

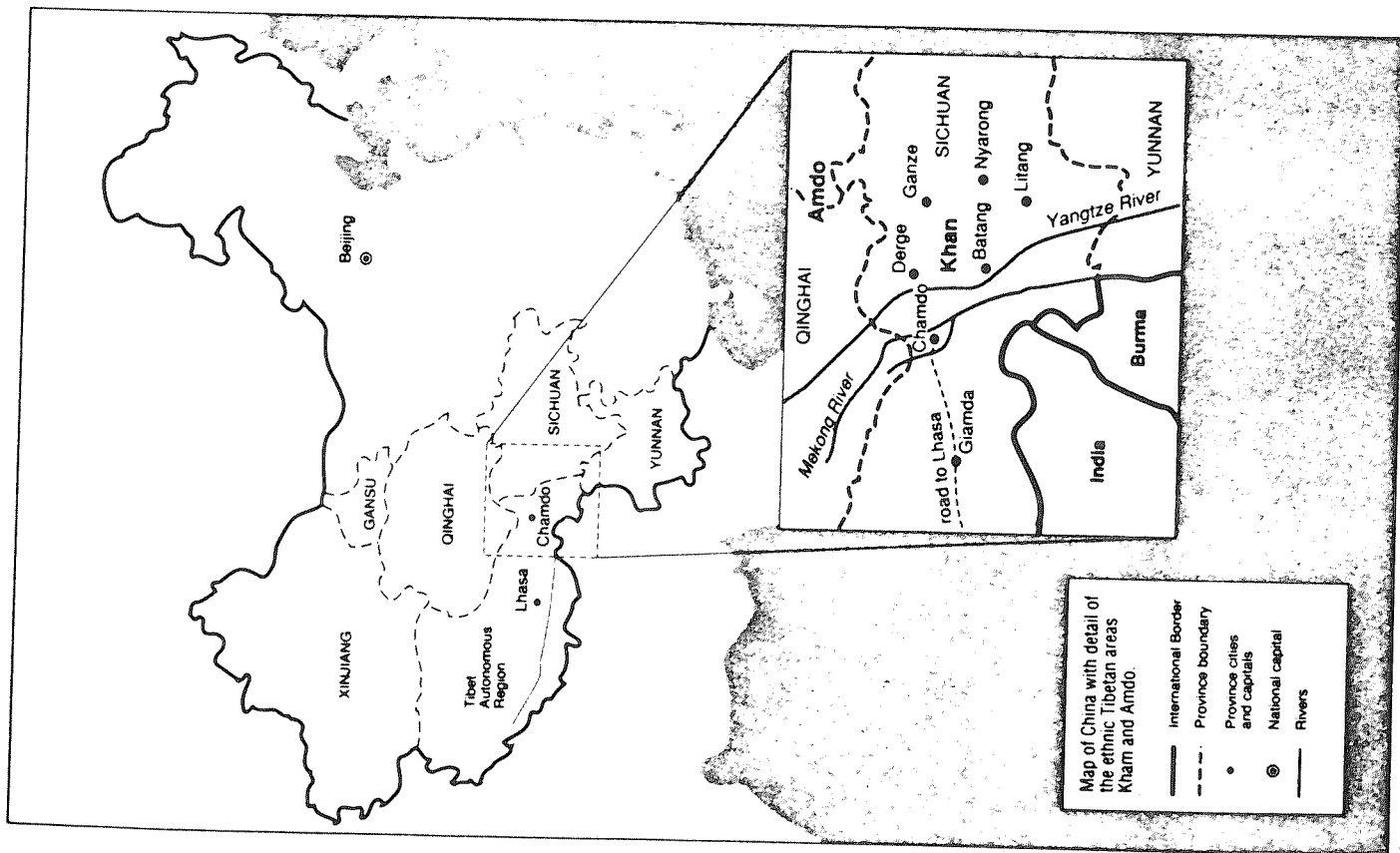
# 7 The Dragon and the Snow Lion: The Tibet Question in the 20th Century

Melvyn C. Goldstein

On March 5, 1989, Tibetan monks and nuns demonstrated in Lhasa in support of Tibetan independence, precipitating the fourth and worst riot in a series that began on October 1, 1987. The extent of the anger and violence exhibited by Tibetans in these riots took the Chinese government by surprise, simultaneously embarrassing, infuriating, and frustrating it. Beijing believed that its post-Mao Tibet policy broke with past excesses and was conciliatory and sympathetic to the economic and cultural aspirations of the Tibetan people. But now, despite this reform, the government was faced with repeated demonstrations and violent riots. As a result of the unrest, China imposed martial law in Lhasa on March 7, 1989.

Nineteen eighty-nine was also the year that His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the former ruler of Tibet who now resides in Dharamsala, India, received the Nobel Peace Prize. His acceptance speech did not describe a Chinese reform policy in Tibet but rather presented a grim picture of events there, claiming terrible systematic violations of fundamental human rights.

The pervasive tendency of both the Tibetan exiles and the Chinese leadership to describe events in Tibet in either black or white—horrendous oppression or magnificent reform and development—presures the nonspecialist to choose one side and accept its version in entirety. This chapter attempts to provide an alternative; an interpretation in which shades of gray are explored and the complex historical antecedents of today's situation are presented. While it is possible that this approach may irritate some in both Dharamsala and Beijing, I hope they will take it as it is intended—as an attempt to set out for Americans a balanced account of a volatile and complex issue.



The recent disturbances in Tibet are the current manifestation of the longstanding conflict over what the political status of Tibet vis-à-vis China should be: the "Tibet question." Throughout the 20th century China and Tibet have sparred over this issue, each shifting positions and strategies, gaining temporary advantages but unable to achieve the elusive goal both seek—a permanent, mutually agreeable solution. The individual players who began the competition have long since died, but the game continues, with today's players launching new strategies to compel the antagonist to accept their conditions as the appropriate conclusion.

The complexity of the issue is such that one cannot even begin to examine the contrasting perceptions of conditions in Tibet without precisely defining what is meant by "Tibet," since the referent of this term has become badly confused. The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan exile community generally subsume under "Tibet" not only the actual political entity (state) that was ruled by the Dalai Lamas until 1959 but also all the ethnic Tibetan areas in the adjacent Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan. Many Westerners, knowingly or unwittingly, have followed suit.

These areas, however, have been under Chinese control for centuries, as noted by Tibetologist Hugh Richardson in distinguishing between "ethnographic" and "political" Tibet.<sup>1</sup> The current Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) is virtually identical to the political entity the Dalai Lamas ruled. In this chapter, therefore, I use "Tibet" to mean the political entity that was equivalent to Tibet in the 1930s and 1940s, that is, to today's TAR, and not the artificially conceptualized "greater Tibet" that Tibetans in exile would like to see created.

### The Historical Context: Tibet under the Qing

The political entity we know as Tibet became subordinate to China in the early 18th century during the height of the Qing (Manchu) dynasty. China's overlordship, however, was never formalized—the mutual rights and obligations of the two sides were not delimited in treaties or other written agreements. Tibet became a loosely linked protectorate of China, but Tibetan officials governed their country with their own officials and laws. Manchu influence and authority were implemented at the top through imperial commissioners (called

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Richardson, *Tibet and Its History* (Boston: Shambhala Press, 1984), pp. 1-2. See also Josef Kolmas, *Tibet and Imperial China* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1967), pp. 41-42, and Eric Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 1-8.

*amban*) who were stationed in Lhasa together with a small bodyguard force. The Qing emperors of China were not interested in incorporating Tibet and administering it as a province. They were content to ensure that Tibet's activities and policies did not conflict with their interests. As Manchu power eroded during the 19th century and China became preoccupied with the onslaught of Western imperialism, its hegemony over Tibet became increasingly symbolic.

British initiatives at the turn of the 19th century changed this, setting in motion a series of events that altered the status quo dramatically. Tibet suddenly assumed center stage in an international drama that continues to this day.

### The British Thrust

British influence on the Indian subcontinent was extended to the border of Tibet when it subordinated the string of Himalayan states and principalities, particularly when Sikkim, an ethnic Tibetan principality lying along the main trade route from Tibet to India, was converted into a protectorate in 1861. The British then tried to establish cordial relations with Tibet, but failed because the Tibetan government was disinclined even to hold discussions let alone to permit travel and trade. Britain turned to China, the *de jure* overlord of Tibet, to gain access. The Anglo-Chinese Tibetan Trade Regulations of 1893 gave British merchants the right to travel to the Yatung trade mart in Tibet and permitted British government officials to reside there to oversee British trade. Tibet, however, was not a party to this agreement and refused to accept its terms.

In 1899 Lord Curzon appeared on the scene as the new viceroy of India. Curzon escalated the importance of British contact with Tibet by linking the political situation in Tibet to the security of India. In particular, he raised the possibility that Tibet might fall under Russian domination.

Curzon quickly decided that China's inability to exert control over Tibet rendered working through Beijing an exercise in futility. He pressured Beijing to arrange for a meeting with Tibetan officials and in late 1903 sent an expedition across the border to a Tibetan administrative headquarters about 15 miles north of Sikkim. Lhasa, however, was unwilling to discuss matters and insisted that the British leave Tibetan territory at once. Faced with the embarrassing specter of another British failure to open Tibet, London agreed to permit the mission to proceed farther north. Although the objective was to open negotiations rather than to invade *per se*, the British officers and officials ultimately led their Indian troops deeper and deeper into Tibet.

They easily defeated the ragtag Tibetan forces they encountered along the way and in 1904 became the first Western troops to conquer Lhasa.

Throughout this period the Chinese imperial commissioners in Lhasa urged the 13th Dalai Lama to negotiate with the British expeditionary force, but the Dalai Lama ignored this counsel and fled to Mongolia, presumably to seek Russian support against Britain. The regent he left in his place was forced to accept British terms (in the Lhasa Convention of 1904) to ensure the withdrawal of British/Indian troops. Signed only by Tibet and the British head of the expeditionary force, it excluded any other foreign power from exercising political influence in Tibet, a clause that was vague enough to exclude China as well as Russia.

With British India now poised to subordinate Tibet under its ever-expanding political and commercial umbrella, London responded negatively to the conquest of Tibet, virtually repudiating the expedition's occupation of Lhasa. Even more important, London promptly entered into negotiations with China to obtain the latter's acceptance of the Lhasa Convention, thereby reaffirming China's *de jure* control over Tibet. The resultant 1906 Anglo-Chinese Convention restated the Chinese overlord position in Tibet and restricted the British role primarily to commercial affairs.

