stronghold for the Chinese presence in Tibet – beyond locals benefits. Similarly schools on modern lines were ushered in as was never witnessed in Tibet. But it also was used as a platform for preparing the young Tibetans with Chinese culture and civilization at the expense of sidelining Tibetan age-old values which were deeply revered. If China was seen developed, and modern, Tibet was seen as exploited, feudal and stagnant which were resented at by Tibetans scholars. Through the grant of high scholarships and good accommodation bright students were invited to study in Beijing and many of the aristocrats children did avail the facility. But there were instances where attempts of indoctrination into Chinese way of life and culture was done at the expense of derogating the Tibetan culture which saw active resentment from Tibetan students.

The Chinese tried to overawe the Tibetans of the progressive state of the motherland. The Chinese especially wanted to capture the interest and find favour with upper aristocrats and ruling elites in Tibet. They wanted to paint a rosy picture that Tibet could become with the help of the concerned motherland and impress upon the need to 'jump' ahead - the "great leap forward" to be in line with the already advancing part of 'motherland'. Instances of this sort abound. One can recall the visit of Dalai Lama and the delegates of 400 who visited Beijing for NPC in 1954. In between the meetings the Chinese led them on tours to witness the factories, industries and other establishments to drive in a sense of progress and developments.¹⁶ Also the scholars of the well to do Aristocrats who were offered schooling facilities in Beijing were given special treatment to let them build a positive image of a benevolent China.

The Chinese also tried to make use of any public occasions, ceremonies or whatsoever to impress upon the Tibetan people in Tibet with its grandeur by ostentatious display and pomp. The anniversaries of 17 Point Agreement, the liberation day of China etc., were such occasions. The cultural troupe displaying dances, projecting films of the motherland, use of Chinese symbols (flags etc), uniforms etc symbolising formalism during public occasions are illustrative examples. Besides this the formation of various voluntary progressive organisations, propaganda books, distribution of Mao's picture were other means. To top it all the Chinese cadres use cliches and admissible phrases to paint their ideology. 'Democratic reforms', 'liberation',

¹⁶ Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, p.124

‘progressive’, etc were used. Though in a limited sense all these propaganda possibly led to an accommodative space for the Chinese ways of life and few Tibetans were actually won over by all these showpieces.

VI. The New Chinese Authority versus the Old Tibetan Government:

The first years saw a sincere adherence to the guidelines of the 17-point agreement by the Chinese. They did not take much interest to set up a new system in Tibet. Therefore though the import of the Communist Administrative system was introduced in other minority areas, besides the Han dominated area, Tibet was not disturbed but left to herself. As Mao’s directive to the CCP Central Committee in Tibet policy showed, the Chinese initially tried to gain the support of the masses or the upper strata before they put their programmes to action.¹⁷ The Tibetans at large felt that the Chinese would sincerely honour the agreement and Tibet would almost continue to be herself without the traditional structure of administration and lifestyle being disturbed of course the chance of a possible exploitation and repression on the lines of Kham and Amdo did drive some fear into Tibet since early 50’s where Chinese communist institutions were enforced on the Tibetan society there. Otherwise this period of a withdrawn posture by China was prevalent in Tibet which undoubtedly was the best times of Tibet-China relations after the 1950 takeover

¹⁷ “Mao Tse Tung On the Policies of Our Work in Tibet”, *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977, p. 74.

and created a possibility of a co-existence between the two societies of a Buddhist Tibet and Han communist China.

But this was not to be. The Chinese were not at all considering the idea of letting Tibet remain a distinct and isolated entity within the motherland culturally, administratively or whatsoever the Chinese were expecting a smooth shift to the socialist fold in the future. Rather Chinese's seemingly withdrawn policy in Tibet vis-a-vis progressive reforms as implemented actively in other parts of Tibet was actually taken in consideration of the unique case of Tibet as previously mentioned. Here the delay is probably to let the highly tensed relationship to cool down and normalise the situation and perhaps psychologically conducting the Tibetans to at least shed some of its heightened inhibitions and distrust before the Chinese presence in Tibetan way of life could be tolerated if not accepted by the masses. But through the need of a slow pace for infusing communist authoritative institutions was realised by the leaders like Mao, the zealous cadres which did set the motion of "progress" and institutionalization of authority elsewhere tend to attempt their successful role in Tibet too. In order to set up strong bases supportive of the Chinese authority in Tibet, the cadres established several United Front Organisations including Patriotic Women's Association, and a Cultural Association of Patriotic Youth.¹⁸

¹⁸ George Ginsbergs and Michael Mathor, *Communist China and Tibet: The First Dozen Years*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964, p. 57

Though initially it tried to form an authority structure which tend to play a seemingly complimentary rule to Kashag, the Tibetan traditional government, it sought to covertly or at times overtly challenge the Kashag. Particularly in 1954, two events marked a shift in Chinese policy in Tibet. The completion of two major motorable roads, one linking Szechuan via Kham and another from Kansu and Chinghai via northern Tibet promised easy supply of goods and soldiers to check any potential rebellion from Tibet. Another one was the treaty between China and India over trade and intercourse where India's recognition of China's full sovereignty in Tibet was secured under the Panchshila – a doctrine of peaceful coexistence, which was established as China's policy on relations with other Asian states.¹⁹ The Chinese authority also seem to take steps to undermine the undisputed leadership and influence of a hierarchical Lamaism by trying to consolidate some gains from the misunderstanding that of late cropped up between the officials of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama over their leaders position. It tried to belittle the historically influential apex place of the Dalai Lama with the Panchen by equating their position in the PCTAR (Preparatory Committee of Tibet Autonomous Region) founded in 1956 as against the traditional subservience if the Panchen Lama to the Dalai Lama. The policy of divide and rule seemed to be very much at play here.

¹⁹ Agreement between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India." *Peoples Daily*, Peking., 29 April 1954, *In Tibet* 1950-67, p. 66.

Also the Chinese authority used the Tibetan institution as its maidservant in many instances by holding it accountable to pull down any anti-Chinese policies and the people behind it. This had put a lot of pressure in Dalai Lama and the Kashag as was in the case of sacking two popular Prime Ministers Lukhangwa and Lobsang Tashi who took anti-Chinese stance. The Chinese hinted that if the Dalai Lama fails to remove the two Prime Ministers then the Chinese would have to consider him as abettor of the two.²⁰ They had to be dismissed by the Kashag on the ground that the Chinese authorities in Tibet threatened to intensify the PLA soldiers and crackdown on the two and their followers.

Another instance is the Mimang Tsusog an anti-Chinese group which came about as a result of popular opposition. Here too the Chinese authorities were determined to stamp out anti-Chinese agitation before it got beyond control. This opposition actually was not against any particular Chinese policy in Tibet but rather against the power it represented. At the same time it also reflects that the Chinese were increasingly less tolerant or compromising towards any opposing groups in Tibet. In 1954 NPC at Beijing where the Dalai Lama attended and PCTAR was formed reflects the Chinese interest to have a share in administration in Tibet, and also a step towards institutionalising Tibet towards the socialist framework. On April 22, 1956 PCTAR was formally inaugurated with great pomp and show. But it was later to be realised that it was actually the Chinese who held the key behind its major operation, though

²⁰ Foreign Office (London) 371-99659:MR, 16. 15 April, 1952

the PCTAR was supposed to entrust the local Tibetans with any democratic reforms.

Gradually the PCTAR, which was supposed to be the governing body of Tibet, like Kashag became sterile. The PCTAR was actually one step further in the transitional stage towards the supremacy of the communist party. Thus, the efforts to set up an authoritative infrastructure was taken from here, with the stamped approval of the Tibetan traditional leaders and tactical victory to follow it more actively if not aggressively. This indeed did lend legitimacy its authority in Tibet.

As one looks back it is clearly observable that the 17-Point Agreement proved to be an impediment in the way of bringing about transformation in Tibet, the way China would have preferred. In the second half of 1950's when the working of PCTAR in a way over rode the 17 point agreement though not in a pronounced way. The basic policy, as Dalai Lama commented, was decided by another body – the committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet, which had no Tibetan members. The imposed modus operandi was such that the PCTAR was relegated to a rubber stamp, passively agreeing to what had been decided by the Party. Dalai Lama's Chairmanship of PCTAR was merely to secure an added appearance of Tibetan authority to their schemes.²¹ The cadres were on the way to enforce democratic reforms in Tibet whether the people like it or not though they tried to achieve it by overt means.

²¹ Dalai Lama, *My Land*, p. 133

VII. Suppression in Kham and Amdo and the 1959 Uprising in Central Tibet

By middle of 1950's Mao had already initiated a free roll of the transition process coined as the 'high tide of Socialist Transformation'.²² This included all hitherto excluded minority nationalities except for TAR which was retarded by the guidelines of 17 Point Agreement, and so could not be pushed on too overtly. Mao's idea to accelerate collectivization began to be noticeable in the TAR in Kham and Amdo (the ethnic Tibetans outside TAR). The seemingly benevolent face of the Chinese was not visible at all in Kham and Amdo, as it was in TAR. It may be recalled that the CCP leader in 1955, Liu Shao-Chi had expressed the directive that these changes were to be effected only through the principle of voluntariness, non-violence and cooperation.²³ But to the Chinese who were self persuaded themselves to believe that Kham and Amdo were outside "Tibet", even Chou En Lai's 1957 assurance of stalling drastic changes in Tibet not apply to this two administrative areas. But the process of democratic reform and socialist transformation that was implemented was quite in contrast to the theoretical basis of voluntariness as the communist Marxist ideology would declare. Any gesture of opposition towards the democratic reform was seen as a result of foreign imperialist influence aimed at restraining the exploitation and weakening of Communist China. The instance of Mimong Tsongdu which was formed as an informal

²² Smith W. Warren Jr., *Tibetan Nation*, p. 400.

²³ Robert R. Bowie and John K. Fairbank, *Communist China 1955-1959*, p. 90; *Policy Documents & Analysis*, Cambridge Harvard University Press, 1962, p. 190.

people's assembly arising out of people's discontent. It was banned in 1955. Class distinction was brought in by the Chinese the upper class which comprised of the hereditary aristocracy and higher lamas. Especially for those opposed to Chinese presence were branded as exploiters. They were stripped off their traditional rights and privileges as well as their wealth and lands in the name of redistribution. But the best lands were retained by the Chinese officials and authority. Struggle (Thamzing in Tibetan) was the catchword of this reform process. Violence and brutality were the means adopted for modernising reform. Many popular and potential Tibetan leaders seems as obstacles in this process were falsely implicated, humiliated, imprisoned, tortured and even killed. Many monasteries were looted and even destroyed. There were tales of wholesome massacres of population by air raids by Chinese forces in Kham and Amdo.

Since mid 1950's there was a regular flow of Khampass into Tibet bringing with them tales of untold oppression and misery. The Khampa revolutionaries also began to filter on into TAR. This resulted in growing tension and misgivings about the Chinese people and their authority. There was the growing fear of a similar disruption of life (religion, economy, social life) in central Tibet too. The flow of thousand of refugees increasingly created the fear of the situation spiraling out to central Tibet as well. The tales of forced communization which roped in even the nomads of the high plateau after carrying out a genocide against a group of them had telling effects on Tibetans in Tibet. Tension was at its crucial point in Lhasa by 1958. There was a

gathering storm. Things were becoming so charged up that even the Tibetan government could not pacify the prevailing mood or the flurry of activities to offer a resistance to Chinese authorities. The Tibetan resistance had by now centered their command under Chushi Gangdrek, "Four rivers, six ranges", with a 5000 men rallying behind it which had set itself up in the vicinity of Lhasa. Now it only needed a spark to set off an uprising in Lhasa.

CHAPTER III

The 1959 Revolt and Chinese Response: State Violence

The 1959 revolt was a phenomenon which not only effected a sudden chain of events but also redefined relationship and outlook towards each other between the Tibetans and the Chinese for a long time to come. The state's response towards this uprising (or revolt) and the subsequent policies executed in a way brought out the real colour of the Communist China and its previously hidden intents and nature.

Broadly speaking, the 1959 uprising was not confined wholly to TAR. It had some of its causal factors beyond this administratively delineated boundary and its effects likewise overflowed across it. It shows that there is a deep and abiding sense of solidarity among the Tibetans at large, cutting across the administrative delineation by China which over-shadows the differences either imposed by the state or as natural factors. For instance, in spite of certain differences arising out of relative position and influence between the institution of Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, or of differentiable ethnic attributes between the Khampas of Kham and Amdo and the Tibetans of TAR, their core identity and their sense of collective aspiration were the same. The 1959 revolt for one thing exemplified this reality. The tales of killings and persecutions of the Tibetans in Kham and Amdo and the cultural destruction created a feeling of anger and apprehension as well as helpless sympathy to the Tibetans in TAR.