#### China's Response

The invasion of Tibet and the Lhasa Convention of 1904 dramatically altered Chinese policy toward Tibet. Until then, the Qing dynasty had evinced no interest in directly administering or Sinicizing Tibet. The British thrust, however, now suggested to Beijing that unless it took prompt action its position as nominal overlord in Tibet might be lost. China, although enfeebled and on the brink of collapse, responded with surprising vigor. It launched a two-pronged policy aimed at administratively incorporating the ethnic Tibetan territories in Sichuan province and taking a more active role in day-to-day affairs in Tibet proper. The 13th Dalai Lama's overture to the Russian czar proved futile, and his position in exile became precarious. He had been "deposed" by the Chinese government in 1904 because of his flight. Although Tibetans never questioned his legitimacy as their ruler, the increased domination of affairs in Lhasa by the imperial commissioners made him unwilling to return to Lhasa without first achieving some accommodation with the Chinese.

In 1908 the Dalai Lama went to Beijing, which ultimately agreed that he could return to Tibet to rule, but when he arrived in Lhasa in

late December 1909, he learned that a Chinese army of several thousand troops from Sichuan was on its way to ensure that he toed the line. For a month he vacillated as to how to respond and then, as this army entered Lhasa in February 1910, he again decided to flee into exile, this time south to his former enemies in India. China again deposed the Dalai Lama and redoubled its efforts to expand its control over Tibet.

#### The Tibet Question: 1913-51

Tibet seemed set on a trajectory that would have ended in its incorporation into China proper when the Qing dynasty was suddenly overthrown in 1911. The 13th Dalai Lama (still in exile in India) organized a military force that quickly expelled all Chinese officials and troops from Tibet. He triumphantly returned to Lhasa in 1913 and unequivocally declared himself the ruler of Tibet, no longer acknowledging even symbolic subordination to China.

#### The Simla Compromise

The new Chinese republican government, however, continued to claim Tibet as a part of China. In fact, because one of the fundamental goals of the Chinese nationalists was the reunification of all parts of what had been the Chinese empire, control of Tibet took on great symbolic significance. It was, therefore, obvious to the Dalai Lama (and the British) that unless some agreement could be reached regarding Tibet's status, Tibet would have to militarily defend the *de facto* independent position it had established in 1913. A tripartite conference was convened by Britain in Simla, India, in 1913 to settle this issue. Attended by Chinese, Tibetan, and British plenipotentiaries, it produced a draft convention in 1914 that set the background for the next three and a half decades.

Tibet wanted the conference to declare it independent. The only way to achieve this aim would have been for Great Britain to strongly champion the Tibetan cause, but British strategic aims were not congruent with those of Lhasa. His Majesty's government decided not to support an independent Tibet or even to threaten to do so if China proved recalcitrant at the conference. Great Britain was unwilling to face the international criticism from Russia and China that support for Tibetan independence would have engendered. The British were fearful of harming their trade interests in China and Hong Kong, and, to a degree, were also fearful that an independent Tibet might soon become "independent" of British influence.

Britain proposed that Tibet be accepted as a self-governing dominion nominally under China but with Chinese influence and power severely limited. The reduction of Chinese influence and power in Tibet would create a buffer zone along India's northern border where British commercial interests could thrive. Tibet ultimately agreed to the Simla compromise because it guaranteed Lhasa complete control over its affairs, including its own army, money, and so forth. The price it paid was that it had to accept China as its suzerain.

The political dimension of the Tibet question, however, turned out to be easier to accommodate than the territorial one. Tibet and China found it impossible to agree on where to draw the boundary between Tibet and China. The 13th Dalai Lama's government demanded (as the Dalai Lama does today) that ethnic Tibetan areas east of the Mekong-Yangtze divide (in Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan, and Sichuan provinces) be ceded to Tibet, while China demanded that the boundary be established only 125 miles east of Lhasa at Giamda (see map), an area well west of the Mekong River. The British tried to broker a compromise, but the new Chinese government found the territorial compromise unacceptable and immediately repudiated the Simla Convention. Britain and Tibet then signed an agreement binding each to the terms of the unsigned Simla Convention, including a statement that so long as China refused to sign the agreement it could not enjoy any of the privileges included in it. However, since China did not agree to the convention, the Tibet question really remained unresolved. Great Britain had achieved its goals, but Tibet obtained no *de jure* status accepted by China.

These events precipitated a major confrontation between two factions within Tibet. On the one hand, a group of pro-British, aristocratic officials argued for modernization including the development of a strong, modern military. This faction had the ear of the Dalai Lama until the early 1920s, when a conservative, religious-led faction convinced him that this policy was a mistake. These conservatives believed that alien Western values were a greater threat to Tibet's theocratic state than was China, since in the long term, the diffusion of atheistic Western ideas would weaken the dominance of Buddhism in Tibet. The Dalai Lama's decision to scale down dramatically the plans for modernization led to new overtures from China for bilateral talks without British involvement. Initiatives continued but little was accomplished, and no Chinese officials were permitted to reside in Tibet throughout the period 1913-33.

Chinese fortunes in Tibet improved somewhat after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1933; nevertheless, when the Kuomintang government of Chiang Kai-shek fell to the communists in 1949, the Tibetan

question was still no closer to settlement than it had been at the time of the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. The relevant Western countries were content to adhere to the convenient Simla conditions, acknowledging *de jure* Chinese suzerainty over Tibet while dealing directly with Tibet as if it were a *de facto* independent state. Much of the current confusion over Tibet's political status derives from this double standard on the part of the Western nations concerned.

For example, in 1948 when the Tibetan government sent a trade mission to the West, British officials in Hong Kong stamped the Tibetan passports with entry visas valid for three months. The Chinese government (of Chiang Kai-shek) discovered this and asked London how it could take Tibetan passports when it did not accept Tibet as an independent state. The British Foreign Office assured the Chinese that a mistake had been made, promising that in the future no more visas would be issued on Tibetan passports. Consequently, when the Tibetan mission requested renewals, it was advised that these visas would be issued on separate pieces of paper called "affidavits of identity." The Tibetans, surprised and indignant, refused to accept these. The British Foreign Office solved the problem by crossing out the words "three months" on the expired visa stamps and substituting "nine months." Thus, Great Britain kept its promise to the Chinese government, since these were not new visas, and at the same time mollified the Tibetans by admitting them on passports issued by the Tibetan government.<sup>2</sup>

#### The 17-Point Agreement

The establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 set in motion events that two years later broke the post-1911 deadlock. The new Chinese government insisted, as had Chiang Kai-shek, that Tibet was an integral part of China, and it achieved in two years what its predecessors had not accomplished in three decades of diplomacy, intimidation, and outright force: it propelled Tibet to the negotiating table by invading across the Yangtze River in October 1950 and quickly capturing the bulk of the Tibetan army stationed there. The road to Lhasa was now virtually open. China, however, clearly wanted to "liberate" Tibet peacefully, not conquer it militarily, so the People's Liberation Army (PLA) halted its advance while Beijing demanded that Lhasa open negotiations to settle the Tibet question. The Tibetan government sought help from the United Nations, the United

<sup>2</sup> Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 598-601.

States, India, and Britain, but none was forthcoming so it sent a negotiating delegation to Beijing in 1951. Once again, as they had been forced to do in 1904, Tibetan delegates reluctantly signed an agreement—the "17-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet." In it, Tibet formally acknowledged Chinese sovereignty over Tibet in exchange for Chinese agreement to maintain the Dalai Lama and the traditional politico-economic system intact.

The 17-Point Agreement established a set of mutually agreed-upon ground rules for Tibetan-Chinese relations for the first time since the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911. But both sides soon found that putting it into practice would be neither straightforward nor easy.

## Tibet and the PRC

*Coexistence: 1951–59*

The years between 1951 and 1959 were marked by increasingly serious levels of conflict and discontent, particularly after 1955 when the situation deteriorated, ending in the abortive Tibetan uprising of March 1959 and the flight of the 14th Dalai Lama into exile in India.

Many conservative monk and lay officials were from the start openly opposed to a sizable Chinese presence in Tibet. Their expectation (or perhaps empty hope) was that accepting Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and letting China conduct Tibet's international relations and defense would sufficiently mollify Beijing that it would allow Tibet to continue governing itself internally without political, economic, or social change. They were, therefore, offended and responded with overt hostility when the first groups of Chinese officials and troops entered Tibet with their red flags and irritating propaganda about Tibet being liberated from imperialism and being once again part of the great "motherland."

On the other hand, the Dalai Lama and the majority of the leading government officials felt that they must try in good faith to develop cooperative relations with the Chinese in order to make the agreement work and preserve the integrity of Tibet's religious polity. Although they did not like the active Chinese role in Tibet, they were still in charge of its administration, for the Chinese were being careful to ask the traditional government to issue any orders they wanted promulgated. The Tibetan government's strategy appeared to be to yield on peripheral issues so as to protect the essential one—continuity of the Dalai Lama's rule and religion.

Beijing's view of the agreement bore little resemblance to the conservative Tibetans' view. The Chinese believed that the issue of whether Tibet was an integral part of China had been decided and that eventually, when Tibetans were more receptive, socialist reforms would be implemented as was currently being done among the Chinese peasants. But since Tibetans were clearly not then receptive, the Chinese adhered to the terms of the 17-Point Agreement, refraining from instituting any reforms regarding land, economy, or class structure among the mass of Tibetan peasants and nomads. Most villagers, therefore, never laid eyes on a Chinese person between 1951 and 1959.

Instead the Chinese tried to win popularity among Tibetans by showing that they respected Tibet's religious institutions. Every year the Chinese gave money alms (*gye*) to the 20,000 monks of Lhasa's great monasteries, and they also refrained from verbal attacks on the traditional socio-economic system. Chinese propaganda in Lhasa in 1951 focused on eliminating so-called imperialist influences and on helping Tibet to modernize rather than on communizing it. Many Tibetans were given trips to China to see what modern Chinese cities looked like, and schools and clinics were established with the approval of the Tibetan government. Women's and youth groups were started and were well received by many members of the aristocracy and trading community who had been thwarted in their attempts to modernize Tibet before 1950.

But there were problems, the most obvious of which was a consequence of the arrival in Lhasa of large numbers of Chinese troops and officials. The sudden need to feed thousands of Chinese, together with the Chinese policy of paying with silver dollars, created an instant shortage of grains and substantial inflation as early as 1952. This gave impetus to strong anti-Chinese feelings among many Lhasans and to the formation of a secret association (the People's Assembly) which demanded that the Chinese repatriate most of their personnel.

Moreover, many of the Tibetan officials who were trying to make things work distrusted Chinese long-term plans for Tibet. But despite such problems and doubts, the years 1951–55 passed with the Tibetan government still in control, and the traditional system continuing to function as it had before 1951. At this juncture, events outside Tibet proper changed the situation within Tibet for the worse.

The liberal terms laid down in the 17-Point Agreement were valid for the Tibetan state ruled by the Dalai Lama but did not cover the adjacent ethnic Tibetan areas east of the Yangtze River that had been under Chinese administration. The Chinese government, therefore, had no qualms about beginning socialist reforms there. These moves

initially provoked a few small outbreaks of violence, but the reforms continued, and in 1955–56 major revolts occurred in which a large number of Chinese soldiers, officials, and citizens were killed. The PLA harshly quelled these revolts by late 1957, but they resulted in a sizable immigration of armed and bitter Eastern Tibetans into Tibet proper.

The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government now feared that the Chinese would begin to implement socialist reforms in Tibet, and the Dalai Lama began seriously to consider fleeing into exile. In late 1956, when he was visiting India with his entourage, he precipitated a crisis by deciding not to return. In early 1957 Mao Zedong publicly announced that reforms in Tibet would be postponed for six years, and if Tibetans were still not willing to accept reforms after that time, they would be postponed again, for decades if necessary. With this commitment, the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa.

But Chinese distrust of the leading officials in Lhasa and intrusiveness in government continued to increase. By March 1959 events deteriorated to the point where the Dalai Lama's key officials prevailed upon him to flee again. He did so, and in his wake about 100,000 Tibetans sought refuge in India, Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan. Simultaneously, a Tibetan uprising took place and was quickly quelled by the PLA. From that point on, the traditional society ended and Tibet came under the direct administration of China. In 1965 Tibet was formally restructured as the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Nineteen fifty-nine, therefore, marked the reemergence of the Tibet question as an international issue, with the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile denouncing the 17-Point Agreement as invalid. The exiles began to accuse the Chinese of human rights violations and to seek international support for Tibet's self-determination and independence. These activities continue to the present.

#### *Direct Chinese Rule*

China employed harsh measures to suppress the 1959 uprising in Lhasa: many Tibetans were killed in the fighting around the Dalai Lama's palace, and others were arrested or sent to labor camps. Beijing soon decided, however, that the Tibetan peasantry was not ready for a major transformation of its economy into communes, so it adopted a policy of bringing Tibet to socialism gradually, implementing some changes but not others. For example, although the mass of monks were sent home from their monasteries, individual Tibetans were still permitted to practice their Buddhism. The overwhelming majority of peasant households kept the fields and animals they held in 1959,

and economic decisions, as well as all income, remained under the control of individual households.

The emergence of the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" in 1966 eventually changed that. Over the next four years farming and pastoral nomadic areas were restructured into communes. Farmers and nomads became "owners" of shares of the commune, but in reality they were simply laborers who worked in accordance with the commune leaders' orders. As in the rest of China, individuals earned food, goods, and cash by their labor, accumulating work points throughout the year. Although no attempt was made to resettle Chinese (Han) farmers in rural farming or nomad areas during this period, Tibetan traditional culture came under severe attack.

The policy known as "destroying the four olds" (old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits) was energetically implemented with the aim of creating a new homogeneous and atheistic communist culture in place of the traditional one. Private religious activities were forbidden, religious buildings (including monasteries, temples, and even prayer walls) were torn down, and Tibetans were forced to abandon deeply held values and customs that went to the core of their cultural identity. The class struggle sessions conducted by Tibetan cadres and the constant barrage of propaganda contradicting and ridiculing everything Tibetans understood and felt created severe psychological dissonance. In short, Chinese policy during this period sought to destroy the social and cultural fabric of Tibet's traditional way of life.

#### **Chinese Policy in Tibet in the Post-Mao Era**

The death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the fall of the Gang of Four, and the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping created a new cultural and economic ideology in China. The full impact of these changes reached Tibet only in 1980 when the highest echelons of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) stepped in to investigate a controversy over conditions in the TAR, in effect to examine the consequences of China's 20 years (1959–79) of direct rule in Tibet.

#### *Assessing Conditions in Tibet*

While China was discarding Maoist ideology and policies in China proper and assessing how to rectify the damage done there, Ren Rong, the Han first secretary of the CCP in Tibet, was reporting that political conditions in Tibet were excellent and that Tibetans were solidly behind the party and the motherland. At about the same time,

the Dalai Lama's brother Gyalo Thundrup and representatives of the Chinese government held preliminary talks in Hong Kong at which both sides expressed an interest in settling the Tibetan question. This led to Beijing's inviting the Dalai Lama to send a delegation in 1979 to travel and observe conditions in Tibet. Beijing obviously believed that the delegation would be impressed by the progress that had been made in Tibet since 1959 and the solidarity of the Tibetan people with the nation.

This first delegation included another brother of the Dalai Lama and several officials from Dharamsala, the headquarters of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile. The Tibetan delegation first visited part of Amdo (in Qinghai province), where it received a tumultuous welcome. Beijing, embarrassed by this expression of support for the Dalai Lama, contacted Ren in Lhasa asking him what would happen if the delegation were to continue to Lhasa according to plan. Ren is said to have replied that the people of Lhasa were more ideologically developed than the simple farmers and herders of Amdo and strongly supported the ideals of the Communist Party; there would be no such problems in Lhasa. So strongly did the local administration in Tibet believe this that it organized neighborhood meetings in Lhasa just before the arrival of the delegation to exhort the local Tibetan "masses" not to let their hatred of the "old society" provoke them to throw stones or spit at the Dalai Lama's delegates, who were coming as guests of the Chinese government.

The Tibetans agreed politely and then gave the delegation a welcome surpassing anything it had received in Qinghai. Thousands upon thousands of Lhasans mobbed the delegation. Many cried and prostrated themselves, others offered ceremonial scarves, fighting to touch the Dalai Lama's brother, and a few shouted Tibetan nationalistic slogans such as "Tibet is independent" and "Han go home." Since Beijing officials were accompanying the Tibetan refugee delegation, there was no way for Ren, who was known to be unsympathetic to Tibetan cultural, religious, and language reforms, to cover up this fitasco and his utter misreading of the sentiment of the Tibetan masses.

This incident revealed to Beijing the extent to which Tibetan nationalism and identification with the Dalai Lama still existed among the Tibetan masses, who presumably were at the bottom of the "old society" and should have been grateful to China for "liberating" them from "feudalism." Twenty years under China apparently had not extinguished Tibetans' belief in the sanctity of the Dalai Lama and his position as leader of the Tibetan people. It also apparently had not extinguished their feeling that Tibet should be ruled by Tibetans in accordance with Tibetan values.

When the Tibetan refugee delegation returned to Beijing it informed the Chinese leadership that it was appalled by the massive religious and cultural destruction and the overall poverty, backwardness, and lack of material progress it had witnessed in Tibet. This shocked the highest reaches of the CCP and forced Beijing to reassess the situation in Tibet and begin a process of readjustment that continues to the present.

After considerable preliminary investigation, Hu Yaobang and Vice Premier Wan Li made an unprecedented fact-finding visit to Tibet in May of 1980 to see conditions for themselves. They apparently were not pleased by what they saw and heard, and acted immediately, taking Ren back to Beijing with them, presumably so that he could not thwart their reform plans. Hu publicly announced a sweeping six-point report on Tibet that addressed political, economic, cultural, and educational issues.

This public statement was apparently mild compared with the secret report and speeches Hu made to the party cadres, in which he is said to have equated the previous 20 years of Chinese rule in Tibet with Western colonial occupation. This decision of Hu Yaobang and the Central Committee of the CCP to support those inside and outside China who criticized conditions in Tibet formed the basis on which a series of reform measures was implemented in Tibet in the following years.

#### *China's New Reform Policy*

The reform policy represented Beijing's attempt to redress the wrongs that had been done to Tibetans, albeit within the framework that Tibet was an inalienable part of China. It had four salient dimensions: quickly improving the standard of living of individual Tibetans; developing the infrastructure and economic potential of Tibet to launch sustained growth in the years ahead; alleviating charges of cultural deprivation by allowing more real autonomy for Tibet, particularly with respect to cultural and religious practices; and decreasing Han-Tibetan friction by reducing the Han presence in Tibet through the return of large numbers of Han cadres (and their families) to China proper.

This policy was also aimed at the Tibetan exile community headed by the Dalai Lama. First, it would blunt the negative criticism about Chinese oppression and poverty in Tibet, enabling Beijing's new leadership to portray itself in the Western media as moderate and forward-thinking with regard to Tibet. It would also make Tibetans in the TAR less susceptible to the propaganda of the exiles and possibly

even persuade the exiles and the Dalai Lama that they could realize their economic and cultural-nationalistic aspirations with Tibet as part of the PRC.

Improving the standard of living of Tibetans, particularly the rural farmers and herders who constitute 80 to 90 percent of the population, was immediately addressed through the dissolution of communes and the introduction of the responsibility system. As in China proper, farmland and animals were divided up among commune members, and households were permitted to produce and sell in accordance with market forces. Beijing, however, went much farther in the TAR than in the rest of China, exempting farmers and nomads in Tibet until 1990 both from taxes and from the contract system, that is, from having to sell a quota to the government at below-market prices, as Han farmers must. This exemption has been very effective, allowing Tibetan families to generate surpluses in a traditional system of production. Although there are still pockets of rural poverty in Tibet due to poor soil quality and climatic factors, by 1987 the majority of Tibetan farmers and nomads were using surpluses to purchase new commodities and start renovating old houses or building new ones.

Tibetans in urban areas such as Lhasa have also fared well. Tibet is classified as a hardship area because of the high cost of living, so salaries for cadres are very high. A new Tibetan cadre/researcher just out of college, for example, received a starting salary of about 200 yuan a month from the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences in 1987, roughly double what he or she would have received in Beijing. Private individuals and small co-ops opened restaurants, "sweet tea" shops, bars, grocery shops, and the like, many of which did very well. In fact, by 1985 Lhasa was engaged in a frenzy of consumption and consumerism. The markets were filled with Japanese televisions, cassette recorders, radios, and other imported luxury items (the TAR government having convinced Beijing that the harsh Tibetan environment required imports rather than Chinese-made products). It was not unusual to see Tibetan traders wearing swords and traditional native dress riding big new Honda motorcycles. There was also a thriving business within the Tibetan community for traditional Tibetan luxury items such as icons, silver bowls, and the like. Economically, therefore, the quality of life for Lhasans and rural folk improved markedly during the 1980s, particularly after 1984.

The government also launched a major program to develop the economic and administrative infrastructure of the TAR. A series of 43 major projects costing about 300 million yuan was begun in 1983, including a 1,200-room luxury hotel in Lhasa, a new gymnasium, improved geothermal electric facilities, and so forth. The target date for

completion of these was August 1985, the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the TAR.