The Tibetans of TAR also were apprehensive of such a policy being imposed to TAR too. These doubts were supported by the fact that the Chinese since the early 1950s showed their inclination to spread their influence and power deeper and wider into Tibetan's way of life which led to heightening of mistrust and fear of the Chinese's ultimate intent. The early years of the 'Honeymoon period' was turning bitter gradually. The treatment of Tibetans outside Tibet made the Tibetans at large realize that their fears of Chinese were more real than just perceived notions. Presumably, the Tibetans took the situation as a portent of things to come in Tibet (TAR) too, until the appropriate time for the Chinese. As events progressed in the early 1959 there was an inkling among the Tibetans that the Chinese wanted to stir up a civil war between the Khampas and the Kashag and undo the existing feeling of empathy.¹ This opinion is reasonable in the sense that the PLA pressurized the Tibetan Government to drive away the Khampas who were well entrenched in TAR, and received sympathy and support of the Tibetans in TAR. Failing to do this would amount to them being sympathisers for the Khampas and therefore, unpatriotic. This means that in the event of any compelling crackdown on the Khampa rebels the Tibetan government officials would also be held responsible for the same. The Tibetan Government was placed in a big dilemma and it found itself helpless. As days moved on the anti-Chinese feeling was spreading across all section of the Tibetans especially in Lhasa.

¹ Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, p. 181.

The Spark and the Fire; the summary of the event

By early March 1959, tension was high. The approaching Monlam festival, a traditional Tibetan festival was usually an incident-ridden occasion with anti-Chinese outpourings. The occasion was expected to spark off a major clash with the Chinese authorities in Lhasa. But perhaps with all possible special caution taken by the Tibetan officials, the event was bypassed without any incident. But before the feeling of good riddance set in, the unexpected chain of events unfolded which made their worst fear turn into reality. It was learnt that unlike the normal practice, the Tibetan Government was not consulted about the Dalai Lamas scheduled visit to the Chinese Military Headquarters in Lhasa for attending a cultural programme.² Also the event was to take place just the third day, i.e., on the 10th of March without the usual elaborate arrangements. These facts touch on high secrecy by the Chinese, and some Kashag members began to read a conspiracy being hatched by the Chinese. Supporting that speculation was an extraordinary demand by the Chinese authority that the Dalai Lama's security in Norbulinga was to be taken care of by the Chinese security personnels inside the camp, which otherwise was done by Tibetan guards. Besides, the flurry of movements of troops at Damshung airport in Lhasa and the presence of Chinese planes also compounded to the suspicion of an imminent abduction of the Dalai Lama. Tibetan officials like Barshi who had previously witnessed a revelation from the traditional oracle about the danger lurking round Dalai Lama's life was left

² Ibid., 182

doubtless of such an unfolding of perilous events. This made him instigate public disapproval over this arranged visit. How far this feared perception had been real, there is no obvious evidence.

But seen from the larger context during those chaotic times in Tibet, it had occasioned that the Dalai Lama had been pressed to attend the national People's Congress in Beijing schedule for April 1959,³ to which the Dalai Lama had not given a positive reply. His presence in the NSC was seen as important especially in strengthening the propaganda value of Tibetan's solidarity with China in the glare of the international attention following the Khampa repression. For this important event there were suspicions that the Chinese may even physically abduct him to make himself available in that important meeting. The growing apprehension especially among some Tibetan officials led to the spread of perceived danger on Dalai Lama's life among the populace in Lhasa, which was spread from mouth to mouth like wild fire. By the eve of the proposed show it reached almost all ears.

The Tibetan army in Lhasa was also advised to be prepared for any eventualities by the instigators. By morning of the proposed visit, thousands of excited Tibetans had gathered outside the Norbulinga to stop the Dalai Lama's visit thereby ensuring his safety. The very fact that the Tibetan officials would not tell the Chinese officials to clarify the rumours showed that the relationship that they had with the Chinese were based on subservience lacking in transparency. It was beyond the Tibetan officials many of whom were largely

³ Tibet 1950-67, Union Research Institute, p. 267-70.

seen as collaborators with the Chinese, to stop the demonstration. On the 10th of March the demonstration comprising of thousands of Tibetans started. The demonstration began to assume an anti-Chinese pro independence stance. In other words, it took the nature of a mass national uprising.

The young Dalai Lama was placed in a confusion as the demonstrators carried with them the threat of a potential conflict. But perhaps he saw this event had provided an opportune outlet to escape from Tibet which will justify the uprising and at the same time stripped China of the little credibility it had in Tibet. On the 17th of March the Dalai Lama and his troupe consisting of important Kashag leaders and immediate family members made an escape from Lhasa. They were guided by the Khampa resistance movement, "Four Rivers, Six Ranges" to a safe exit in India. The escape bid was so sudden and so secretive that it took the Chinese and even the Tibetans in Lhasa by surprise. The Chinese having been distracted by the events unfolding then, were caught off guard. Meanwhile, the demonstration in Lhasa continued.

The Immediate Chinese Reaction

On the 20th of March the PLA which had been following a restrained wait and watch was ordered to suppress the rebellion after more than a week of demonstrations. The revolt mainly concentrated in Lhasa with the support of some 1,500 Tibetan army and others with old weapons that were stored in the monasteries while the majority were unarmed. They were pitted against a well-equipped, well-disciplined and organized and an experienced PLA from

mainland China. As expected, the Chinese captured the Norbulinga and Potala with ease in just two days at the cost of thousands of Tibetan lives and negligible casualty from the Chinese side. After the success of this full scale attack a special military control committee was set up immediately on 23rd March 1959 to take stock of the situation. On March 28 Zhou Enlai announced that the rebellion had spelt the death sentence for the 17-Point Agreement.⁴ With it the local government –the Kashag was declared dissolved and its role was to be taken up by PCART. The Panchen Rinpoche was to take up the place of acting chairman of PCART. The PCART members who were alleged to have taken part in the revolt were warned of severe punishment. By 1960 every pocket of resistance movement in Tibet was silenced.

The implications of the 1959 uprising

For one thing the 1959 revolt sealed the effort to forge a co-existence between Communist China and Buddhist Tibet. The flight of the Dalai Lama also was an indication that things were not all right in Tibet in China. From the political and administrative point of view it signalled the failure of the special autonomous entity that Tibet possessed under Peoples Republic of China. It clearly showed that the 17-Point Agreement was not honored by China.⁵ Besides there was no effort to plug the loopholes in the functional aspect of the 17-Point agreement to make it more elaborate by means of a redeemable effort

⁴ Order of the State Council of the Chinese People's Republic, Tibet, 1950-1967, Union Research Institute, Hongkong, p. 357-58.

⁵ Tsering Sahakya, *Dragon in the Land of snows*, p. 208.

by jointly addressing it. In fact it was rather manipulated by the Chinese who increasingly intruded into the local administration of Tibet. The increasing assertiveness of the Chinese in the higher decision making level in Tibet undermined the already restricted power of the Tibetan officials. Especially the Kashag as an institution was losing its importance and the PCART was increasingly coming under the clout of the Chinese leaders at the central and the regional level rather than being under the effective working and direction of its chairman the Dalai Lama. With this underlying erosion of the sanctity of the 17-Point Agreement was setting in and so many Tibetan officials were also harbouring and inexpressible ire towards the Chinese in their helplessness, only few Tibetan leaders sought to openly appease the Chinese authorities.

Besides, the 17-Point framework could not provide a practical safeguard for whatever reasons and thus there was intolerable interference in the Tibetan way of life. The 1959 revolt perhaps provided a ventilation for pent up feelings and was the surest expression of this interference in their life.

Also the common people especially the older generations who were more cautious and perceptive could sense the increasing attempts at sidelining the unquestionable position of the Dalai Lama as Tibetan's topmost leader whose influence travelled beyond the confines of things spiritual. Common Tibetans could observe the Chinese attempts to belittle his status (as was witnessed in the functioning of the PCTAR and Kashag). They took it as a threat to their cultural and national identity at large (and not just his personal status). This apprehension also contributed to a host of other reasons perceived

or real that provided a sort of ideological basis of Sino-Tibetan conflict rather than the class or regional differences⁶ as China would make-believe.

So to the common people thus Chinese attempt was not just an instance of competing political tug-of-war for powers as is witnessed in politics but a basic question of a direct effort to dilute their social cultural political and spiritual set up. This explained their excited reaction during the 1959 uprising. As far as the common Tibetans are concerned another very important factor, rather catalyzing factor for their mistrust one is the Chinese cadres regimented policy of coercive “progressive reforms” which the Tibetans in Kham and Amdo experienced the most, being placed outside the safeguard of 17-point Agreement. Their tales of brutal suppression and wholesale massacres, the religious persecution which followed the subsequent failure of the “Great Leap forward” did arouse the Tibetans in TAR to antagonism and mistrust tempered with fear towards the Chinese. The plight of the Khampas as related by the refugees in TAR and the appeal to the Tibetans of TAR from the Khampas excited the Tibetans.⁷ But in 1959 revolt it is notable that fear took a back seat to uncontrollable ire and they could not hold back their excitement. The thought of a consequential reprisal did not restrain them from standing up against the Chinese authority and so the uprising became an actuality as well as the subsequent suppression. What this eventful uprising elucidate is not the peoples well planned attempt to overthrow the existing authority founded on

⁶ Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, p. 209.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

strong military power but rather another clear expression of accumulated frustration and disappointment, which explains why it was crushed with ease.

Thus, the 1959 uprising though it was sparked off with an incident and in the form of a demonstration by common people in Lhasa carried in its momentum the affected narrow as well as larger common interests of the common Tibetans, the ruling aristocrats and even the Dalai Lama found a purpose through it. At the end of it all, it would be wrong to conclude that the Chinese deliberately incited such a revolt. Many of the actions taken by the Chinese authorities and its agencies certainly have added to the consequential uprising as mentioned but at large China in no way would have desired or more so planned to incite such an uprising. China wanted to bring about socialization in Tibet but they would not have preferred it following a military crackdown. In a way, the 'progressive development' was restrained in Tibet proper (TAR) which was not the case anywhere else. This in a way explains that however faint the application was there was some element of appeasement shown to Tibetans. Chinese assertion was felt mostly in the top-level policy making which also reflected the play of power politics by regional Chinese leaders and not necessarily as a matter of a thorough policy from the centre. By whatever it was it surely did diminish the power of the Tibetan 'local' government, and also sidelined the institution of the Dalai Lama. It is probable that if the Chinese thought and expressed that the 1959 rebellion was singularly good for consolidating China's position in Tibet, that could be more of an after-thought than a matter of active policy making towards that end.

The Consequences of the 1959 Uprising

The uprising followed by the escape of the Dalai Lama was interpreted as a denouncement of the 17 point Agreement by the Tibetans which means that China was no more to be bound by that special framework. Through this uprising the Chinese could demonstrate the 'invincible and 'inescapable' military prowess of the PLA by cruel and systematic suppression of the revolt. Thousands died within the few days of the clash with the experienced PLA. To the Chinese the revolt provides a reasonable ground to quell the dissents in Tibet. The local Chinese administrators considered it to their advantage that now the rebels were exterminated, with the arrests of the remaining who has escaped and their accessories would make their policy execution in Tibet easier and their power increased. Also the escape of the Dalai Lama would revoke any traditional obstacle that stood in the way of the Chinese political and administrative machineries. The Chinese found this as the opportune time to carry out the full scale socialization process in Tibet which had previously been restrained by the 17 Point Agreement so that Tibet can catch up with other nationalities in the process of 'socialization' and 'progress'.

Here too, the Chinese were all too ready to spread their propaganda and twist the uprising to their advantage. As a matter of fact, the mass uprising and the escape of the Dalai Lama did taint China's image as well as diminish if not undo the little credibility that China had in Tibet, especially in the eyes of the international community. It is altogether another case that no concerned country was all too forthcoming to directly encounter China on this count. This

image apart, China made use of its propaganda albeit unconvincingly to spread that the uprising was a counterrevolution led by a status quoist – privileged upper classes who benefited from the prevailing exploitative relationship vis-à-vis the Tibetan commoners. Even the unexpected escape of the Dalai Lama was interpreted as abduction by some anti-revolutionary groups for their narrow interests of disrupting the functional relationship between the institution of Dalai Lama and the Chinese authority in Tibet. In order to prove their belief the Dalai Lama's position as Chairman of the PCTAR was preserved on the contention that he was held under duress and the Panchen Lama was to function as acting Chairman.⁸ The propaganda also sought to be an important tool for the authority to enforce their policy immediately after the 1959 uprising.