In 1983 the "open" policy was expanded to Tibet. Tourism, which had begun as early as 1980, was greatly expanded, and by 1986 there were between 30,000 and 40,000 tourists visiting Lhasa per year (whereas before 1985 there were only about 1,500). Similarly, foreign businesses as well as other provinces in China were invited to help develop Tibet, and beginning in 1985, Tibet opened somewhat to Western and Japanese academics. China obviously felt it had nothing to hide in Tibet.

On the level of Tibetan culture, a major series of reforms occurred, not all at once to be sure, but incrementally. Traditional secular and religious books were published in Tibetan, and an effort was made to foster modern Tibetan literature through the development of several literary magazines and the publication of poems and short stories in newspapers. Lhasa Television began broadcasting programs on a second channel in Tibetan, with foreign and Chinese shows often dubbed. The Department of Tibetan Language and Literature at Tibet University was expanded.

Individuals were allowed to practice traditional Tibetan Buddhism. They could worship openly by circumambulating holy sites, turning prayer wheels, erecting prayer flags on their houses, going on visits to monasteries and temples, and making monetary and other offerings (such as butter lamps) to deities, monks, or monasteries. Altars could be maintained in houses, new statues could be built and consecrated for such altars, and by 1985-86, monks could be invited to perform prayers in people's houses. Pictures of the Dalai Lama were openly for sale in the Lhasa marketplace, and local Tibetans wore Dalai Lama buttons.

Institutional religion—monasteries and nunneries—also saw a renaissance, although here the government retained considerable control. Beginning in the early 1980s, money was allocated to rebuild and renovate several hundred of the more important monasteries and temples that had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Other monasteries were permitted to be rebuilt with funds donated by private citizens. By 1987 Lhasa's three great monasteries (Ganden, Sera, and Drepung) contained about 1,000 monks, far fewer than the 20,000 they had contained in 1959, but still impressive considering that there were none when the new reforms began.

For Tibetans in Tibet, this was a heady time. Their devotion to Buddhism could be expressed by prayers and deeds, and their perception of the worth of their traditional culture had been vindicated. The old customs and values that had been so severely denigrated during the



“destroy the four olds” campaign reappeared, and people were thrilled at the changes that had occurred. Parents took their small children on religious visits to monasteries so that they would learn their culture, and pilgrims from all over Tibet and the ethnic Tibetan areas of Qinghai, Sichuan, and Gansu flocked to Lhasa to visit the Jokhang temple and other holy sites.

Other policies were aimed at transforming the TAR politically into a more truly “Tibetan” autonomous region. First, a program was started with much fanfare wherein many Han cadres were withdrawn and the number and proportion of Tibetan cadres were increased. Although this did not proceed as well as planned, by 1986 about 60 percent of all TAR officials were ethnic Tibetans. In 1987 a blue-ribbon committee was formed to develop a plan to make the Tibetan language (written and spoken) the official working language throughout the TAR by the year 2000. There was also public recognition in Beijing that Tibet was different from the other autonomous regions in China because of its unique history. Many Tibetan cadres believed that Beijing would soon initiate a second wave of reforms that would establish a special autonomous status for Tibet in which all officials would be ethnic Tibetans and the language of government would be Tibetan.

Simultaneously, a set of policies aimed at developing new linkages with the Tibetans in exile began very successfully. From 1979, Tibetans in exile could visit Tibet to see relatives and Tibetans could leave for visits (with some constraints). Between 1986 and 1988, many Tibetans in exile did in fact visit Tibet, even though they had to accept Chinese visas as “overseas Chinese” to do so. A number of Tibetans abroad expressed interest in doing business in Tibet. There was a feeling of possibility in the air. For the first time some Tibetans in exile began to wonder whether the new Chinese policies might not make it possible for Tibet to be a part of China yet retain the essential elements of Tibetan culture and values. Such Tibetans themselves generally had no thought of resettling, but they were beginning to like the idea of being able to travel back and forth, so long, of course, as Tibet continued along the path to more complete cultural autonomy. This was still China to be sure, and political freedom of expression and assembly as we know them in the West were not permitted, but great strides had been made in permitting Tibetan culture to flourish.

#### *The Beijing-Dalai Lama Discourse*

Beijing's leaders in 1979 appear to have been eager to put the Tibet question behind them. They saw themselves as reformers committed to a policy of improving conditions in Tibet and rightly considered

normalization of relations with the Dalai Lama to be in their long-term interest. Not only would it silence one of China's most vocal critics abroad, but it would also send a positive signal to Hong Kong and Taiwan. It would undermine the small nationalist underground that existed in Lhasa, help to satisfy the Tibetan people as a whole, and allow Beijing to concentrate its attention on its real problem—revitalizing China's decrepit economy.

Nevertheless, Beijing set clear parameters regarding the political status of Tibet. Tibet was an inseparable part of China, and self-determination was not an acceptable issue for discussion. The only issue on the table (as it had been in 1914 at Simla and 1951 in Beijing) would be the terms of Tibet's autonomy. The Chinese goal apparently was a “cultural” solution—allowing the TAR to satisfy the religious and cultural aspirations of Tibetans but leaving the current political structure intact. However, Beijing indicated to Dharamsala that it would discuss anything short of independence.

From the Dalai Lama's vantage point, this was also a propitious time. The Maoists were discredited and out of power, and the reformers were turning China upside down as they worked to open China to the West. Vocal though the Tibetan exile community had been about independence, it consisted of only 100,000 members, a minuscule number in comparison with the roughly 2 million Tibetans in the TAR (and roughly 3 million in the bordering Chinese provinces). It was obvious that the long-term future of Tibetans and Tibetan culture lay with the Tibetans in China, and the Dalai Lama apparently felt a responsibility to try to intervene on their behalf. It now seemed possible that an acceptable compromise might be worked out. The question for the Dalai Lama was how much autonomy short of independence was sufficient to permit reconciliation.

By 1982 relations had warmed sufficiently for the Dalai Lama to send a high-level delegation to hold talks in Beijing. The substance of these discussions is not completely known, but it appears that the Tibetans saw the meeting as primarily functioning to educate and “feel out” the Chinese rather than to fix the exact terms of Tibetan autonomy within the PRC. In addition to presenting their interpretation of the history of Sino-Tibetan relations, they discussed the substantial differences between Tibetans and Chinese in culture, race, and religion and the problematic conditions in Tibet and the adjacent ethnic enclaves. It also appears that the Tibetan side insisted that any settlement must include reuniting the ethnic Tibetan areas of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces with Tibet proper. The exiles also presented their views that Tibet should become a demilitarized zone, meaning that all Han troops should be withdrawn. Discussions

also took place about the possibility of the Dalai Lama making a visit to Tibet within the next year or two. No serious progress was made on the terms of autonomy, apparently because Dharamsala was unwilling to discuss a compromise that would address the cultural issues but leave the political structure—continued rule by the Communist Party—intact.

While these discussions were in progress, the exile government and its friends continued to accuse the Chinese of heinous and systematic human rights violations and to lobby worldwide for independence. Highly inflammatory rhetoric was widely used, including the repeated accusation that the Chinese were committing genocide in Tibet.<sup>3</sup> And although the Dalai Lama on occasion indicated that things had improved somewhat in Tibet, this assessment was overshadowed by the torrent of emotional anti-Chinese rhetoric.

In 1984 a second face-to-face meeting between negotiators from Dharamsala and China took place in Beijing. No statements have been made about the content of these talks, but it appears that China was not pleased by the way the discussions were stalemated or by the refusal of the Dalai Lama to ease up on anti-Chinese propaganda, despite the major reforms it was instituting. It decided to fire a shell across the Dalai Lama's bow by making public a five-point proposal that the Tibetan delegation had just rejected. These points included the suggestion that if the Dalai Lama returned to China to live, he should live not in Tibet but in Beijing. This position represented a substantial hardening of the Chinese attitude and shocked the exile community. It is not clear what the Beijing leadership hoped to accomplish by making the proposal public.

#### *Constraints on the Dalai Lama*

Beijing's criticism that Dharamsala was unwilling to negotiate for a realistic settlement—that is, one that focused on greater autonomy within the communist state system rather than on a separate government—is probably accurate. On the other hand, this was no easy matter for the Dalai Lama since despite his obvious desire to reach some

<sup>3</sup> It is clear that there was never any Chinese policy aimed at eradicating Tibetans by singling them out and murdering them as was the case in Nazi Germany with Jews. Those Tibetans who died unnaturally in Tibet during this period did so through revolts and famines, not through a deliberate policy of genocide. There was also no policy of eliminating Tibetans by forcing them to utilize birth control. For a discussion of the population dimension of this issue, see Melvyn C. Goldstein and Cynthia M. Beall, "China's Birth Control Policy in the Tibet Autonomous Region: Myths and Realities," *Asian Survey*, forthcoming, 1990.

sort of rapprochement with Beijing over the status of Tibet, there was no consensus among the exiles as to what terms short of independence would be acceptable. Within the exile community many factions were already unhappy that secret negotiations were going on and were vehemently opposed to the renouncing of the cherished dream of independence, let alone to a Tibet with the Dalai Lama in Beijing rather than Lhasa.

The Tibetan exiles are divided into regional, religious, and, to a lesser extent, political factions. Regionally, the cleavage is between three groups: the Tibetans from Central and Western Tibet (i.e., those from political Tibet), and the two ethnic Tibetan subgroups from the Chinese border provinces, the Eastern and the Northeastern Tibetans (Khampas and Amdowas). Traditionally there was considerable inter-regional hostility, particularly between Central and Eastern Tibetans, who spoke different and sometimes mutually unintelligible dialects. In exile, some Eastern Tibetans set up refugee operations completely independent of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile, and others nominally accepted affiliation with Dharamsala but continued to argue about rights and prerogatives. In the area of religion, some Tibetan Buddhist sects also kept their distance from Dharamsala or operated separately. And politically, the Tibetan Youth Association generally took a much more militant stance than Dharamsala, at varying times advocating violence and terrorism to achieve independence.

Since the government-in-exile had no coercive sanctions at its disposal, the Dalai Lama saw his main role as keeping the various factions in the exile community together. Consequently, he has assiduously avoided taking extreme positions that would generate conflict and flame the preexisting regional and religious animosities. The strategy of his leadership has been to unite the exiles by focusing attention on goals that all share: the preservation of religion, language, and culture and the fight for independence.

All of this constrained the Dalai Lama's options in the 1980s. First, the regional differences made it virtually impossible for him to negotiate with the Chinese over the TAR alone, even if he had wanted to, for this would be impossible to justify to the Eastern and Northeastern Tibetans in exile. Consequently, he has demanded that all ethnic Tibetans must be united in a new Tibet, just as the traditional Tibetan government demanded at Simla in 1914, and he now talks about Tibet as if it had really included these ethnic areas in the 1930s and 1940s. In fact, he now talks of China invading Tibet in 1949 (rather than in 1950, as was the case for political Tibet), since that is when the PLA took control of the provinces adjacent to political Tibet that contained ethnic Tibetans.