State as an Agent of Coercive Change

The immediate years following the 1959 suppression was a period where the Tibetans anticipated fears came true. The element of sensitiveness and a streak of tolerance that Tibet experienced as a special minority group faded out since the 1959 revolt. 'Socialization' and 'progress' as the Chinese ideological base for the transformation was no longer to follow a natural course as expressed earlier. The ideas of 'voluntariness' and 'democratic' transformation, something that the Chinese propaganda often harped were totally absent. The Chinese authority felt that nothing would stop them then, to execute their policy in Tibet. Unable to win over the Tibetans through

⁸ Warren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, p. 452.

appeasement in the 'honeymoon' years, they were now all set to execute a more coercive (and brutal) method of transformation to change the cultural psychological social and spiritual composition of the Tibetans. For this a comprehensive, regimented strategies and programmes were enforced from 1954 and carried out for several years to achieve their desired results.

The PCTAR, after the revolt of 1959 took over the functions of the 'former Tibetan local Government' which had been dissolved by the State Council. Tibet also witnessed the strong control of the PLA which established Military Control Commissions in all districts of Tibet excepting Shigatse.⁹ In one word administrative and political power was entirely consolidated in the hands of the Chinese institutions with the last symbolic presence of Tibetan government done away with. For the realisation of Chinese idea of regional autonomy and people's democratic dictatorship, it was felt that a large pool of the revolutionary cadres and communist cadres from Tibet need to be recruited.¹⁰ Many were compelled if not forced to join as cadres. Few Tibetans who passed out of the minority Nationalities Institute in Peking were absorbed albeit as cogs in a machine with little decision making power. This fact belied the expressed active participation of the minorities in policy making in their regional setting.

There were two sides of the Chinese response towards the Tibetans following the 1959 uprising. Firstly, the punitive measure and on the other

⁹ Warren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, p. 452.

¹⁰ Cited in China's Tibet, Supra note 10. June Tenfel Dreyer, *China's Forty Millions*, 197

plane the process of 'socialization' which ran simultaneously. Firstly giving the image of a 'class reaction' to the 1959 uprising the Chinese labelled the demonstrators as the 'reactionary clique of the upper social strata', as has been mentioned and not a popular movement for 'independence' which in itself represents another extreme view. In order to substantiate their viewpoint, the Chinese organised Tibetans led demonstrations to condemn and disown the demonstration as a popular uprising and project it as upper strata's opposition to social reforms.¹¹ The presence of the Panchen Lama was added for more effect and for belittling the nature of the uprising. This done the Chinese were all set to unleash a series of programmes meant to usher in 'reforms', which they contend, had been catalyzed by the revolt. The framework for this was declared by three leaders. Chang Kuo-hua, Ngapo Ngawang Jigme and Panchen Lama at a meeting of the PCTAR in July. The guiding lines of the reforms were a two step slogan – 'Three Antis and Two Reductions' and followed by the redistribution of land.

The Chinese conceptualized the ideas of rebuke and punishment coupled with teaching process as is analogous of an educating process of a student. The 'Three antis' were coined as anti-rebellion, anti-ulag and anti-slavery (house servants); while the 'Two Reductions' were in interest on loans and in rents paid to the landlords.¹²

¹¹ "Nationwide Support for building a new Tibet", *Peking Review* 7, 7th April, 1959, p. 9.

¹² Warren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, p. 471.

The Chinese attempt to belittle if not uproot the foundation of Tibetan culture and identity, and the monastic institution was quite notable. The so called democratic reforms within a span of few years drastically reduced the number of the functioning monasteries as well as the monks. The monks and lamas were confined to monasteries and in case of any inkling of their participation in the revolt were 'struggled', humiliated and was even sent to labour camps. They were forced into what was called 'thought reform'. The sanctity of the monastic figures was forcefully leveled with the common (labouring) Tibetans. Traditional payment of taxes to the monasteries were abolished, and monastic estates confiscated. To top it all the monks who were spared of punishment were made to sustain themselves by the 'sweat of their brow'. At this stage this very requirement perhaps was guided more with removing all forms of differentiation of the monks with the labouring commoners as was culturally practiced, rather than for running against the socialist slogan 'from each according to his capacity and to each according to his needs'. This very policy when seen in the light of another policy appears as contradictory to each other. The instance of the policy of creating class-consciousness by emphasizing on class divisions and class struggle. These two facts are not necessarily opposite in nature. While the former tries to do away with the then existing differentiated allocation of economic roles the latter tends to bring about a social differentiation possibility with the intent of playing one group (class) against another where their policy of 'divide and rule' was convenient. The very idea of 'redistribution of land' revolves round

the concept of introducing the concept of class division in a way. The land reform or redistribution of land was to be founded on the logic of confiscating land and property of families with record of participation in the revolt. Indeed it was noted that the Chinese actually retained the best and most valuable things out of this confiscated goods. Redistribution in a sense was in fact only symbolic for the land to be redistributed to the former serfs and tenants were temporary, i.e., until the state confiscate it as communal property.¹³ Also it is remarkable that the period saw the first stage of agricultural collectivization titled as Mutual Aid Teams (MAT) introduced in the summer of 1959. This collectivization with the expressed purpose of benefiting the farmers through collective labour and private ownership of land and its products were actually manipulated by the state. As a result what actually was left behind for the people were bare minimum 'rations' while the fruits of their labour were reaped by the Chinese. Here, one clearly sees the two parallel processes of 'socialization' process and the undercurrent policy of economically sustaining the Chinese heartland at the expense of the Tibetans and their subsistence economy. Also, though the membership of MAT was supposed to be voluntary, those who did not join were virtually left with little chance of survival and people were coerced into collectives by a variety of means. Moving on, certain campaigns for maximization of the produce like 'Destroy the Four Pests', for elimination of rats, mice, flies and sparrows was enforced

¹³ Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of People's Republic*, The Free Press, 1986, p. 146.

without paying heed to people's religious sentiments who were taught not to harm any living creatures. Among the core policies was the socialization to be achieved through 'self realization' or true consciousness of the existing exploitative relations and to steer themselves out of this through Chinese guided revolution against the old system. Divided into small 'study groups' these units were supposed to form the base for transmission of study/education and mutual criticism.¹⁴ Lack of participation was interpreted as opposition befitting punishment. These rigorous study sessions, which followed the days work, were oriented to destroy the old traditional fabric and its values and were meant to break the loyalty and solidarity of the Tibetan society completely. Self-criticism and mutual criticism, which were the steps, employed created mistrust among the Tibetans against one another all in the name of conflict and struggle - the vehicle for transformation. Every step was taken to secure unquestioned loyalty to the Chinese State. Any differing opinion or criticism howsoever rational and constructive it might have been were considered bad and were discouraged. This was clearly exemplified in the Panchen Lamas' 70,000 character petition criticism for which he was imprisoned for 18 years. On the other hand, newspapers, posters, slogans were put to full use as propaganda materials to support their policy. 'Self incriminating testimonies of the past by Tibetans were said to have been for the good of the Tibetans to usher in 'peoples' democratic dictatorship'. Regular self criticism and mutual

¹⁴ Warren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, p. 476.

criticism were enforced on the ground that it would change their attitudes and conduct confirming to the demands of higher authorities.¹⁵ Through this policy of socialisation the Chinese could win some young opportunist Tibetans. But at large it created the mass of Tibetans who could chant the slogans out of communist lexicon yet deep inside they still hold their unquestionable loyalty to their culture and society. This process of socialization was all the more intensified following the period of Cultural Revolution.

¹⁵ Martin King Whyte, *Small Groups and Political Rituals in China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974, p. 10.

CHAPTER IV

Cultural Revolution and Maosization of Tibet, (1967-1976): The Chinese Cultural Policy

In the first place, it will be appropriate to conceive this period in the larger context of China. The Cultural Revolution or otherwise called the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution'. The Cultural Revolution was the brainchild of Chairman Mao Tse Tung. This 'Cultural Revolution' as a state sponsored revolution was experienced in varying forms and degrees in the whole of China. It was a radical Maoist movement initiated as a rectification campaign. The Cultural Revolution was meant to bring about a consolidative, homogenizing culture carrying the name of socialization in its stride towards a socialist utopia. Cultural Revolution has been succinctly described by Hong Yung Lee. It is seen as a complex phenomenon with varying interpretation "as a power struggle; an ideological struggle over policy issues; a crises of legitimacy; a confrontation between Mao and the bureaucracy; an ideological struggle between proletarian revolutionaries and capitalist revisionists; and an expression of Mao's megalomania.¹ The actual manifestation of the cultural revolution was a gruelling and a regimented policy towards creating the so called progressive and socialistic society running in parallel with an

¹ Dawa Norbu, *The Road Ahead*, p. 273

underlining zeal of creating a pervasive Chinese (Han) culture throughout the land and breadth of China. Besides, it also reflected tendencies of creating a demi-god-like image of Mao Tse-tung, thereby, carrying a strand of cultism in its expression and propagation.

At the background of the Cultural Revolution lies the development of a cleavage among party leaders at the top in the quest basically for influence and power. Mao and his supporters including his wife for one were making efforts to wrestle back unquestioned power at the apex of the party decision making body – the CCP (Chinese Communist Party). During the Cultural Revolution Mao was backed up by four pillars of core party members known popularly as the ‘Gang of Four’. This ‘Gang of Four’ was a description given by Mao Tse-tung to the Shanghai based hard core radicals of the Cultural Revolution namely, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, Wang Hongwen and Jiang Qing. The Cultural Revolution from one angle also meant indictment of rival factions specially by Mao and his supporters as counter-revolutionaries, (branded as the ‘rightists’, ‘capitalist readers’) – who were held responsible for slowing down the process of culturization in China. These accusations were levelled at leaders both at the center and at various regional levels who were supposed to reflect rightist tendencies within the Party, meaning that they harboured special feelings towards the local nationalities much to the detriment of the progress of ‘the motherland’.

In order to usher in the cultural revolution, Mao directly appealed to the people, in particular to young students, the red guards, who with the support of

the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) overthrew not only party members but also all the so called 'bourgeois reactionaries' in authority, in schools, universities, factories and administration. In retrospect, the Cultural Revolution specially in peripheral regions like Tibet was not so much known for the newness of the programmes but rather in the intensity of the policy and its pervasiveness. A cultural revolution in China was monitored by Mao's wife Chiang Ch'ing and was at large supposed to be the outcome of a well-thought out policy but in fact, this period of cultural revolution saw an element of intra-party politics lending its colour to the nature of its outcome. As such the conflict spiraled out to the peripheral party cadres as well as the PLA and other state administrative agencies. The dangerous portent was felt mostly by the minority nationalities like Tibet whose cultural distinctiveness was largely liquidated following a systematic and an inhuman policy of indoctrination in the name of a civilizing effort.

The Cultural Revolution was seen by the latter generations of post Mao leaders as an aberration in the history of communist China. It is said that the Cultural Revolution was an ill-conceived and ill-executed policy. Instead of achieving the ambitious aim of construction the years of Cultural Revolution which spanned from 1967-1976 left a trail of destruction of the society in China taking the whole civilization many steps backward. The decade of cultural revolution saw social and political turmoil marked by closures of schools and universities, factories were at a standstill, tens of thousands of deaths and millions of people sent to undertake manual labour in the

countryside as re-education. In fact, the Cultural Revolution was a period of cultural terror for many people and at best 'successfully' made the targeted peoples like machined objects. Indeed, the period of Cultural Revolution was a black spot in the fifty-plus years of the history of communist China.

Nature of Cultural Revolution in Tibet

Tibet was one of the targeted regions for intensive cultural revolutionizing. As a matter of fact, Tibet was one of these regions which had seen less socialization and cultural change compared to other nationalities in the 50's. This cultural safeguards which was provided to Tibet in the past was seen directly as an impediment for making fast-paced progress and relegating her to a state of wholesome backwardness. During the Cultural Revolution as in the period of Great Leap, the nature and customs of the nationalities were considered less favourable and infested with impediments than the Chinese culture which was consider equivalent to socialism and therefore, were compelled to emulate it.² This explains why Tibet in the context of China at large was one of those regions, which had remained as an obstacle in the path of speedy progress for the motherland. Cultural revolution was expected to act as yet another catalyst for backward regions like Tibet which, it was noted, had to take big strides to pace up with the more advanced parts of China and also contribute towards that end. Cultural Revolution was seen as a vehicle for mass transformation and education to enter the new desired dispensation.

² Hsein Fu-min, "Socialist Education Movement Opposing Local Nationalism" in *Tibet*, 1950-67, p. 281.

Cultural Revolution in Tibet lasted the full stretch from 1966 to 1976 and by the time it was rounded up Tibet thoroughly bore the brunt of its policies. This so called revolution came to an end in China only with the death of Mao Tse-tung and the subsequent arrest of the 'Gang of Four' in autumn 1976. As will be discovered, cultural revolution had a calamitous portent in Tibet. More than in any other region, cultural revolution in Tibet left behind a comprehensive cultural destruction of the Tibetan (locals). A closer analysis of this period will bring out the real intent behind such a policy targeted on the nationalities. Whether the policy truly reflects the benevolent nature of the Chinese state to 'liberate; and alleviate the standard of the living of its people – minorities included can be gauged out from the often hidden facts and realities of those times.

Manifestation of Cultural Revolution in Tibet

On the outset the cultural policy of the Chinese towards Tibetans had already taken root way before the policy of Cultural Revolution. The process of 'communization', 'socialization', and 'education' en masse has as a policy started extensively after the 1959 revolt. The Chinese cadres in Tibet had with the help of the PLA set the policy in motion. But the sweep of Cultural Revolution was so pervasive; more regimented and more destructive in all respects.

As before any manifestation of local nationalism was labelled as counterrevolutionary and its unique culture as an impediment towards socialism. As witnessed during the anti-rightist campaign of 1957 and the

subsequent Great Leap of 1958-61, the continuing preservation of local culture and religion was outrightly condemned as anti-socialist rightism.³ There were renewed attacks on nationalism with the rise of Mao and left wing of the CCP. Nationality culture were considered as reactionary culture, which formed as tools at the hand of anti-socialists both inside China as well as external forces – which obstructs national unity of China. The culture and arts of all nationalities were to conform to the interests of socialism and be revolutionary in content.⁴ In 1965 there was a noted surge on leftists which was marked by increasing call for revival of collectivization campaigns and ‘Cultural Revolution; among national minorities. For Mao this campaign was also a counter attack against the mentioned right wings and oppositions within the party and in the bureaucracy. After what was seen as drumming up support through a countrywide tour from end of 1955 to 1966 he set the programme in motion. This programme was to be achieved through the loyal PLA university students, which was given the designation as ‘Red Guards’. By July 1966, the Red Guards had spread out all over the cities of China, including Tibet.

In Tibet too, the crusader and reformists were selected in a tactical manner. The cultural revolution group had mixed the Chinese Red Guards from Peking accompanied by Chinese instructions and select Tibetan products who had been churned from institutes in China and (especially the minority

³ Warren W. Smith Jr. *Tibetan Nation*, p. 542.

⁴ Lu Ting-Yi, “Cultural Revolution of China’s National Minorities,” *Peking Review*, 4th December, 1964, p. 13.

Nationalities Institutes) and from Tibetan minorities schools.⁵ It is also important to understand the wranglings that marked the different agents of the Chinese authority even at the local level especially in the first few years of Cultural Revolution. This period witnessed a situation of shifting alliances and trading of attacks among the party cadres and the PLA 'mass revolutionary organizations' pitted against 'radical Red Guards' from Peking (also known as Revolutionary Rebels). It was only with the formation of 'Revolutionary Committee' in September 1968 that factionalism within the different bodies of the State could be tamed and the roads cleared for a 'socialist transformation' in Tibet. The Tibetans, it can be said, were also caught in the web of wranglings and in the cultural revolution in Tibet, they found themselves as robots in the hands of Chinese Red Guard leaders.

The nature of 'Cultural Revolution' unleashed in Tibet is quite telling, with its multi pronged approaches. Cultural liquidation was to set the ground for cultural reconstruction or more so, cultural transformation. The Han Chinese civilization and culture, to the Chinese seemed to be compatible to usher in a socialist utopia and a model to be emulated for the minority nationalities. This aspect will be discovered in the subsequent pages. It was indeed quite strategic that the Tibetan Red Guards were put on the forefront in the attacks on all manifestations of the 'four olds' in Tibet. 'Four olds' consisted of old ideas, old customs, old manners and old traditions. The frontal

⁵ Kunsang Paljor, *Tibet: The Undying Flame*, Dharamshala: Information and Publicity office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1977, p. 50.

attack on the 'four olds' has been a policy introduced in the past, which again had been introduced with renewed vigour. Cultural policy actions in Tibet during this period can be delineated into the following headings:

a) Attempts at liquidation of religion: To the Tibetans Buddhism was their stronghold – their well-spring of life; to the Chinese it is their greatest impediment and obstacle towards progress and modernity. Also to the Chinese and Marxist if religion was ever an 'opium of the mass' it was never seen so truer anywhere else than it was in Tibet. In order to carry out their 'bounden' duty of liberating the Tibetans and to help them strive for progress, the Chinese felt it necessary to root out religion from Tibetan landscape, so that the vacuum left by this 'feudal' ideas and institution can be filled by pragmatic, progressive and socialist ideas. This explains their all-out attack at Buddhism in Tibet.

The Cultural Revolution was officially launched in Tibet on 25th August. Under the guide of the Red Guards, the 'revolutionary masses of various nationalities' were let loose who were trained to bring about destruction to every aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, the physical structures, symbols, religious deity, et al. These 'superstitious and feudal' objects and ideas were to be supplanted by ideas and things practical and progressive. Among the first notable structure to be invaded by these angels of destruction were the Tsugchakhang (or Jokhang), the central monastery in Lhasa. Anything that had utility like wooden walls for one were spared and used by the cadres or 'gifted' to the common people. Other important monasteries in Lhasa like Ramoche Norbulinka etc. met the same fate. The Chinese cadres who led these groups

encouraged the Tibetan Red Guards to enthusiastically practice in the whole show. As a result of this policy thousand of temples were robbed, partially damaged and some razed to the ground, leaving no imprint of its former existence.⁶ As if to say 'the old is gone giving place to the new' there was an all out effort to form a deity-like image of Mao Tse-tung in Tibet as if to replace Buddha. Chairman Mao as he was called was seen as the harbinger of everything that is progressive and good. His name was to be venerated and praised at every opportune time. His portraits were distributed to almost every household in Tibet (said to number around 40,000). He was projected as infallible and the word of this 'great leader, great teacher' and great supreme commander.⁷ Mao's words were to be taken unquestioningly as law itself. Posters in support of these attributes of Mao were pasted all around. To top it all, the little 'Red Book' titled 'Quotations from Chairman Mao' was widely distributed in Tibet and the masses were made to consume it to get enlightened spiritually and intellectually. Mao's thought was accredited to contain a life transforming power for all.

As the Cultural Revolution moved on, the Lamas and nuns were targetted. They were insulted, abused, beaten up, humiliated as propagators of the exploitative system and for living as parasites on the labour of the labouring Tibetans. They were subjected to condemnation in public and the people were forced to make public criticisms about their 'crimes'. Many of them were

⁶ Kunsang Paljor, *Tibet: The undying Flame*, Dharamshala: Information and Publicity Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama 1977, p. 50.

⁷ *Tibet 1950-67*, Union Research Institute, Hongkong, 1967, p. 606

forced to undergo *thamzing* and later on work in the concentration and labour camps as common working Tibetans. They found themselves at the center of the Chinese attack as a convenient exploitative class besides their being the symbolic pillars of Tibet's spiritualism. On top of that dependence on the common people for economic support – food or otherwise was against the socialist philosophy of the Chinese. Not only was religious practice at the community level attacked but even personal worship was targeted. Any form of sacred objects – the alter, flag posts, Dalai Lamas' picture etc, were forbidden and discovery of any of these objects or practice were publicly exposed, abused and punished. Not only were religious objects destroyed and precious ones looted but sacred objects were also often publicly denigrated and desecrated. As indicated the dismantled temples and monasteries provided timber and stone blocks which were used to set up buildings for small roadside shrines were not spared of destruction. Figures may vary according to sources but it is without doubt that the trail of destruction led to the reduced number of monasteries and depopulation of monastic population many times over. Here the Red Guards slogan of 'destruction before construction' was systematically implemented.

b) Attempts at destruction of other cultural traits: As echoed earlier any distinct cultural attributes which were non-Chinese in origin or manifestation were necessarily considered as 'reactionary' and instead of being 'progressive and socialist' were retrogressive and backward in nature. This cultural chauvinism and haughtiness contributed to the need for Cultural

Revolution. This policy of cultural education to attain cultural transformation was a tendency already at work before the Cultural Revolution. In the political campaigns of the 70's Tibetans were required to sing publicly in praises of Mao Tse-tung for bringing about freedom and prosperity, while scathingly criticise Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama and all aspects of old culture before the Chinese liberation. Tibet's past was pointed as hell on earth. Even fine arts was use to spread the black propaganda of the former Tibetan social system.⁸ But the intensity and pervasiveness of the policy in this period was as never witnessed before. Tibetan customs, traditions, songs, dances, ceremonies, and language were all moulded over hundreds of years by events and experiences and had acquired value like any other composite cultural group entity. All these distinctiveness were now considered as 'reactionary' in character and so need to be erased and replaced by a more progressive and forward looking culture.

At the end of it all, to most Tibetans, Cultural Revolution in Tibet was virtually nothing but an all-out attack on the 'four olds'.⁹ Cultural Revolution saw the replacement of religion by utilitarianism and gross materialism¹⁰. It was indeed an irony that the Tibetans had to be 'forced' to opt for the Chinese culture on the contention of its progressiveness and compatibility with modernity. Their 'concern' towards the non-Chinese Han culture impelled them to conversion through coercion so that these backward people might think

⁸ Wrath of the Serfs – A tableau of Sculptures, *Peking Review*, 19 September, 1975.

⁹ Tsering Wangchuk, Lobsang Tenzing, personal interviews.

¹⁰ Dawa Norbu, *The Road Ahead*, p. 271.

and live like the Chinese. Those who practiced or safeguarded old values and items were reprimanded publicly and were forced to undergo corrective session of struggle call 'thamzing'. Any confiscation of things symbolic of the old culture befitted such punishment. In the process of destruction of monasteries, quarters of nuns and monks were ransacked and after rebuking them publicly they were forced to 'thamzing'. Chinese culture was considered as an ideal model all in all. Tibetans were required to dress like the Chinese, keep their hair short in Chinese fashion as contrast from the practice of keeping long hairs of the Tibetans, chant songs in praise of Mao in Chinese. On top of that not only were the Tibetan personal names given Chinese nomenclatures but many places were actually renamed. Besides the Tibetan official religious holidays were replaced by secular festivals with Chinese colorings.