Politically, Dharamsala has insisted for more than two decades that the refugees are only temporarily in exile. It has actively urged Tibetans not to accept Indian, Nepalese, or Bhutanese citizenship—that is, to remain stateless—since it feels that becoming citizens of another country would diminish their moral claim to Tibet and perhaps foster their assimilation into the host country. This focus on waiting for Tibet to regain its independence, however, has made it difficult for the Dalai Lama to suddenly inform his refugee followers that something less than independence is now acceptable.

Dharamsala's longstanding accusations about Chinese abuses created a similar constraint because it portrayed Chinese communists one-dimensionally, as monsters. While this may have been true during the Cultural Revolution, it clearly was not in the 1980s. Internally, this approach was highly effective in keeping nationalistic sentiment alive, but it also made talking positively of Beijing's post-1980 efforts in Tibet very difficult within the exile community, if, in fact, Dharamsala ever had any interest in doing so.

There was a similar problem externally. Moderating the virulent anti-Chinese propaganda was also rendered difficult because Dharamsala's most effective weapon against Beijing had been its ability to utilize the very strong human rights and anti-communist interest that flourished in Washington during the Reagan administration to secure new support from influential groups, in particular, members of the U.S. Congress. Dharamsala had attacked China on human rights grounds since 1959 with considerable justification, but now, despite the changing situation in Tibet and China, it was unwilling to relinquish its newfound audience. While the Dalai Lama certainly understood the dimensions of the reforms going on in Tibet (presumably that is why he felt negotiations might be fruitful), he opted to allow a barrage of misleading and dissembling charges, apparently believing such rhetorical confrontation would compel Beijing to agree to better terms for Tibet. Thus, while Beijing continued to improve conditions in Tibet, it received no credit in the West due to the very effective propaganda effort of Dharamsala.

All of this created a vituperative atmosphere not conducive to constructive negotiations. Not surprisingly, as 1985 came to a close the Dalai Lama had still not visited Tibet. The faint hope of 1979 was fading fast. Not only was Beijing angry at Dharamsala's virulent attacks, but events in Tibet seemed to be moving on a course that favored the Chinese and made Dharamsala and the exiles less important to Beijing.

### Beijing's Gains

By 1985–86, there was optimism in Tibet that the TAR would be able to develop and implement new language and cultural policies that would make it again a distinctly Tibetan autonomous region. And in addition to the gains discussed earlier, China scored several international successes—with the British, it completed the plan for Hong Kong's return, the United Nations organized development projects in Tibet (as did the Swiss Red Cross), and major leaders such as Helmut Kohl and Jimmy Carter planned to visit Tibet in 1987.

Beijing also appeared to be making headway in wooing the Lhasan masses. Although this is a simplification, Tibetans in Lhasa in 1985–86 can be divided into three subgroups. There was a small group (about 10 percent), mainly high officials, who were strongly pro-Chinese. Another small group (also about 10 percent) of Lhasa's Tibetans consisted of die-hard Tibetan nationalists who believed that no matter how long it took, Tibetans should resist, or even fight, the Chinese to reestablish an independent Tibet. In between were the mass of workers, cadres, and businesspeople. Their feelings and loyalties were mixed. Although they were bitter at how Tibet had been treated by China and probably shared the aspirations of the activist nationalists, they did not consider independence a realistic goal. Thus, they were unwilling to support the nationalists' position with action. For Beijing, this meant that if it could convince this majority of Tibetans that conditions in Tibet were improving culturally and economically, they were likely to accept Tibet as part of China. On the other hand, if things became worse, they could easily be pushed to support the die-hard nationalist faction actively, compelling China to resort to the use of sheer force to hold Tibet. In essence, therefore, influencing the attitudes of this cohort was a key element in the struggle between Dharamsala and Beijing in the 1980s.

As the new reforms took hold in Lhasa, it began to seem that Beijing's new policy would continue to develop and meet the needs of these Tibetans. One sign of this was the absence of a mass flight of Tibetans to India or Nepal during the 1980s comparable to the recent migration from East to West Germany. Since the importance of a settlement with the Dalai Lama decreased in proportion to the increase in satisfaction on the part of the masses in Tibet, Beijing appeared in 1985–86 to be holding the winning cards. An indication that Beijing believed this to be the case was its insistence that an official Dharamsala fact-finding delegation scheduled for 1986 had to accept visas as "overseas Chinese." When it refused, the trip was canceled.

For the exiles, the possibility that Beijing's reform policy was winning the struggle for the mass of Tibetans and gaining international respectability represented the worst-case scenario. Suddenly Dharamsala found itself in danger of becoming irrelevant to the political process in Tibet. Dharamsala responded by launching a major counterattack whose aim was to attract international attention and support for the Tibetan cause, thereby showing China that it must come to terms with the Dalai Lama and Dharamsala.

#### *Dharamsala's Offensive*

The Dalai Lama's greatest problem was that although there was sympathy for Tibet's cause in the West, no major government anywhere had ever backed its quest for independence. The U.S. government does not support this goal, nor do the governments of Great Britain or India. Thus the exiles' propaganda, though effective in garnering sympathy and embarrassing Beijing, did not represent a direct threat to China's *de jure* claim to Tibet. However, the exiles' increasing contact with and support among the human rights and anti-China factions in the U.S. Congress offered a new, and potentially powerful, tactic for increasing the costs to Beijing of not coming to terms. The strategy was simple. Because China's economic development needed support from the United States and other Western nations, any influence the exiles could exert on U.S. congresspeople (and others) to place stumbling blocks in the way of U.S.-China relations because of China's treatment of Tibet could dramatically increase Dharamsala's leverage in Beijing, even without a change in official U.S. policy with regard to independence. Dharamsala apparently believed that this added leverage would ultimately compel Beijing to accept a different political structure for Tibet as the solution to the Tibet question.

The new Dharamsala offensive had four main components: the Dalai Lama for the first time would himself carry the exiles' political message to the West, where he would make overtly political speeches to government forums; large-scale letter-writing campaigns to Congress would be coordinated by members of Buddhist and other pro-Tibetan organizations in the United States; civil disobedience would be encouraged in Tibet so as to support the exiles' accusations in the West and refocus the attention of the Tibetan people; and the Dalai Lama would demonstrate his reasonableness and flexibility by proposing terms to solve the Tibet question that did not demand full independence.

In late 1986 and early 1987 several high-level meetings of senior Tibetan exile leaders and other "friends" were held in London, New

York, and Washington, D.C., to plan this strategy—in particular the political aspects of the Dalai Lama's visit to the United States in late 1987. The Dalai Lama arrived in the United States on September 19, 1987, and addressed the Congressional Human Rights Caucus two days later, making a proposal that called for the withdrawal of Chinese troops and military installations from Tibet (including ethnic Kham and Amdo) and the resumption of negotiations between Dharamsala and Beijing.

Laced with emotion-laden statements and assertions of human rights abuses and environmental degradation certain to gall Beijing, this proposal was geared to the Western, not the Chinese, audience. Nevertheless, it did not talk of independence, and it openly asserted that the Dalai Lama wanted to hold talks on Tibet's future. Though vague, the proposal played well with Congress and the press in the West.

#### *The First Riot—October 1, 1987*

All of this was eagerly followed in Lhasa, as many Tibetans knew Chinese and regularly listened to the Voice of America radio broadcasts and the Dalai Lama's visit to the United States had been shown on Lhasa television. Less than a week after the Dalai Lama's speech and while he was ending his visit to the United States, nationalistic monks in Lhasa demonstrated in support of his initiative.

On September 27, about 27 monks from Drepung Monastery (located just west of Lhasa) walked around the circular path in the main market area of Lhasa, the heart of the traditional city. Holding a handmade Tibetan flag, they shouted slogans like "May the Dalai Lama live 10,000 years" and "Chinese should leave Tibet." The monks went around the always-crowded path five times. No one interfered with them, since the police had not expected such a demonstration and were not around. After their fifth turn, the monks walked down the main thoroughfare to the TAR government's headquarters and protested there. At that point the police appeared, and the monks were arrested and taken away.

Four days later, on the morning of October 1, 1987, Chinese National Day, another group of between 20 and 30 monks came to the Lhasa market area to show support for the earlier group and demand their release from jail. Police took them into custody and started beating them inside the police station. Some Tibetans on the upper floor of an adjacent building saw this and began to shout from the windows, "Stop beating the monks." A crowd of Tibetans had already gathered outside the police headquarters demanding the release of

the monks, and before long this escalated into a full-scale riot. In the end, the police station and some vehicles were burnt, a number of Chinese stores were destroyed, and anywhere from 6 to 20 Tibetans were killed when police (including ethnic Tibetans) fired at the crowds.

Beijing was stunned by the riots and the anti-Chinese anger they expressed. There had been clandestine nationalistic incidents for years in Lhasa, but these were small, isolated activities that were easy to deal with. Now Beijing had to contend with thousands of average Tibetans who were angry enough to face death and prison by participating in a massive riot against Chinese rule in Tibet. This riot was particularly humiliating to Beijing because it coincided with the attacks of the Dalai Lama and U.S. congresspeople and seemed to prove to the world that they were true.

The Chinese initially claimed that the demonstration was inspired by Dharamsala, and in a sense they were correct. Many Tibetan monks had traveled to Dharamsala and Nepal over the previous three years, and Tibetan refugees from India and Nepal were allowed to visit and live in Lhasa for months on end. Thus the mechanism for such instigation was readily available. And, while it is not clear whether Dharamsala (or other exile elements) actually asked one or more of the Drepung monks to organize a demonstration, it is clear that the demonstration was meant to support the Dalai Lama's new initiative in the United States while he was there.

The Tibetans in Lhasa interpreted the events in the United States in the context of their own system of government and therefore saw the Dalai Lama's speech to Congress as a potential turning point in Tibetan history. With no knowledge of concepts like checks and balances, it was natural for Tibetans in Lhasa to believe that the support shown by members of the U.S. Congress reflected general U.S. government support for the Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence. Many people believed that this meant the United States would soon force China to "free" Tibet. Beijing inadvertently reinforced this belief by launching a string of vitriolic attacks in the Beijing and Lhasa media about the U.S. Congress's interference in Chinese affairs, which seemed to confirm that the events in the United States were indeed extremely important. Thus, while there is reason to believe that Tibetans in exile actually encouraged the monks to stage a demonstration, it is equally plausible that the monks' belief that this was a turning point in Tibetan history produced the demonstration without any direct request from abroad. Whatever the truth of this matter, certainly no one dreamed of provoking a bloody riot.