The effort to topple the Tibetan culture can be seen from the fact that they even went to the extent of dictating changes inside the four walls of the Tibetan dwelling. The kind of food they should take, the colour combinations that they should use to decorate their houses and so on. Even the language was not spared. Maoist terminology and 'progressive' Chinese vocabulary found its way 'conveniently' into the Tibetan language. As a result the Tibetan language was to a serious extent adulterated and deformed because of arbitrary exclusion and inclusion as desired by the Chinese. The famous Tibetan mantra 'Om Mani Padme Hum' which usually carved on the rocks were replaced by the quotation from Chairman Mao's Red book. Even morning greetings had to be replaced by exchange of quotations from Mao's Red book. Punishments

were meted out to those who showed inability to abide by the same. Orders like this routinised action of recitation lend even a touch of stupidity to the Cultural Revolution.

c) Communitisation Process in Tibet: The communes as an ideal unit and network for maximum mutual utility had actually taken off in 1959 in Tibet. During the course of the Cultural Revolution it was on full swing. It is noted that by 1974, the communes systems were established in 90% of Tibet's counties. The collectivisation of agriculture in China was intended to have a two-fold purpose: on the one hand, it was to assist the efforts at mopping up the surplus which would finance the industrial development. On the other hand, it meant to constitute the next stage in transforming the rural mode of production, from one based on the imdividualisation of private small holders to one based on cooperative forms of management and work.¹¹ The communes which were supposedly established on the principle of 'voluntariness' and mutual benefits contravened the actual practice. Neither was the socialist transformation of the agriculture and animal husbandary reportedly attained anything but beneficial for the Tibetans. The big stride towards progress and 'happiness' were at best exaggerated and at worst delusions. Tibetan's under communes were subjected to meager rations just to maintain their utility. The socialist principle of need corresponding with ability was practiced. The daily scales were measured in 'karmas' ranging from two to ten per day according to their contribution. This 'karma' contained grain and butter or oil; it is understandable that many people

¹¹ *World Focus*, February 2000, No. 224, p. 8.

especially old folks could not stand the labours demanded and perished due to starvation. Element of bureaucratic arbitrariness in the choice of preferred crop continued to exist. Even the Tibetan staple crop of barley was a target of economic reform. Chinese officials ordered the planting of winter wheat, a crop that failed dismally in Tibet's climate.¹² This instance was just to meet the consumption of Chinese population the less suitable wheat crop was grown in place of barley which was the staple food of the Tibetans. It was quite an irony that under the system of communes which Tibet experienced food shortages, famines and death truckloads of so-called surplus produced were transported to heartland of China. Indeed far from providing the Tibetan poor with enough to eat, the meagre but essentially self-sustaining nature of Tibet's economy was disrupted.¹³

Cultural Revolution – A Look Back:

The impact of Cultural Revolution was deep and widespread. For starters, the bare facts reveal that a sizeable; population of Tibetans lost their lives in the factional clashes, or while resisting the Chinese cultural onslaught in Tibet, but most of them died unable to sustain the rigour of regimentation of communization and socialization. According to the Tibetan (Dharamsala) estimate the Cultural Revolution took a toll of 20% of Tibet's population. The latter development shows that to add to this depopulation was the attempt at forced nuptial relations with the Tibetan women by the enthusiastic Chinese

¹² Tsenden Wangchuk Sharlho, *China's Reforms in Tibet; Issues and Dilemmas*, I. J. Contemporary China, 1992, p. 37.

¹³ Stephen Corry, "China Syndrome", *Natural People's News*, No. 6, July/August, 1981 Passim.

settlers with the backing of the state. Many of Tibet's constructed physical structure representing Tibet age old culture – beautiful monasteries, shrines and other historical and cultural objects were indiscriminately desecrated, looted, damaged and even destroyed. Tibet's expressive aspect of culture underwent forced eradication, but at best and at large it ends up gagging it or more so freezing it from outward manifestation. Even the namesake existence of Tibetan government structure was done away with.

The discerning Tibetans could see through the hollowness of the Chinese reiteration that China is all out to liberate Tibetans and better their life conditions more than ever before. But once again in the 80's the resurgence of Tibetan's consciousness and nationalism was manifested as never before.¹⁴ Cultural Revolution in China unwittingly brought about cultural genocide and created an image of cultural 'imperialism', and abhorrent label which ironically it had earlier lashed against the western colonisers.

Knowing that they could never resist the Chinese power by force as was once again exemplified in the Nyamo Revolt, the Tibetans for the time being felt that it was best to sing to the Chinese tune without conforming to it in spirit. It also indirectly brought about more solidarity among the Tibetans through common experiences of pain, suffering and frustration. But they had also learnt to endure and act as if they have fully subscribed to the Chinese lifestyle, heart and soul. As the later events will unfold, the Tibetans sense of

¹⁴ Warren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, p. 563.

CHAPTER V

Deng Xiaoping's Liberal Reforms (1972-83)

Economic Policy

Deng Xiaoping, the rightful successor of Mao Tse-tung as the chairman of the CCP, emerged out of Mao's overpowering image as China's supreme leader. On the outset it may be mentioned that Deng Xiaoping was a person in his own right and did not readily choose to toe the line prescribed by Mao. It may be recalled that Deng was one of those leaders at the top rung of the party who was accused of being "rightist" within the party, as contrasted from Mao's ultra-leftist line during the Cultural Revolution.

It was under the patronage of Deng that what was known as China's 'second revolution of economic reforms', was conceived and set rolling. This may be contrasted with Mao's failed strategy of economic development in the late 50's which came to be known as the Great Leap Forward (GLF), creating of a new socio-economic and political unit in the countryside, namely the People's Communes.¹ To this failure of GLF can be added the blunder of the Cultural Revolution under Mao, China's great leader. On the other hand to Deng goes the credit of initiating a new programme which actually catapulted China's economy (and living standards) many times forward in a matter of two decades and in a sense was the true 'great leap forward' for China. Termed as

¹ China at Fifty: A Nation on the Move, *World focus* Vol. 224, February 2000, p. 9.

identity and solidarity as well as their hope for freedom was never suppressed.
For Tibetans in particular hope springs eternal.

What the Cultural Revolution could visibly achieve albeit momentarily was to stop any expressed exhibition of Tibet's unique cultural traits. In fact, throughout the '70s the question of Tibetan nationalism was a dead issue.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Collected Statements of His Holiness, The Dalai Lama*, 10th March, 1980, p. 57.

the reform policy, this new programme boosted the waning image of the party and strengthened communism in China on the whole. It brought back to life and vibrancy this communist state from a state of uncertainty and failures, both socio-economic and ideological.

The new period was marked by Deng's conceived policy of liberalization and "Four modernisation". The "Four modernisation" were to be effected in agriculture, industry, military and science and technology. Liberal policy promised easing of state imposed restrictions marked by a policy of flexibility and openness within and without, with the primary emphasis on rapid economic growth. In other words it recognized the primacy of economic development for China.²

The attempt to introduce liberalisation and modernisation in China is seen as a bold venture especially seen in the backdrop of the failures of the earlier policies. When juxtaposed against the preceding policies, the modernisation drive indeed deserved praise for turning the tide of failures to one that of a great achievement. This mega-reform project indeed reflects that any well-meaning policy needs to be more than being just a lofty ideal, and has to go further to be a realistic and pragmatic. The success of the liberalization and modernization policy owes to these latter qualities for its success.

Besides, the success of the modernisation drive in China owes to the prevailing political circumstances of the time. The conflict and chaos which

² Dawa Norbu, *The Road Ahead*, p. 289

marked the Cultural Revolution under orthodox leftist gradually died down with the death of Mao Tse-tung and the subsequent arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976. As a result, a political space was created at the centre for new leaders at the top with liberal bent of mind. By the time Deng ascended the top seat of the party in 1978 a conducive atmosphere for introducing the new policy was setting in. These new brand of leaders at the helm of affairs denounced the Cultural Revolution as an aberration in the path of socialism. They could instill some lost popularity of the party and communism in China at large, which was lost to the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Gradually as the reform policy gained momentum, China's economy began to grow from strength to strength and there was no looking back.

The Reform Policy and Tibet

With the dawn of Dengist era from 1978 in China, Tibet also experienced a reflection of changed Chinese policy and strategy. The wave of liberalization and modernization reached Tibet lately in 1979. Like any other policies of the past Tibet was among the last places to see the liberal reforms set in. The important period of the reform policy from 1979 to 1983 is under study here. For one thing, the reform policy had multiple repercussions in Tibet. This policy being adopted at the backdrop of the Cultural Revolution stand in stark contrast to the state's preceding policy. This period of reform process provided more or less a silver lining for Tibet in the mostly dark period

of Tibet's existence under China. The liberalization in Tibet particularly came about as a welcome wind of change.

The Cultural Revolution in Tibet caused an irreparable damage to an irreconcilable degree narrowing any chance of a natural co-mingling and accommodation between the two cultural groups – Chinese and Tibetans in any real sense.

Cultural liberalization sought to replace cultural destruction experienced during Cultural Revolution in Tibet under Deng. Every strata of Tibet's population shared the common experience of suffering in different ways in the immediate years gone by. The monks and lamas, the nuns, the aristocrats as well as the common Tibetans were all subjected to the process of 'socialisation' and cultururation. Their common Tibetan culture were attacked from all directions by the use of propaganda, appeasement, persuasion and brute force as and when the perpetrators of 'the culture' felt the situation demanded. After the trial of terror and traumatic experiences which created deep wounds psychologically and physically there was an unexpressed sense of doubt, and mistrust as to what this seemingly liberal policy was in store for them. For one thing, their experience of the past years had such an intense effect on the Tibetan's opinion towards the Chinese and their institution that they would not dare to trust and bask in the sun of the liberal atmosphere. Only few Tibetans actually thought that the Chinese policies in Tibet were all based on good sense of caring for the 'backward' and orthodox Tibetans. Not so the overwhelming majority.

In the context of the Cultural Revolution, what was interestingly noticeable was that the Tibetans in general had learnt to play-act and not displease the Chinese authorities to avoid drawing the Chinese wrath, which had proved to be severe. This acquired quality of play-acting to show their outward loyalty and adherence towards the required Chinese standards by the Tibetans possibly prompted the policy makers to consider extending the liberalisation in Tibet, too considering it safe and beneficial for China. In other words 'socialisation' process was assumed to have been completed in Tibet and so time was ripe for the next steps of socialist development. Also the modernisation that Deng introduced is a blend of certain positive features of capitalism, which demanded a certain relaxation for the individual rights. This perhaps in a sense proves true the derogatory tag that Mao placed on Deng (i.e., capitalist loader). It is not to say that Deng's modernization policy was a shift complete break from Mao's socialist goal, but was rather a shift of strategy marked by a market orientation with limited state control.

On the outset, the reform period was at large a relatively better period marked by many positive features even in Tibet. The economic reform in Tibet started with agriculture and animal husbandary which formed the core of Tibet's economy. Rural economy was decollectivised and the process of redistribution of commune owned land and animals took place. The concept of 'independent management of land by households' was introduced in the agricultural areas. Opening new avenues of township enterprises and

commodity economy in Tibet was encouraged to usher in commodity economy in Tibet. Subsidies and other benefits came in to Tibet for its construction.³

Power industry could tap Tibet's huge potential and the combined installed capacity producing 280 million KW of electricity a year.⁴ Besides this period saw the acceleration of infrastructural facilities in transport, post and telecommunication which had given a further boost for enhancing Tibet's commerce, foreign trade and tourism.

The Move towards Liberalization

The immediate successor of Mao Tse-tung – Hua Guofeng who took over the chairmanship of the Central Committee of the CCP showed the first sign of easing the policies towards Tibet. It is said that under him the lifting up of the decade old policy of routinized straining meetings and studies sessions, and provided a gradual relaxation of political control started. In Tibet the need for development was noted and one of the steps felt needed to lay the infrastructure was by laying down railway links between Tibet and China. It was in the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC in December 1978 is generally considered as the point of departure from the Maoist era in the history of the PRC. This was the juncture that marked Deng's consolidation of control within as well as consolidation of the leadership of the CPC. From then on the PRC embarked on a series of

³ *China Daily*, 26 August, 1982, Passim.

⁴ *Beijing review*, May 20-29, 1991, p. 21.

economic reforms which amounted to a reversal of the earlier policies which, it may be added, radically transform the face and character of Maoist China.⁵

This broad open door policy and market reforms which were to usher in China's "second revolution" was felt deeply in Tibet too. At the centre the new brand of leaders under Deng signified the revival of more tolerant attitudes towards national minorities. The policy reflected a streak of realism and pragmatism marked by moderation. Under Deng the new leaders sought to set right what was seen as a misunderstanding and misconduct in regard to the question of ethnic minorities in China. They expressed concerned approach towards the question of cultural assimilation. They realized that forced fusion would only continue leading to negative repercussions in the relationship between the centre and its constituent minority as in Tibet. The nationality question of assimilation was therefore to take a natural course and not be attempted through forced amalgamation.

This new approach of allowing practice of the Tibetan culture once again albeit in controlled form is therefore, not being just a considerate step but founded on the grounds of expediency. This new understanding and the subsequent policy affected do not readily imply an abortion of the core aims and objectives designed by Mao, but rather a tactical shift. The new party members at the top still held to the goal of assimilation of all minority nationalities and other groups within China. The alleged mistakes committed

⁵ China at Fifty: A Nation on the Move, *World Focus*, No. 224, February, 2000. P. 11.

by the Party under Mao and his ideological associates was not understood to be in the nature of being a fundamentally wrong goal but rather for faulty work style and diversions marked by excesses. These new brands of leaders were only taking a break from the ultra-left line championed by Mao in the past.