The real cause of the riot—as distinct from the earlier small demonstration—is complex. Despite the reforms, a residue of bitterness and resentment against the government (which in Tibetans' minds was synonymous with the Han Chinese) remained. And like unseen flammable fumes, this anger and frustration needed only to be ignited. The sight of police beating monks set it ablaze.

The reasons for this residual anger are several. Tibetans were still bitter about the personal and collective (ethnic) suffering they had experienced since 1959 under direct Chinese rule. They saw themselves as engaged in a struggle to keep their culture and national identity afloat in a world of 1 billion Han. In addition, Tibetans resented the condescending attitudes of many Han in Tibet, who appeared to consider them uncouth barbarians and view their culture as inferior. The presence of large numbers of poorly educated Han in Lhasa fueled the problem, creating a myriad of face-to-face encounters that opened past wounds. Not surprisingly, Tibetans invariably interpreted events in Tibet ethnically—Han versus Tibetan. For example, although both Han and Tibetans complained about the Cultural Revolution and about corruption, the Han blamed the Gang of Four (a political faction) while Tibetans invariably blamed the Han and were reluctant to believe that the transition from Mao to Deng Xiaoping signaled a major qualitative change, since Han still dictated the Tibetans' fate.

Moreover, the Chinese insistence on a crash program of economic development in Tibet inadvertently created new problems. One such problem was the large influx of Han Chinese into Tibet after 1983. Ironically, this does not appear to have started as a deliberate Chinese scheme to swamp Tibet with Han "colonists," as is often charged, but rather was an outgrowth of the government's wish to develop Tibet quickly, particularly with respect to large construction projects, and its decision to import thousands of Han workers to achieve this goal. This created a demand for scores of new Han restaurants, shops, and services, and thousands of petty capitalist Han followed to fill these needs. These tradespeople expanded their scope to sell Tibetans all sorts of products imported from eastern China and abroad, as well as traditional items such as incense and prayer scarves for religious offerings at temples. They also came to dominate the industries that repair bicycles, watches, radios, and televisions in Lhasa, and at higher levels, have co-opted much of the private trade in wool, skins, and cashmere between Tibet and the rest of China. Their success sent a message to the surrounding provinces that there was profit to be made in Tibet, and this drew large numbers of new Han annually. Even Han beggars got the message, and by 1988 there were teams of Han with monkeys begging throughout Lhasa.

The explosion of tourism beginning in 1985 added to the influx of Han, who came to dominate the tourist trade as drivers and guides. The general economic prosperity among Tibetans in Lhasa also gave the Han tradespeople plenty of customers in the local service sector. The Han in Tibet are extremely industrious and hard working, and even very nationalistic Tibetans often hired Han rather than Tibetan carpenters because they were cheaper and less trouble (for example, they accepted poorer-quality food while they worked and did not demand the traditional gifts of home-brewed Tibetan beer).

These Han are not colonists in the normal sense of the word. They do not see themselves as permanent immigrants but are, by and large, petty entrepreneurs who have come to Tibet to make money and then return to Sichuan or Qinghai. Moreover, no Han have come to Tibet to move into villages and farms or to compete with the nomads as ranchers. Nevertheless, although this is understood by Lhasans, it does not mitigate their anger and resentment toward the Chinese influx that has made them a minority in their own city. There are obvious economic reasons for this resentment, since Han control increasingly large segments of the local economy. However, while the influx is a frequent topic of conversation and complaint, in reality there is still enough work to go around. Again, the anger is largely ethnic in character, with Tibetans feeling that Lhasa is being transformed into a Han city.

The program of development in Tibet highlighted a related point—the Tibetans' feeling of discrimination vis-à-vis the Han. There is no official program of favoritism to Han in the TAR; to the contrary, many Han themselves complain of discrimination, since entitlement programs often give less well-qualified Tibetans preference for jobs in government offices. But since getting things done in China depends to a large extent on friendship and contacts (the so-called back door), many of the incoming Chinese have been able to secure all sorts of government permits and opportunities because they are relatives or friends of Han cadres and army officers.

Thus, from the perspective of the Tibetans' confidence in the government and the reform policy, the crash development program for the TAR was a serious miscalculation with unintended negative consequences. By creating forces that exacerbated existing local feelings of anger and bitterness over harms done to Tibet during the Cultural Revolution, it worked to undermine the positive impact of the new reforms on Tibetans' attitudes and feelings. Moreover, it focused Tibetans' attention precisely on the volatile ethnic or national issue—too many Han in Tibet and too many benefits for them. In turn, this fu-

eled the Tibetans' feeling of powerlessness and abuse at the hands of the dominant Han.

Another important problem area was Beijing's reluctance to permit as full an expression of cultural and religious freedom as Tibetans wanted. Continuing restrictions on the monasteries angered the monks and many laymen. For most Tibetans, the three great monasteries of Lhasa symbolized the essence of Tibetan culture, and the refusal of the new policy to let them flourish to their former level of greatness served to highlight Tibet's subordination to an alien, Chinese value system. The monks had other grievances, to be sure, but in 1987 the main problem was Beijing's unwillingness to give the monasteries complete internal autonomy and the right to grow to the extent to which they could be supported by the masses—whether this resulted in 1,000 or 10,000 monks in a monastery.

The government also appeared to be dragging its feet on language reform. Since full implementation of a policy that made Tibetan the official working language of the TAR would mean that virtually all Han cadres and clerks would have to leave, this proposed reform had much deeper connotations than language per se. Beijing's failure to quickly approve and begin the long phase-in period signaled a reluctance to institute the additional reforms that most Tibetans wanted: those that would truly "Tibetanize" the Tibet Autonomous Region.

And last but not least, one cannot underestimate the strong historical sense of Tibet as the exclusive homeland of Tibetans. Many Tibetans felt that the Chinese had taken their country and transformed it into just another part of China, and in the process destroyed Tibetan institutions and attacked core values. While Tibetans clearly did not want to return to "feudalism" and "serfdom," they believed that Tibet should be a country (whether independent or not) that is run by Tibetans, uses the Tibetan language, and follows Tibetan laws and customs. For most Tibetans, the new reforms had made progress toward that end, but it was not enough to be allowed to turn prayer wheels and burn butter lamps if Tibet were not a homogeneous entity.

The October 1, 1987, riot, therefore, was the product of emotion and anger. It was primarily an unplanned response to a situation that Tibetans felt symbolized the loss of their nationhood and the denigration of their culture since 1959 by a dominant and alien group, rather than a rejection of the reform policy since 1980. Building one more arena, road, factory, or apartment building would not address the sources of the discontent.

*The Tibet Question after the 1987 Riot*

The 1987 riot presented Dharamsala with a tremendous propaganda victory. Not only had the Dalai Lama's visit to Washington, D.C., produced major support from the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and influential senators on the Foreign Relations Committee, but it had also precipitated dramatic civil disobedience and a bloody riot in Lhasa that were perceived in the West as confirmation of current unbearable oppression. Moreover, Tibetans in Lhasa had been diverted from their consumerism and materialism to the issue of their ethnicity—the struggle to regain a cultural and political homeland.

The immediate response of Tibetans in Lhasa, both the masses and the cadres, was interesting. People were not fearful of the consequences of the riot nor even doubtful of its wisdom. Rather, they were elated. Although it had not accomplished anything concrete, it had given them something to be proud of as Tibetans. No one talked of anything else for weeks on end. Even dedicated Tibetan cadres and party members thought the impact of the riot was positive since they believed it would shock Beijing into seeing the real problems in Tibet and prompt the leaders of the CCP to take decisive action to rectify these by accelerating the reform program.

Beijing's initial reaction to the riot, however, exacerbated the situation. For two months it stubbornly blamed a few people manipulated by Dharamsala and did not criticize the police or admit that the police had shot a number of demonstrators. To understand this decision, it is important to realize that the cadres running the government of the TAR were no more homogeneous than was the exile community.

There were actually four factions pulling and tugging against each other in Tibet (as well as differences of opinion among the leadership in Beijing). One faction was the older Han officials (including military leaders), who tended to be more conservative and more leftist (Maoist) in their thinking. They saw Beijing's concession to Tibetan religion and language as unwise and the new economic freedoms as undesirable, and tended to drag their feet in implementing them. Another faction was composed of the older Tibetan cadres. They exhibited a similar conservatism, favoring a policy of trying to integrate Tibet more closely with China, and thus not reinforcing Tibet's cultural, linguistic, and demographic distinctions. The third faction, composed of the younger and middle-aged Tibetan cadres, was generally better educated and supportive of Beijing's new policies. They were also, however, strongly pro-nationalistic, believing that they could secure a better Tibet, run by Tibetans, in the Tibetan language, and for Tibetans, within the context of the PRC. Surprisingly, they found their greatest

support among the fourth faction, the younger Han cadres, who also tended to be better educated and more liberal than the older Han and Tibetan cadres. But there was a clear cleavage along ethnic lines between all Han cadres and all Tibetan cadres. Han and Tibetan cadres rarely socialized except at office functions, and a typical complaint of Han officials in Lhasa was that while a Tibetan would invite a foreigner he had just met on the street to his house for dinner, he would not do the same for a Chinese colleague he had worked with for years.

Thus, in the discussions among cadres as to what to advise Beijing about the riot, the younger Tibetan cadres argued for an even-handed approach. The police as well as the monks should be censured and punished. They conceded that the demonstrators were wrong and had broken the law but believed that they should have been arrested and sent to prison, not beaten. Beating them was against Chinese law and an affront to Tibetans. The more conservative Han and Tibetan cadres, however, were not enthusiastic about this line. When the word finally came down from Beijing, it said that the police were not to be accused of wrongdoing. This decision infuriated the ethnically sensitive Tibetans, to whom it seemed that Han did not have to abide by the law in their dealings with Tibetans.

Nevertheless, life in Lhasa for most people went back to normal quickly. The tea shops and beer halls were full a week after the riot, and the Chinese reappeared hawking their wares in the market area. The people of Lhasa appeared unwilling to risk losing what they had gained in the 1980s by initiating their own mass demonstrations, regardless of their feelings.

The same was not true of the monks and secular nationalists. They had learned how to keep world attention focused on the independence issue. A few monks willing to risk imprisonment or death could challenge the entire People's Republic of China, simultaneously supporting the Dalai Lama and radicalizing Tibetans in Tibet. The impressive support given the Dalai Lama by the U.S. Congress reinforced the monks' initial perception of events abroad and provided new motivation for them to continue their program of demonstrations for independence. The Dalai Lama's public support for civil disobedience further energized the dissidents.