One important aspect of changed approach can be sensed from the fact that the nationality question which was essentially seen as a 'class' question and so any reaction against the state imposed policy was seen as class reaction befitting suppression by the state. But the new policy in a way revived the original nationality policies and guaranteed its safeguard. The state authority was to show constraint and was required to allow the cultural manifestation of the nationalities as nationalities special characteristic to the larger interest of the state – a shift from the earlier policy.⁶

This new changed policy besides other things continued to be prompted by a 'reconciliation' bid where the condemned former Tibetan rebels of the Tibetan rebels who had been imprisoned were released between 1977 to 1979 in post-Mao Tibet. The liberal policy also saw the removal of reactionary labels from around 6000 Tibetans who were known to have completed their required reform through labour.⁷ It may also be recounted that some of the Tibetans whose properties were arbitrarily confiscated during the Cultural Revolution were duly compensated now. These gestures were followed by compensations paid to those wrongly accused and punished. The states

⁶ Warren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, p. 564

⁷ *Ibid.*

initiated effort to placate the Tibetans was apparent here. Other aspects of this period of liberal reform and modernization bid in Tibet will be dealt in the succeeding lines.

The Nature of Liberalisation and Modernisation in Tibet

As mentioned the third plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee held in December 1978 reflected a clear policy change. Here Deng Xiaoping took the reins of the party and was the prime representative of a more liberal policy. Denouncing the modus operandi of the Cultural Revolution style he introduced his 'Four modernization' in a liberal setting. This reforming turnaround policy was envisioned for the whole of China. Deng's ascendancy reflected the onset of a more flexible and engaging policy towards the minorities. Basing on the premise of a voluntary and natural assimilation the party's task, it was felt, was to create an environment conducive to usher in an ultimate assimilation of the minority nationalities in spite of the longer time span required for achieving such a target. Under this united front policy the Chinese authorities created a situation reminiscent of the early 1950s of the honeymoon era where Tibetans life and culture were left largely untouched. This step can also be understood to entice the minority leaders into cooperating with the CCP and produce a workable atmosphere. Economic prosperity and networks initiated by the Government was expected to integrate Tibetans with the Chinese without forced compulsion which is a break from the past policy.

When this policy of modernisation was introduced in Tibet, the Chinese were also likely to have taken into consideration the rich mineral resources of

Tibet (and other minority regions). To let it appear that the new policy was not to arbitrarily or forcefully imposed the against the interest of the minority nationalities, some sort of appeasement was to be affected by letting, if not all, at least the influential class of Tibetan people taste a sense of participation in the affairs of the state. This aspect of reality was echoed later in 1983-84 and all the more complemented the policy of liberal reforms and modernization. For setting in this new policy of liberal reform and modernization Deng Xiaoping found in Hu Yaobang an ideal person to direct the actual policy process in Tibet. In Hu Yaobang Deng could trust with the task of translating his new policy of mixing state authority and certain aspects of capitalist philosophy. As a result the post of Party secretary in Tibet was given over to Hu Yaobang to translate the new policy into action.

Hu Yaobang was the man who in the actual sense brought about the new policy into Tibet. His liberal bent of mind as well as his concern for the TAR was evidently manifested. In May 1980, Hu Yaobang himself led the fact-finding mission to Tibet after reports of great misconduct of the party cadres in Tibet. He can easily be singled out as one leader who vehemently echoed the gross mistakes committed by the cadres during the Cultural Revolution. During his tour which revealed the ground realities in Tibet, in a strongly worded speech he sharply criticized the party cadres in Tibet. As an agent of the state authority Hu owned the responsibility for the past acts of omission and commission. He plainly made it known that the Party members in Tibet had led the people down. It was only through his character that some measure of

hope among some Tibetans in Tibet could be instilled. He promised to alleviate the quality of life of the Tibetans and formulated his six point policy or direction.⁸ This assurance of the six-point once again offered space for the exercise of regional autonomy, something which they have virtually been deprived of since the 1959 revolt.

Besides, it also guaranteed the safeguard and development of Tibetan culture, language, and education which was in line with the past nationalities policy. In the economic front too, special provisions were laid down in Tibet. For instance a three year recuperation period was announced in Tibet for taxes and compulsory state purchase of quotas. This concession was in order in Tibet in a span of two three years which seemed quite a difficult task. It was observed that there were appreciable moves towards this target in Tibet.

There was also an expressed concern to sensitize the PLA in Tibet along with the cadres in Tibet to show respect for the nationality rights conferred by the State. For this it was required of the Chinese cadres in Tibet to learn Tibetan language for easy communication with the Tibetans and efficient administration thereby. This requirement when compared with the policy of the erstwhile leaders is a complete reversal. In the past it was emphasized and made necessary that any Tibetans who was to serve in the Government administration was required to learn Chinese not just for convenience sake but as a matter of policy. During the course of executing this policy Hu did not hesitate to remove party members who acted as bottlenecks against the reform

⁸ Dawa Norbu, *Tibet, The Road Ahead*, p. 289

policy. For instance, Ren Kong, the first secretary to CCP was removed because of his alleged anti-reform stance and Yin Fatang was given that position.⁹ The achievement level of the magnanimous assurances that sought to bring about change and the change affected in reality in Tibet during the early 80s as consequential to it will be enlightening.

Effects and Repercussions of the Reform Policy

The reform policy was conceived with the short time goal of alleviation of the economic situation plus the restricted promotion or more so relaxation of Tibet's culture. It is also an attempt to create a conducive environment for goodwill and for striking a feasible solution over the nationality issues. The long term objective was same as ever – to assimilate the Tibetans in the fold of Chinese Han culture, in spite of the fact that the reform policy displays a pleasing face the success of the policy is the extent of achieving the economic target of modernization and also the success of the effort to establish a participant and engaging relation with the Tibetans are areas of concern.

Hu's six-point policy can be seen as Deng's local interpretation of the "Four Modernization" and liberalization in Tibetan context. The new promised package not only sought to undo the wrongs of the immediate past but also to bring back to life the guaranteed rights to the Tibetans, which had been stripped off since the 1959 uprising. In economy it made an attempt to be a creative policy by laying new foundation for Tibet to meet the needs of the times.

⁹ Warren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, p. 568.

Of all the assurances that the new policy heralded, the one which had a pervasive effect was the relaxation shown towards Tibet to let its ailing economy nurse back to health. On top of that it promised of a flexible economic policy suitable for catering to Tibet's special needs. It even proposed of subsidies for development in agriculture and animal husbandry. The announcement even went out of the ordinary by its expressed appreciation of Tibet's rich Buddhist culture something which the Chinese State was not expected to show. Hu's promise was welcoming in the light of acute economic crises. The Tibetan farmers and nomads in particular did gradually make use of the economic independence granted by the State to once again freely decide in their own whatever was deemed best by them. It was a great relief to come out of the commune system which was introduced and regulated by the State. It had proved to be a drastic failure and Tibetans suffered acutely under this programme.

In spite of the many concessions granted by the State and the promise of economic upliftment, the response from the Tibetans were not so forthcoming. Being occupied by their tempered tears and doubts to embrace the opportunity offered lost all hope and trust in the good intentions of the Chinese. They had in the past experienced how the State had often detracted from its promises and assurances. The State propaganda had also been one instrument which was employed to spread exaggerated statements at best and pure lies at its worst. The benefits of developmental efforts and modernising elements, limited as they were not benefitted by the intended beneficiaries i.e., the Tibetans. It was

the Han population who benefitted from the construction of government offices, hospitals, hotels, etc.¹⁰ When these new announcements were made the Tibetans in general not only had fresh wounds from the immediate past occupying them but also harboured deep mistrust to expect anything good from the Chinese. This explains why questions were often raised as to who actually benefitted from all these economic endeavours and public utility services – the Tibetans or the Chinese who were staying in Tibet. It is also another fact that the government in Tibet was surprised that Tibetans take the credit for the present growth in market economy as the result of their own individual efforts – not the government. In fact, they expressed fear and resented continuing government interference in their lives.¹¹

Revolution also marked certain other negative features. For instance the government initiated drive for population transfer of Hans from China to Tibet from early 1980s onwards increasingly posed a threat of demographic invasion, which has increasingly become a source of conflict and mistrust.

Besides these assurances did not translate into reality because of the obtrusive tendencies of the regional cadres whose powers and privileges were threatened. The regional leaders and members were mostly the agents of the Cultural Revolution in Tibet and did not favour the idea of divulging powers and privileges to the people, which were till then in their hands. On top of that

¹⁰ Wang Xiaopiang & Bai Nanfeng, *Poverty of Plenty* 1991; John Ackerly, *Development for Whom?* Human Rights Tribune, January 1992, at 4.7.

¹¹ Melvyn C. Goldstein and Cynthia M. Beall, "The Impact of China's Reform Policy on the Nomads of Western Tibet", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 6, June 1989.

they resented what they felt was the lack of appreciation for their contribution and instead they were criticized in the most scathing manner particularly by Hu Yaobang, for their role in Cultural Revolution. So their idea was to obstruct the policy from being realized. Another one of Hu's proposal was to fill at least two-thirds of the government, initially received opposition from the leftist within the Party.

Liberalisation also affected certain positive changes in Tibetan culture up to certain extent. This effort too was another attempt to instill a sense of 'recommitment' of the government towards the promise expressed in the original Constitution. In a way it was to mark a new dispensation of Chinese authority which would respect the culture of the Tibetans. But monasteries like Ganden, Sera and Drepung which were destroyed were not to be rebuilt. This can more closely be defined as an effort to placate the Tibetans over the loss of their wealth of culture rather than a wholehearted effort to replace the lost. It is more to do with echoing the intent of good sense. Also the religious institutions were now placed under regulation of the State. The terms of the qualification for a monk as well as the number of monks to reside in a particular monastery was now to be decided upon by the State. It may be recalled that these restrictions were imposed in the background of Cultural Revolution, which saw a drastic reduction of not only the temples but also the number of practicing monks.

In Lhakang Chemo Monastery for instance, the limit of the number of monks that were to be allowed to enter the monastery was 50 and the age of

entry was placed at 18. Besides it was announced that the practice of religion on private homes were abolished by the State. This State regulation of what falls within the ambit of religion implies that the State had opted to interfere and influence religious aspect, which happened to be the centralizing feature in Tibetan life and restrict it within tolerable limits.

People began to revert back to the use of traditional Tibetan clothes and other aspects of their manifest culture. This here clearly show that the Tibetans deeply attached a sense of value to their way of life. Two decades of forced cultururation did not seem to have achieved much. This aspect of Tibetans nature is revealed time and again.

As regard to governance in Tibet, Hu Yaobang's declared intent of letting the 'ethnic' Tibetan cadres compose the bulk of the administrative work force did translate into reality in good measure. It is said that since 1980 there was a noticeable replacement of the Chinese cadres in Tibet by freshly inducted Tibetan cadres. According to a certain projection published by the Chinese, the composition of the Tibetan cadres rose from what was 39.9 % in 1965 to almost double figure of 60.9% in 1986¹² especially at the lower level. Practical difficulties did hamper the process of what is phrased as Tibetanizing the bureaucracy especially because of want of qualified and educated workforce as a result of the party policy. To the Chinese the apparent increase in the proportion of the Tibetan cadres in Tibet carried legitimizing factor though the

¹² Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, p. 390.

ultimate decision making powers in Tibet was wielded by the Chinese. The Chinese once again had, as in the past honeymoon period to look to the Tibetan elite who served in the administration but was made to retire during the Cultural Revolution. Many of these cadres were reinstated and promoted to positions.

This period is also noteworthy for the effort to reinstate the right to autonomy to the Tibetans as provided to the nationalities in the past. The first such attempt transpired at a meeting of the NPC in Beijing in January 1980. This expressed need led to a more specific safeguards to uphold the right to autonomy in the revised Constitutions of 1982 and still further provisions for the same in 1984 Constitution which continues till today. The functioning of the administration in Tibet in the actual sense showed a highly restricted form of self-governance by Tibetans. Besides the unquestionable dictatorship of the party 'guiding' its activities. The further handicap comes from the fiscal dependence on the Centre for the budget. In effect though the situation was far better than the period of Cultural Revolution that had just elapsed by, in terms of domestic independence in governance, real autonomy was only an illusion.

What this period disproved was the reality that economic elevation of the people's basic needs do not necessarily win the legitimacy or loyalty towards the State. Deng's reform and modernisation was not, in spite of its relative developmental outcome a panacea for Tibet's longstanding issues. This period of historical experience was probably a reminder of that fact.

Both economic modernisation and liberalisation which were the hallmarks of the reform process undertaken by the State saw limited and restricted execution in spite of the enthusiastic declarations by the leaders at the top like Hu Yaobang. The party cadres with their bureaucratic outlook could not deliver the desired aim of the policy-makers. In retrospect, the highlight of the reform policy was that it could create a conducive atmosphere for dialogue engagement with the Tibetan leaders to address the Tibetan issue which indeed was a commendable breakthrough which carried with it the hope for a political settlement.

CHAPTER VI

The Period of Dialogue: Conclusion

The dialogue engagement between Deng Xiaoping and Dalai Lama marked another unique dimension during this four decades of forced co-existence of Tibet with China. The period of dialogue from 1979 to around 1990 witnessed an attempt to exercise the option of diplomatic settlement of Tibetan issues. This period took off along with the new wave of economic modernization and liberalization, which had set in China. The orientation towards a dialogue initiated by China reflected the new brand of political leaders at the top policy making levels in China. It indicated a new look towards Tibet and a desire to better the relationship between the Tibetans and the Chinese state.

The initiative towards a dialogue was attributed to Deng Zaoping, the new leader of China. There had been no Chinese official contact with the exiled Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama in India since the 1959 revolt and the subsequent escape. China's new leader Deng, finally broke the two decades of silence and had indicated an open policy to address the Tibetan case with the exiled Tibetan leader. This created an initial hope with the expectation that the dialogue carried the potential to solve the core issues between the two groups.

The rise of Deng Xiaoping signified the upsurge of the liberal rightists within the socialist fold in China. It is likely that the past failures under the guidance of the ultra-leftists led to the downslide of the party's popularity in

China and their political ideological space was filled by the former. This new reform policy of liberalization, modernization and even the orientation for a dialogue set off around the same time and reflects overall coherency. All these indicate bold imagination and calculation. The twin policy of liberalization and modernization not only set the stage for a dialogue but in a way can be seen as an extension of it. It is quite probable that China wanted to clinch a profiting deal at this convenient and opportune moment when China seemed to be riding high on the road to prosperity and progress. China had assumed that Tibet had experienced commendable advancement because of the state's proactive policy.

Besides, another supporting factor was possibly that China's international image which had already improved could receive a further boost if China could be projected as making a positive diplomatic overtures towards Tibetan issue. China's liberalization and policy of openness had already received international applaud. Any productive outcome following a successful negotiation with Dalai Lama would not only further the international prestige of China but also quell the growing internationalization of the Tibetan issue as an outcome of Charismatic personality of the Dalai Lama. But Chinese worst fear is that he could be used for anti-Chinese purposes by hostile powers. This particularly worries the Chinese given the Soviet interest in Tibetan question through the Dalai Lama since the late 70's.¹ Again, when Dalai Lama is reined in to China his presence can be used to legitimize Chinese presence in Tibet as well as used to defuse any untoward eruptions from

¹ Israel Epstein, *Tibet Transformed*, Beijing, 1983, p. 51-52

Tibetans directed towards China. Here it is acknowledged expressly that Dalai Lama's image still had great influence in Tibet in spite of the official propaganda otherwise spread now and then. This explains why China in course of the dialogue tried to opt for a deal touching on Dalai Lama's personal interest by bypassing the Tibetan question, which concerned Tibetans on the whole.

Orientation Toward Dialogue

The overall setting – social, political and economic conditions reflected the onset of a less turbulent time especially of the nature generated as a consequence of unsound government policy. Tibet had been through trying times during Cultural Revolution. The new leaders in China seem to be less extreme in their ideological leanings and in their policies towards Tibetans. Particularly Deng's ascension brought some hope. Deng was among the few Chinese leaders who had a long association with Tibetan question. He had been a one time political commissar of the southwest military region in the 50's, the period where Tibet was at relative ease with the Chinese. In fact, Deng was accused for his policy of appeasement towards the Tibetan ruling elite for which he had to undergo reform process.² His concern towards the Tibetan issue seemed not to wane over the years. It is a credit to Deng that he as the supreme leader of China chose to acknowledge the Tibetan problem and sought to address it. The relevance of the dialogue was heightened by the development of a new creative and bold policy towards the problems of Taiwan

² Tsering Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows*, p. 374.

and Honkong where the slogan of 'one country two systems' was coined.³ The effort to integrate Taiwan, for one, into mainland China retaining its special capitalistic economic and social system reflected Deng's sense of accommodation and flexibility in the midst of variety. Though the question of Tibet was to an extent in a differing contextual plane of reality, yet it was expected to provide a yardstick or framework for resolving the Tibetan problem if a realizable solution comes about.

For his part the Dalai Lama too had been alive to the issue all along and had explored over the possibility of an acceptable solution. For instance he did also ponder upon the idea of a federation with China. The very essence of the Tibetan question was redefined. The 60's and early part of 70's marked the call for plebiscite to define Tibet's political destiny. The closing years of 70's witnessed the Dalai Lama's expressed concern regarding the Tibetan issues focussing on the welfare and ultimate happiness of the six million Tibetans.⁴ This seems to indicate that the Tibetan issue had boiled down to the issue of social and economic welfare, political and other aspirations conspicuous by their absence. It may be recalled that Deng Xiaoping had in 1978 meeting with Gyalo Thondup delineated the area of talk in the following words: "The basic question is whether Tibet is a part of China or not. This should be kept as criteria for testing the truth... so long a it is not accepted that Tibet is an

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. p. 375

integral part of China there is nothing else to talk about”.⁵ There apparently seemed to be a confluence between the broad parameters implied by Deng and Dalai Lama over the issue.

China’s unilateral initiative to clear the path for a dialogue was evident. It was significant that Tibetans were permitted to pay visit to their relatives living in exile, in India. Another good will gesture was an invitation to the Tibetans living abroad to open business in Tibet. For the first time the Chinese also extended an unconditional call for the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet. But the officials also carried a tinge of warning that if the Dalai lama did not make use of the opportunity offered them the future may not hold room for such hospitality.⁶

China found in Gyalo Dhundup (Dalai Lama’s brother) who had retired from Diaspora politics, a convenient go-between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese leaders. Having received the approval of the Dalai Lama, Gyalo Dhundup met Ulanfu, the director of the United Front, the department in charge of tackling Tibetan issue in Beijing. On March 1979 he was referred to meet Deng himself. This meeting with Deng reflects the sense that China meant business. Deng firstly expressly apprised Gyalo that China was on the highway to progress. It was in the meeting that Deng mentioned that the Dalai Lama might even send some people to confirm the progressive situation in Tibet. Following this allowance a series of three visits took place.

⁵ “Gist of the Chinese views conveyed by Jiang Ping, Deputy Head of Central Committee United Front, to the three Representatives sent by the Dalai Lama”, Beijing, October 28, 1984, p. 4.

⁶ Tsering Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows*, p. 375.

In good faith, though with a cautious optimism the Dalai Lama accepted Deng's conciliatory gesture. The Dalai Lama reciprocated by arguing to send fact-finding delegation to Tibet. At this point of time the invitation had thrown up lots of questions in the Dharamsala for the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile. If Deng's contention about the development is right and if the Tibetans at large there had been drawn into the Chinese way of life, the response towards the visit of Dalai Lama's delegates would be hardly welcoming which would mean the people's preference for a status quo relatively with and under China. This also would mean that the Dalai Lama had lost his respect, influence and appeal to Tibetans in Tibet in the two decades of virtual separation. But the actual visits had shown that these injected doubts were not to be.

The series of visits proved to be a shock for Dalai Lama and the government in exile, but a more shocking revelation for the Chinese. The August 1979 delegation of five members led by Kalan Juchen from Dharamshala was allowed to visit TAR and all other Tibet inhabited areas (Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan). The second visit under Tenzin Tethong the Dalai Lama's sister Jetsun Pema, especially for observing the conditions of education. It is recounted that all the three delegations received shocking revelations of the realities inside Tibet.

In all places that they visited they were greeted by enthusiastic crowds. The people of these different areas not only poured out their painful experiences of tragedies under the shadows of communist China but also in

their state of excitement chanted nationalistic and political slogans much to the disdain and embarrassment of China. This unanticipated reaction took the Chinese off guard and they were compelled to call off further visits especially of the fourth one, which was supposed to represent the high ranking Lamas. The visits were quite revealing. The Tibetans support for Dalai Lama as well as their firm commitment towards Tibetans common failure over the past twenty years of communism.⁷ It transpired even to the Chinese (like Hu Yaobang for one) that Tibetans chose to pour out their deeply held grievances to the visiting delegates rather than doing the same to the Chinese authorities who had always been present. This showed that there was something fundamentally wrong in Chinese's Tibet. It in fact questions their legitimacy in Tibet. To them this gesture of allowing the delegates was realized as a blunder which exposed the lack of understanding the deeper realities within Tibet. For instance the Chinese were the victim of their own propaganda in Tibet. They thought China had done commendable work in alleviating the lives of Tibetans overall, and so expected them to be grateful and loyal. These changes were also thought to express the visiting Tibetan delegates. In other words they believed that they won over the Tibetans. On the contrary the delegates too were amazed at the resounding response of the people everywhere. The third delegates discovered that the standard of education was much to be desired and what they had witnessed was "lies and deception" of the Chinese.⁸ The claims of the

⁷ Ibid., p. 378.

⁸ Beijing Review, 3, December, 1986, Passin. The proposal has been repeated many times since then as in 1989 to the US Congress by Embassy of PRC in Washington.

Chinese were found pathetically wrong. What China had supposed to be her strong point turned out to expose her hypocrisy and superficial understanding of Tibet region. For one thing the Chinese never understood in full the intensity of the sense of pain and the loss inflicted by the Chinese regime in the past. But they seem to believe that the situation on the whole had improved under China. This reflects a selective amnesia on the part of the Chinese leaders. Now it was China who had felt the need to be more cautious and guarded in any future engagement. But this did not mean that China had rolled back its earlier commitments expressed. Hu Yaobang as the Chinese spokesman conveyed to Gyalo Thandup the CCP's policy on the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet on July 28 1981.

Hu Yaobang's offer was a capsulation of assurances and guarantees that were to be granted to Dalai Lama on his return. The proposal made by Hu on July 28, 1981, to Gyalo Thandup and comprise the only concrete proposal made by China so far was the five points' which was a reply to the Dalai Lama's basic demand made in 1978 and 1979. For one thing the Chinese were understood in full the intensity of the sense of pain and loss inflicted by the Chinese region in the past. But they seemed to believe that the situation in Tibet on the whole had improved under China. This reflects a selective amnesia on the past of its leaders. Firstly the Dalai Lama was assured of a new era marked by political liberalization, stability economic prosperity and improved relations among nationalities. He expressed China's desire to condon the follies of the past pointing to the 1959 revolt. Besides the Dalai Lama was promised

of reinstatement of status and privileges that existed before 1959. He was also to hold the post if Vice-president of the NPC and Vice-chairman of the NPPC,⁹ which in actuality did not signify exercise of any real power. Also China's sense of adding much significance to ceremonies was manifested in including an offer of grand reception on his behalf and also the 'privilege' to held a press conference. Lastly he was to be provided a residence in Beijing and would also be allowed to visit Tibet "from time to time".

Added to these assurances were the expressed expectations, which formed the second and third points of the proposal. The Dalai Lama was not to echo the historical repression of the period following the 1959 suppression. Also his presence was expected to uphold China's unity and promote solidarity between Han and Tibetan nationalities.¹⁰

What this proposal indicates is that China by no means was willing to touch the larger issue of Tibetan question. China wanted to reduce the Tibetan issue to a microscopic level of one person-The Dalai Lama rather than treating it life size. Dalai Lama had lamented in response that the China had reduced the issue concerning 6 million Tibetan people to a mere discussion of his personal status- a question which concerned all Tibetans.¹¹ To go further, even that one person-the Dalai Lama was not to play any active political role of any consequence in Tibet if at all he returns back. He was expected to be a passive figure whose only importance was the symbolic importance that goes with the

⁹ Waren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation* p. 572

¹⁰ Tsering Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows* p. 385.

¹¹ The Dalai Lama, *Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet*, New Delhi: 1988, p. 4

institution. Here a wide gap in relative perceptions regarding the nature and solution of the issue comes to light. The Chinese wanted to clinch a favourable deal by making the least concessions. The Chinese offer was perhaps devised to hook Dalai Lama by exploring a chance weak point by making promises to satisfy his personal 'good' as against the common good of all Tibetans. The Dalai Lama rejected the proposal lamentably but did not rule out the hope of holding a more meaningful dialogue.