The role of the U.S. Congress was critical here. Despite the efforts of the State Department to provide a balanced perspective on what was going on in Tibet, Congress adopted a strongly pro-Tibetan position. On June 18, 1987, the House of Representatives unanimously adopted legislation on the Tibet question condemning China for its human rights violations in Tibet. On September 27, 1987, Claiborne

an independent country." Just when everyone thought that the ceremony had passed without disaster, the situation disintegrated. The police intervened with excessive force and the latent anger again exploded, producing the second bloody riot in Lhasa. Arrests and a clampdown in Tibet followed, only serving to further alienate the mass of moderates.

#### *The Dalai Lama's 1988 Campaign*

Meanwhile, outside of Tibet, the Dalai Lama continued his campaign to get Western parliaments and congresses to actively intervene in the Tibet question. In April 1988 he responded to a new Chinese announcement that he could live in Tibet (rather than Beijing) provided he publicly gave up the goal of an independent Tibet by saying that within 12 months he would make public proposals to Beijing with a view to securing "proper" autonomy for Tibet. He took a very moderate line, saying only that a "middle way" had to be found. Apparently Dharamsala felt that its new offensive and the riots had so successfully demonstrated its clout that Beijing would now be ready to accept new terms.

Soon afterward, in his second major political address in the West, the Dalai Lama made the first detailed statement of his conditions for a political settlement of the Tibet question. On June 15, 1988, at the European Parliament at Strasbourg, he gave the main points. Tibet and the ethnic Tibetan areas in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces should become a self-governing democratic political entity, founded on a constitution granting democratic rights. An enlarged Tibet would operate under a democratic system of government (i.e., one different than that under which the rest of China operated) and would have the right to decide all matters relating to Tibet and Tibetans. China would remain responsible for Tibet's foreign policy, although Tibet would develop and maintain relations through its own foreign affairs bureau in nonpolitical fields like commerce, sports, and education. China could maintain a limited number of troops in Tibet until a regional peace conference was convened and Tibet was made a demilitarized zone. Finally, all of this would have to be ratified by a nationwide referendum of Tibetans. The Dalai Lama indicated that he was ready to talk with the Chinese about this proposal and that he had already selected a negotiating team.

Although these terms represented a compromise within the exile community, they did not go over well in China, which saw them as a disguised form of "independence." Again the Dalai Lama and his advisers seemed to be playing primarily to the Western audience, not

Beijing. On September 23, 1988, China responded. Taking a hard line, Beijing indicated that while it hoped to have direct talks with the Dalai Lama, this was possible only under certain conditions: the talks must be with the Dalai Lama himself, not members of a delegation chosen by the government-in-exile; there could be no foreigners involved; and the unacceptable Strasbourg proposal could not be considered as the basis for talks because "it has not at all relinquished the concept of the independence of Tibet."

The Dalai Lama's new initiative also ran into opposition within the exile community, where it was sharply criticized by many segments, including the large Tibetan Youth Congress, the Tibetan Youth Association in Europe, and an elder brother of the Dalai Lama living in the United States (who sent a letter to Tibetans throughout the world attacking his brother's decision to relinquish the goal of independence). For the remainder of 1988 there was intense debate among the exiles over whether to support this proposal, and although most of them apparently ended up hesitantly backing the Dalai Lama's initiative, there was little enthusiasm for it, and the extent of the hostility among the younger and better-educated exiles led the Dalai Lama to state publicly soon after the Strasbourg announcement that he would make no further concessions.

The possibility of fruitful negotiations now seemed remote. The Dalai Lama went through the motions of proposing that talks be held in Geneva in January 1989 but refused to meet personally with the Chinese, refused to discard the foreigner acting as his legal adviser, and indicated that the Strasbourg statement provided the only reasonable basis for solving the Tibet question. Although the Dalai Lama's brother in Hong Kong appears to have visited Beijing several times in 1988 in an attempt to keep communications open, as the year drew to a close, movement toward beginning direct talks was stalled.

Dharamsala now concentrated on dramatizing its version of the Tibetans' plight in Tibet, working to persuade members of Western parliaments and congresses (and the Western media) to support its cause and act on its behalf. At the same time, it encouraged the monks, nuns, and other nationalistic elements in Tibet to engage in civil disobedience, since each such incident held the potential for becoming a riot or mass demonstration. In a sense, a kind of monk-driven *intifada* was fostered.

#### *Tibet in 1988 and 1989*

The March 5, 1988, riot forced a major reassessment of China's policy in Tibet. The prospect of rapprochement with the Dalai Lama was



Pell, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and seven other congresspeople sent a letter to Premier Zhao Ziyang expressing grave concern over the current situation in Tibet and stating that they completely supported the Dalai Lama's proposal, which they called a historic step toward resolving the Tibet question. And on October 6, the U.S. Senate unanimously adopted a strong resolution paralleling the House's June legislation as an amendment to the State Department Authorization Act. The resolution linked U.S. sale or transfer of defense articles to China's treatment of Tibet, authorized scholarships and other aid for Tibetan refugees, and indicated that it was the sense of the Congress that the United States should make the treatment of the Tibetan people an important factor in U.S.-China relations. On December 22, 1987, President Reagan signed this bill. This was all known in Lhasa, and on a number of occasions Tibetans I did not know came up to me on the street and expressed their thanks for the U.S. government's support of the Tibetan cause.

As 1988 began, attention in Lhasa turned to the coming Great Prayer Festival, scheduled to begin on February 17, when almost 2,000 monks would come to the central temple in Lhasa for three weeks of joint prayers. This was a major event with all the high government officials of the TAR attending and thousands of pilgrims flocking to Lhasa from the hinterland. The question on everyone's mind was whether the prayer festival would go on as planned, and if so, whether the monks would try to use it to launch a major demonstration.

Beijing now made a decision that, in retrospect, was a disaster. On the defensive internationally, the Chinese leadership apparently felt it was important to show the world that its liberal Tibetan religious policy was working, so it pushed ahead with holding the prayer festival.

To facilitate this, Beijing shifted policy, suddenly admitting that the October 1, 1987, riot was caused in part by "remnant leftist thought," that is, by serious deficiencies in the manner in which the reform policy had been carried out in the TAR. On the face of it, this was almost as striking an admission as had been Hu Yaobang's comments in 1980. This turnaround buoyed the optimistic hopes of many young Tibetan cadres and gratified people, who felt vindicated by Beijing's acceptance of their complaints. To many, it seemed as if this might at last produce the additional cultural, linguistic, and religious reforms that were desired and needed.

Beijing also tried to ameliorate the tense situation by offering new concessions to the monks. The Lhasa monks had been complaining about all the books, paintings, statues, and land that had been confiscated from the monasteries since 1959, and Beijing now authorized

property restitution and monetary compensation for that which no longer existed. Then the Panchen Lama, Tibet's number-two lama after the Dalai Lama, arrived in Lhasa to try to calm the monks and ensure the success of the prayer festival. The monks had insisted that they would not attend the festival unless their fellow monks were released from jail, and on January 26, 1988, after intervention by the Panchen Lama, the TAR government released about 59 monks, leaving only about 15 in custody. All but one of these were in fact released two weeks before the festival started. The Panchen Lama also indicated publicly that the government was going to continue to make restitutions to monks and monasteries for past abuses. For example, on January 27 he announced at Drepung Monastery that the government was going to give the three great Lhasa monasteries about 2 million yuan (US\$500,000) as partial compensation.

But once again, as with the development program, Beijing misjudged the situation and tried to treat the Tibet problem as economic and financial rather than as nationalistic and emotional. The anger of most of the monks was now too great to be assuaged simply with money, particularly since they felt that the Chinese were trying to turn their revered religious event into a propaganda stunt. Thus, while the Panchen Lama was announcing the payments at Drepung Monastery, one of the monks actually stood up and interrupted him, saying, "Don't expect us to show gratitude. The Chinese destroyed so much of our things that this [grant] is nothing." Interestingly, he was not arrested.

During this tense period, many of the older monks advised the government against holding the prayer festival, saying that they could not guarantee what the younger monks would do. With so many people and monks massed in the narrow and cramped temple area, they warned that the result could be a disaster and suggested that it would be better if the monks conducted the prayer festival that year at their own monasteries. In retrospect, that would have been the prudent decision.

But the government now dug in its heels and insisted that the prayer festival had to go on. Foreign journalists had been invited, so it cajoled, threatened, and pleaded with the monks to appear. Although many monks boycotted the opening, the prayer festival began on schedule. All went well until March 5, 1988, the last day. As the monks completed a traditional procession, one or more of them suddenly shouted at the ranking TAR officials seated in the temple, demanding that the remaining monk in custody be released from prison. A Tibetan official apparently yelled at them to "shut up," and the monks responded angrily with political slogans, such as "Tibet is

now remote, and the policy of reform had not kept Tibetans from joining the dissidents and rioting against the government. Beijing had several options. One was to implement quickly more radical reforms in order to win the loyalty of the 2 million Tibetans in Tibet. However, given the presence of the exiles and the die-hard nationalist monks, granting substantially more autonomy and freedom to Tibetans (including, of course, the monasteries) and withdrawing Han from Tibet could lead to even worse trouble there. Another option was to "close the door" in Tibet, end tourism, decrease support for Tibetan culture, and foster assimilation using the threat of force to control the population. A third course fell between these. Beijing could take a hard line with respect to demonstrators and nationalists and go neither backward nor forward with regard to cultural reforms.

In the summer of 1988 Qiao Shi, Politburo member and head of China's security apparatus, was sent to Tibet and apparently called together a number of Han cadres who had been leading officials in the prereform days to advise him. A version of the third option was chosen. It was publicly announced that dissenters would now be treated severely, and behind closed doors it was decided that there would be no further attempts to win the support of the monasteries by making major restitutions for past confiscations and losses. At the same time, the plan to make Tibetan the working language of the TAR was shelved, and tourism was sharply curtailed. However, existing cultural and religious freedoms were not rescinded, and the push to develop Tibet economically was supported.

In the meantime, the nationalists in Tibet continued to engage in civil disobedience, and five months later, on December 10, 1988, a demonstration of monks to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights precipitated the third major riot. Three months later, on March 5, 1989, monk demonstrations produced a fourth riot which resulted in much loss of life. This time Beijing arrested many Tibetans and declared martial law, which remains in effect in early 1990.