Between 1982 and 1984 two exploratory talks were held in Beijing between CCP Central Committee Functionaries and the Dalai Lama's delegates. These talks covered more concrete and specific issues which could become the agenda for future Sino-Tibetan negotiation if both parties show serious interest for a compromised solution to the Tibetan question.¹² In April of 1982, a delegation composed of three Govt. in exile: Kaloms, Juchen Thupten Nangyal, Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari and P.T. Takral as interpreter (during 17 point agreement) had a meeting with Xi Zhongxam, secretary of CCP central commission, Ulanfu, head of the Nationalities Affairs Commission, and Yeng Jingrent.¹³

Dalai Lama proposed two demands, which would redefine the status of Tibet within China. The first was the administrative unification of all Tibetan inhabited area, known as the Chalka Sum (U-tsang, kham and Ando), as a single political and administrative entity. The second was a demand for

¹² Dawa Norbu, "China Dialogue with the Dalai Lama 1978-90, Pre-negotiation or Dead End?" *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 3, 1991

¹³ Warren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, p. 573.

granting an equivalent special status as offered to Taiwan and Hong Kong. Both the proposals were shut down. The question of unification was rejected on the contention that Tibet united would produce too large and unwieldy an administrative unit. The real factor for the Chinese probably lies in the possible growth of Tibetan nationalism which would carry even greater potential for conflict with China. They also indicated that the Bod Chalka-Sum had never existed as one administrative unit in the in the past. The religious or political influence of the Dalai Lama in all these regions did not reserved a consideration. The second proposal also did not receive a positive consideration. The point put forward was that Tibet was already 'liberated' and unified with the motherland where as the other two were not. Probably the deeper realities could be that any such liberal grant might create demands from other trouble spots like Xinjiang. Also Tibet did not have economic clout like the two to 'bargain' for any fair claims. On top of that China did not want it be seen that Tibetan delegates could bargain out certain provisions from the Chinese. Rather if at all they could come about with anything. China wanted to let it be seen as the delegator of such allowance out of its magnanimity rather than something that the Tibetan delegation comparably made it yield. After rejecting it the Chinese interlocutors once again insisted the five points made by Hu Yaobang was the only term work for any negotiation.

After a two-year gap, in Oct.1984, Dalai Lama once again sent a three-man delegation to Beijing. They met Yang Jingren, the Director of the United Front, and Jian Ping, the deputy director. To their previous list the Tibetans

added the proposal for demilitarization of Tibet in order to pave the way for transferring it to a Zone of peace.¹⁴ Rejection marked this meeting too and it closed down without any break through. The Tibetan's demand for reunification of the whole of Tibet plus a greater degree of autonomy also was rejected and the Tibetans were implicitly told to drop these demands if they wanted to have any negotiations at all with the Chinese.¹⁵ Here too the Chinese reiterated of Hu Yaobang's 1981 proposal. Jang concluded with the self contradictory remarks that China's open doors policy exists as ever considering that the defined offer was not subject to change and they were told that was to adjust themselves and accept the offer.¹⁶ This shows that China had been moving towards rigidity and lost its earlier enthusiasm. It was not open to any new grounds to arrive at an attainable level. China was playing a diplomatic game. On one hand it did not expressly write off its open door policy regarding its talks with Tibetans while following a rigid stand. Thereby including itself from international pressure on China. While on the other hand it was buying time to let Dalai Lama passes away. This national had set in with the growing economic progress expressed in China. It is expected that instead of Dalai Lama being the source of possible harmony and unity in Tibet the economic prosperity could possibly woo the Tibetans towards the mainstream of China's

¹⁴ *Tibetan Review*, January 1985, p. 6.

¹⁵ "Gist of the Chinese Views" conveyed by Jiang Ping, Deputy head of the Central Committee United Front, to the three representatives sent by the Dalai Lama, Beijing transcript October 1984, p. 4

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1-8.

interest towards dialogue seemed to have dwindled with the increasing rise of the ultra leftists within its party.¹⁷

Since September 1987, over 50 Tibetans were killed and many wounded when major incidences occurred in March and December 1998 as a result of police atrocities on apparently a peaceful demonstration. Growing tensions exacerbated by the large Chinese influx into Tibet seem to be the reason for open confrontation between the Tibetan demonstrators and Chinese security forces particularly in Lhasa.¹⁸ These 1987 and 88 proposals made by Dalai Lama reflected not only the Tibetan the long-time Tibetan problem but the immediate domestic concern in Tibet. It was on 21st Sept 1987 that a proposal was put forward by Dalai Lama on his congressional Human Rights Caucus. Dalai Lama laid his 5 points counter proposal to the Chinese 5-points: 1) Transformation of the whole of Tibet (Inner and Outer) into a zone of peace; 2) abandonment of China's population transfer policy which threatens the very existence of the Tibetans as a people; 3) respect for the Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms; 4) restoration and protection of Tibet's natural environment and the abandonment of China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and dumping of nuclear waste; 5) commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between Tibetan and Chinese peoples.¹⁹ The 5-points peace plan proposal reflects a broad-based proposal. To these proposals the Chinese

¹⁷ *Tibetan Review* Vol. 231, NO. 7, June 1986, p. 6.

¹⁸ Asia Watch and Amnesty International reports, see also M.C. Van Watt Braag, "Resisting Chinese Final Solution" *Spectator*, 10 October, 1987

¹⁹ The Dalai Lama, *Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet*, New Delhi, 1988, p. 5-9

expressed its willingness to meet Dalai Lama's representatives and did not directly react to it.

This reflects the broad based nature of Dalai Lama's approach taking into consideration the immediate concerns which have become issue areas. The Chinese only expressed willingness to meet Dalai Lama's 2 representatives and did not comment directly on the proposal.

After a year in 1989, the Dalai Lama's Strasbourg's (France) proposal came about, titled as the "Framework for Sino-Tibetan negotiation". This proposal was moulded in a more conciliatory tone and is largely seen to provide a major political concession to China. He talked of an arrangement where the PRC would take the responsibility of Tibet's foreign policy and defense. Under it Tibet was to possess an independent Foreign Affairs Bureau dealing with commerce, education, culture, religion, tourism, science, sports and other non-political activities.²⁰ This proposal is largely seen to reflect a scaling down from the demand of independence to one that of genuine autonomy which will not conflict with Chinese sovereignty or security concerns. In simpler words complete domestic autonomy of a unified Tibet known as Cholka-Sum with only in February 1990, the Chinese Embassy in its desired democratic framework was conceived. This was supposed to bring about a major breakthrough. This seemed to be a realistic compromise trading

²⁰ The Dalai Lama, "Address to the Members of European Parliament", *Tibetan Bulletin*, Vol. 19, No. 2, May-July, 1988, p.2.

on the middle path between the lofty expectations of the Tibetan masses for complete independence and than impersonal power that completely denies it.

China initially chose to remain silent on it. Only in 1990, the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi expressed its disapproval for 5-point peace plan and Strasbourg Statement to be the basis for negotiation. China invented new conditions for any future talk. Apart from 'independence' the Chinese wrote off any chances for accommodating 'semi-independence' for Tibet. China also objected to the composition of Dalai Lama's team that comprised of members of the cabinet of the government in-exile the Kashag, accusing them of 'splittist' activities. They also dismissed any ground for involving foreign personality in the talks. On these two counts the Dalai Lama clarified his actions. It appears that China meant to sleep over the question without actually pronouncing the closing of a dialogue option. Reflecting the Dalai Lama two proposal in 1987 and 1988, the Chinese brought up another controversial question, which it affirms as the criteria for any future negotiation

China also objected to the composition of Dalai Lama's team which comprised of members of the Cabinet of the government in exile the Kashag, accusing them of 'splittist' activities. They also dismissed any ground for involving foreign personality in the talks. On these two counts the Dalai Lama clarified his actions. The issue now centered on the question of historical interpretation In the first two proposals made by Dalai Lama it was remarked that prior to the 1950 Chinese take over Tibet was an independent nation. The statements recognized the post 1950 situation where Tibet found itself, as an

integral part of China, and on that basis Dalai Lama was willing to negotiate the future status of Tibet.²¹

But for the Chinese cadres this acknowledgement of Tibet's present reality was not a sufficient criteria for holding a dialogue with it. The Chinese who had been worry of its ideological justification in Tibet that, first and foremost, if not anything else should give it a legitimizing image for its presence in Tibet within, and more so without. To this China wanted Dalai Lama try publicly accept that PRC's action in 1950 was historically valid and Tibet had always been a part of China.²² The very idea of Tibetan independence either in the past or in the future was something rightly unacceptable a notion for China, which touch its sensitive chord. This has continued to be the most point.

The Dalai Lama plea for "associate status" with Tibet as expressed which meant a high degree of autonomy in domestic affairs was also rejected. China for one had no plea for Tibet beyond the existing grant of regional autonomy for minority nationalities. Any concessions made outside this, it was largely felt, would be interpreted as an acceptance of Tibet's historical Chinese. This had added another area of disagreement which had tightened the scope of future dialogue and which could not just be wish away. On this contention China had conveniently chose to stay away from any further dialogue in spite of its official openness.

²¹ Dawa Norbu, "China Dialogue with the Dalai Lama 1978-90, p. 356.

²² Ibid., p. 356.

It is for the Dalai Lama the possible concessions had being made and there was no question of conceding the claim of Tibetan independence before the Chinese occupation in 1950. The Dalai Lama had indicated that China should try to look at the Tibetan issue in the present context where there is a common ground for agreement, rather than being caught up in the contentions past – which for the Chinese had assumed an inalienable part of future negotiation. This had caused a major stalemate and for China possibly an excuse to put Tibetan issue to cold-storage.

Conclusion

In the light of the Tibetan issue, the Chinese policy in Tibet as it coursed through the first four decades (under study) had oscillated from side to side reflecting a complex dynamics in time and space. The facts and realities that was prevailing then in Tibet, China and even at the international level have influenced the Tibetan question and the Chinese policy towards it. The vicissitudes of, events, ideologies policies and personalities had all contributed as causal factors and left their imprint on the physical, social and cultural scape of Tibet – in these four historical decades under study. The more important and pressing question of a political solution for Tibet has continued to remain an unresolved issue for these fifty years.

At the foundation of this period of four decades lay an imposing attempt at coexistence between the two distinct ethno-cultural groups through a military-politico arrangement This period has shown two different realities at

work .At one level the Chinese state which had taken over Tibet wanted to effect changes in Tibet's socio-cultural and economic composition by employing state agencies. At another level the Tibetans' strong resolve to oppose any change in their way of life – political, cultural or otherwise without discrimination. From another angle throughout the period two diametrically opposite tendencies- centripetal and centrifugal were at work in Tibet and China. In other words the Chinese policy in Tibet was always guided by the ultimate aim of integrating Tibet to China through socio-cultural assimilation. On the other hand the Tibetans wanted to maintain their cultural identity and freedom to decide their own destiny without any interference from outside. The Chinese policy in Tibet has been directly and indirectly influenced by these two strong undercurrents. This period witnessed China's policy oscillating between one of appeasement on the one hand and on the other side marked by oppression, repression and manipulation – a carrot and stick policy. These two policies are exemplified in the two phases – Cultural Revolution on one hand and the period of liberalisation and modernisation on the other. The state-sponsored policy of demographic invasion that was started in the 80's is one such policy which seeks to suppress the problem by apolitical means. This population policy is increasingly becoming a potential source of ethnic conflict in Tibet.

The orientation towards the dialogue in the 80s in spite of the attention and enthusiasm it received failed to bring about a solution. The ensuing deadlock is mainly because of two factors. The inadequate weightage given to

the issue arising out of the lack of understanding the Tibetans' social and psychological necessities in the early phases, and the need for a consensual political framework with provisions for genuine accommodation of Tibetans' 'rights' is witnessed in the latter phase. In retrospect the Strasbourg Proposals made by the Dalai Lama in 1988 has generally been seen as a realistic compromise between the Tibetans' aspiration and the Chinese' interests. Incidentally, the Chinese has opted to shut itself off from the dialogue posture since that proposal and continue to remain so throughout the 90s reportedly waiting for the present charismatic Dalai Lama to pass away.

As for the Tibetan issue, a just and long lasting solution will come about only when the two sides concerned sincerely address it in good faith. This possibly will come about only when the national and international environment becomes conducive for such a breakthrough. Until then the Tibetan problem will continue to exist manifesting itself in newer forms and experiences, and marked by lingering uncertainties.

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