Nevertheless, despite the martial law, current Chinese policy in Tibet has not shifted to the "closed door" alternative. As 1989 came to a close, Beijing appeared unwilling to discard its reform policy in Tibet, yet was also unwilling to make a dramatic leap forward that might undermine the exiles and win the goodwill and confidence of the mass of Lhasans. For example, a modified version of the new Tibetan-language policy has been announced. This new language policy makes Tibetan the medium for all education, not just primary school (as it had been). It requires all teaching in the junior middle school to be conducted in Tibetan by 1993 and in the senior middle school by

1997. By the year 2000, most subjects in colleges are to be taught in Tibetan. The regulation also states that in all judicial and public security issues Tibetans can use either Tibetan or Chinese and that by the end of 1990 all official communications should be written primarily in the Tibetan language. Yet it stops short of fulfilling the hopes of many Tibetans by making Tibetan the official working language of the TAR.

Beijing did not deal with the problem of too many Han in Tibet, however, and the monastic situation has deteriorated, with the government now talking of imposing a nontraditional format guaranteed to infuriate even the monks who have not demonstrated. Official rhetoric in Lhasa stressed law and order and economic development and ignored the other, more critical, issues.

The end of 1989 brought another issue to the forefront—the situation in Tibet's villages and nomad areas. The original reform package exempted villagers and nomads from having to pay taxes or make quota sales, and was extremely popular. It is due to expire in 1990, and there has been no word about whether it will be extended. Failure to renew it will certainly anger the rural Tibetans who, interestingly enough, have been largely mute during the two years of civil disobedience in Lhasa and some of Tibet's other towns.

There is a marked attitudinal difference between Tibetans in Lhasa and those in the nomad areas I studied between 1986 and 1988. Although the nomads are as bitter as Lhasans about the suffering and humiliations they experienced during the Cultural Revolution, they are much more positive about the new reforms than Lhasans and less angry and resentful about the present. This may be because of a key difference in the way the reforms played out in their areas. Unlike in Lhasa, there were no Han anywhere. All cadres were Tibetans, and all official correspondence was conducted in Tibetan. The nomads, therefore, never experienced condescending slights or slurs and did not feel swamped by a flood of alien Han. Once the new reforms were instituted, the flavor of life reverted quickly to something akin to what it had been traditionally. There were still problems, to be sure, but there was also satisfaction at having regained the right to behave in accordance with traditional values and norms.

#### *Events outside Tibet in 1989*

Outside Tibet, 1989 saw Beijing for the first time come face-to-face with a serious mass demonstration of Han, the results of which are well known. Just as Beijing had opted for coercive force to quell the riots and maintain law and order in Tibet, it ultimately did the same

in Beijing and the other involved cities. With the exception of Tibet University in Lhasa, where there was a brief strike and a demonstration to show sympathy with the Beijing students, these events had no direct impact in Tibet. Many Tibetans, I am told, actually considered it fitting that Han demonstrators were shot just as Tibetans had been in the previous riots. Indirectly, however, the more conservative stance of the post-Tiananmen Beijing leadership certainly has reduced the likelihood of a major new policy in Tibet aimed at satisfying the grievances of Tibetans there.

Another important event in 1989 was the decision of the Norwegian Nobel Commission to award the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize to the 14th Dalai Lama. This represented a major international victory for the exile community, adding to the prestige of His Holiness and at the same time making a powerful, albeit indirect, statement that the proposals he made in the United States and at Strasbourg are valid and proper. Subsequent events in Eastern Europe and Mongolia have even further energized Tibetan exiles, since they believe that the day when China will become part of this syndrome is but around the corner. These events appear to have hardened opinion in Dharamsala and reduced the likelihood that the Dalai Lama will be willing to accept a substantial compromise to achieve a negotiated settlement to the Tibet question in the next year or so. In a recent speech, for example, the Dalai Lama told the exile community that the current state of affairs represents a great opportunity for Tibetans and that within five to ten years there will definitely be a major change in China. The message is that if Tibetans hold tight and continue to dramatize their case, they will prevail. Thus, it is likely that the exiles will continue to work energetically to present their views in the West and wait for events in China to solve the Tibetan question. However, it is also possible that elements in the exile community will try to escalate their leverage by encouraging the underground nationalistic groups in Lhasa to launch a larger-scale program of civil disobedience, or even to begin a campaign of anti-Han terrorism. Events external to Tibet in 1989 have, therefore, produced more hard-line policy orientations in both Beijing and Dharamsala.

### Are There Solutions?

As 1989 ended, the Tibet question remained one of the world's most intractable disputes. The current situation suggests that the political offensive the exiles launched several years ago has been a tactical victory. The Tibetans' cause is acclaimed throughout the West, and the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Human

rights groups have focused on Tibet and denounced Beijing for alleged violations against specific individuals and the entire Tibetan race. The U.S. Congress has adopted an activist, pro-Tibetan policy, passing legislation to provide funds for Tibetan refugees, create Tibetan-language Voice of America broadcasts, and take account of Tibet in its dealings with Beijing. Underlying this is the almost universal acceptance in the West of the exiles' cultural and political construction of modern history and the contemporary situation in Tibet. U.S. congressional leaders, for example, now talk of the ethnic Tibetan borderlands as if they were part of political Tibet, following the line taken by the Dalai Lama. And on the Tibetan side, the persistent nationalistic demonstrations and periodic riots have pushed Beijing to impose martial law and place a brake on the forward momentum of the reform policy, these actions in turn helping to radicalize the mass of Tibetans and inflame ethnic tensions. In this sense, Beijing has inadvertently played into the hands of the exile government.

But despite the exiles' successes, the peaceful solution to the Tibet question that the Dalai Lama and the exiles apparently desire seems farther away than at any other time since 1979. Tibet is firmly a part of the People's Republic of China, and the key international players still do not support the exiles' claims that Tibet was and should be independent. Time, moreover, does not appear to be on the exiles' side, since unlike the situation in South Africa or even Israel where the demographic reality does not favor the politically dominant group, China could easily swamp Tibet with large numbers of permanent Han settlers. The histories of Sikkim and Ladakh (absorbed by India) reveal with clarity the political vulnerability of sparse Tibetan populations vis-à-vis their more numerous ethnic neighbors.

Have Dharamsala and the Dalai Lama, therefore, really won a meaningful victory? If China disintegrates politically in the near future and, in the ensuing chaos, if Tibet gains its independence, then Dharamsala will, with justification, declare its strategy to have been successful. But short of this, even a major change in Beijing is unlikely to significantly affect the Tibetan question in the manner the exiles hope. The Tibetan exiles' interaction with the post-Tiananmen Chinese dissident community in the West, for example, has revealed that while these dissidents would like the Dalai Lama to join their ranks in opposing Beijing, they do not agree that Tibetans should have the right to self-determination. Like Beijing, they see Tibet as an inseparable part of China. This is also the policy of Taiwan, which firmly considers Tibet an integral part of China even though it is said to have clandestinely poured enormous sums of money into the exile

community. The ethnic and territorial basis of the Tibet question transcends a particular form of government or a particular set of leaders.

It appears, therefore, that Dharamsala's strategy has really won only a Pyrrhic victory. It has secured large-scale sympathy and support in the West, but has not succeeded in protecting and fostering Tibetan culture in Tibet. Ironically, it has created a set of conditions under which the aspirations of Tibetans in Tibet will probably not be met. It may even result in Beijing deciding to marginalize Tibetan culture and promote the permanent immigration of Han settlers to the TAR. From this point of view, the 2 million Tibetans in Tibet are the losers of the confrontation between the Dalai Lama and Beijing during the 1980s. The lives of the Tibetan exiles have stayed constant or improved during this period, with some now coming to the United States on scholarships mandated by Congress, but Tibetans in Lhasa live under martial law and there is a danger that the important gains they recently won will be lost.

What of the future? The fate of Tibet and Tibetans appears now to be at a turning point. Whether Tibet will join Northern Ireland, Israel, and Lebanon as a region where unending reciprocal conflict and hatred consume the inhabitants is clearly the question for the 1990s.

Solving the Tibet question in the 1990s on one level requires terms that would be acceptable both to the Dalai Lama and the exiles and to Beijing. For the former, at the very least a workable compromise would require a substantial degree of political independence—a "one country, two systems" solution. This, however, is unlikely to be acceptable to Beijing, so barring the disintegration of the rule of the CCP in a manner analogous to recent events in Eastern Europe, it is implausible to expect a "political" solution to make meaningful progress in the near future. Thus, it is certain that the exiles will strive to keep their version of the Tibet question alive using the techniques they have successfully honed in the 1980s, or will even escalate their attack through more violent forms of protest.

However, although the prospect for rapprochement between the exiles and Beijing seems bleak, there is another solution advocated by many thoughtful people in Tibet that is worthy of serious consideration. This solution to the Tibet question involves conditions that would be acceptable, I think, to most Tibetans living in the TAR, but not necessarily to the exiles. It would create not a different political system, but rather considerably more cultural and ethnic autonomy—a TAR that is *homogeneous in population, language, and culture*. It is difficult to spell out precisely the form of such a solution, but clearly the changes required to produce it could not all be accomplished overnight. Generally speaking, it would require that within some

fixed period of time Beijing withdraw from Tibet all Han engaged in administration and trade except those with special skills, such as doctors, engineers, and teachers. The Tibetan language would at the same time become the basic medium of communication in government, although Tibetan schools would continue to teach Chinese, and all higher-level cadres would have to be bilingual. This "ethnic" solution is not incongruent with the goals of Beijing's 1980 reform policy and would offer it a viable alternative to risking indefinite perpetuation (or escalation) of the current violence and unrest in Tibet.

Many Tibetans in Tibet believe such a program would gradually win the approval of the people in Tibet. In fact, this solution is not very radical, for in essence what would be required is to create an urban situation analogous to that extant in remote rural areas such as those of the nomads in Western Tibet. There would certainly be risks in this policy, but the present alternative of halfway measures seems even more fraught with risk. Such an "ethnic" solution might ultimately even be acceptable to the Dalai Lama, who, at 55 years of age, must worry about the future of his people after his death. He may himself not wish to return to Tibet without a "political" solution, but he might give his tacit blessing to such an "ethnic" policy as an interim measure while he and the exiles wait for that shift in the tide of history that will provide them the solution they really desire.

One key issue, however, is whether the West would support such a move. It is difficult to see how China could take the risk of enacting such dramatic reforms if they felt that influential Westerners would ignore this and continue to talk about a Tibetan "holocaust." Ironically, although China is insistent that Tibet is an internal issue and not the business of the United States or other countries, a key element in solving the Tibet question at this level appears to be the willingness of influential Westerners vigorously and publicly to support such a solution.

Only time will tell if China's leaders have the vision and energy to launch such a move, and, critically, whether Western scholars, politicians, and media leaders are willing to take a fresh and objective look at China's policy in Tibet and provide encouragement for Beijing to move in this direction. There is no simple answer to the Tibet question or questions, but it is clear that the level of debate in the West must go beyond the current partisan accounts to examine more thoroughly the world of the grays.