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THE STORY OF RACISM IN TIBET

PREPARED FOR THE UNITED NATIONS  
WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM

*Durban, South Africa*

SEPTEMBER 2001

INTERNATIONAL  
**CAMPAIGN  
FOR TIBET**

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Michael van Walt wrote the third draft. Van Ly, Program Assistant at ICT, contributed to several chapters, and did extensive research and editing. Cathy Shin of ICT Europe provided insightful comments. John Ackerly oversaw the various incarnations of the report and edited the final draft.

**COVER:** In 1963, a film about a Tibetan serf named Jampa portrayed the Tibetan people as dark and crude. Although the film was supposed to be about victims of a feudal society ruled by corrupt monks and rich landowners, Tibetans see it as a symbol of negative Chinese perceptions of the Tibetan people, which exist even today.

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# Foreword

J A M P A : T H E S T O R Y O F R A C I S M I N T I B E T

**F**or a Tibetan to raise charges of racism in China today can lead to detention and imprisonment. It is no coincidence that there is not a single NGO in China today that openly speaks of the extensive racism against non-Chinese peoples. Such advocacy could easily run afoul of China's policies prohibiting anything that incites national division or undermines national unity.<sup>1</sup>

China still maintains the myth that racism is mainly a Western phenomenon and there have been numerous official pronouncements that racism does not exist in China. It is also shocking that these same official pronouncements often talk in terms of "civilizing" China's minorities. Just last month, Hu Jintao, China's vice president and possible successor to Jiang Zemin, visited Tibet and gave a speech on China's civilizing mission which would "turn from darkness to light, from backwardness to progress, from poverty to affluence."<sup>2</sup> In this statement and in scores of official policies and regulations, there is an open attitude of superiority and paternalism, which is sometimes officially recognized as "Han chauvinism" but which masks a reality that exists in countries all over the world: racism.

One of the greatest results of China's participation in the 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) would simply be the acknowledgement that racism is a serious and significant problem in Ti-

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1 Such policies are illustrated in China's last report to the CERD committee. See People's Republic of China, "Ninth Periodic Report of States Parties Due in 1999," submitted to United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, CERD/C/357/Add.4(Part I), 3 April 2001.

2 Hu Jintao, "Full Text of Speech by Hu Jintao at Tibet's Peaceful Liberation Celebration," (Speech made at the Rally of Celebration of 50th Anniversary of 'Peaceful Liberation of Tibet,' Lhasa, Tibet, 19 July 2001), Beijing Xinhua, FBIS-CHI-2001-0719.

bet and China. As Yang Lien-sheng wrote, racism should be “spelled out in order to be dispelled.”

What is needed in China is a mass educational initiative to dispel widespread notions of Han Chinese superiority and minority inferiority. While it is official government policy that all peoples in China are equal and discrimination is prohibited, what is occurring in China today is massive denial of tragic proportions. China’s laws and policies are in dire need of revision to remove the pervasive paternalism and inferences of superiority that lead to thousands of acts of discrimination day in and day out.

It is also important to give due credit to many of China’s reformers, past and present, in and out of government, who are part of the genuine fight against racism and who have contributed to reducing racist attitudes in China. A number of them are cited in this report. There are thousands of selfless and courageous individuals across China and in exile, who often speak up on behalf of Tibetans and minorities, sometimes at great risk to themselves.

The Chinese government has a demonstrably good record in opposing racism in some of its international forms such as its opposition of apartheid in South Africa long before many other governments, including the government of the United States.

It is also fair to say that domestically, China lags far behind much of the world in acknowledging and addressing racism. Rather than allowing open debate about racism, China rigorously suppresses such discourse, setting back progress in the fight against racism.

Connected to this impulse was China’s attempt to block the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, and Human Rights in China from attending the NGO Forum of the WCAR. A full vote of all member countries of the UN was taken on ICT’s application for accreditation and that vote overrode China’s objections. Forty-six countries voted for ICT, 37 against and 29 abstained.

Human Rights in China did not win their vote for accreditation but ICT is honored to have their Executive Director, Xiao Qiang, on ICT’s delegation to the WCAR in Durban, South Africa. Human Rights in China’s main concern at the conference is the issue of discrimination against internal migrants within China, which is also a very pressing issue for China today.

Despite the obstacles to introduce this report at the UN Conference Against Racism, ICT looks forward to taking its rightful place alongside hundreds of other organizations to raise some of the most difficult, perplexing and deep-rooted problems of humanity and shed light on the Tibetan experience.

*John Ackerly*  
PRESIDENT

*Tsering Jampa*  
DIRECTOR, ICT-EUROPE





# Preface

JAMPA: THE STORY OF RACISM IN TIBET

On a hot August morning in 1979, I arrived in Liuyuan, a small railway town on the western frontier of China. We were forty-odd young Tibetans, college-bound and eager to learn more about the world in which we lived. But as we made our way into the crowded train clad in our thick Tibetan coats, I grew uneasy. We were met with not only cold stares and whispers but also outright statements of disgust. We were “black” (*hei*), dirty (*zang*) and greasy (*you*). Over the course of this uncomfortable and disheartening journey to Beijing, we realized that as Tibetans we would always live in the shadow of Jampa.

In the notorious 1963 film, *Serf* (Nongnu), Jampa is a Tibetan serf who lives a life of appalling degradation and violence. It is a classic story of class conflict and revolution, but with an ethnic twist. As he grows up in a cruel, pre-liberation Tibet, Jampa becomes increasingly withdrawn and introverted until one day he stops speaking altogether. At long last, Jampa is saved by a selfless Chinese soldier who himself dies in the courageous rescue. The film ends with Jampa finally speaking his first words after many years of silence – the name of Chairman Mao.

In my years in Beijing, I saw that, for many Chinese, the significance of Jampa was less in his final redemption through socialist liberation than in his dark, wild appearance and his inability to speak. I learned, for example, that Chinese parents would induce proper behavior in their children by threatening to “call Jampa.” Ironically, the tragic victim of feudalism had become less an object of sympathy and moral concern than a cause for racialized fear and dread.

What is therefore most significant about this film is not simply that it propagates a negative construction of pre-liberation Tibet, but that this particular construction draws on longstanding stereotypes of Tibetans in the Chinese imagination: Tibetans as savage and backward. On one level, this

stereotype provides the cultural logic for colonization. In the evolutionary framework of Chinese historiography, Tibetans and other so-called national minorities lag far behind and must therefore be civilized by the more advanced “Han” people. On another level, this negative stereotype reinforces the power of racialized hatred and creates the possibility of racial discrimination in every realm of social, political and economic life.

Racism is a social fact for many Tibetans living under Chinese rule. And yet it is a topic that has never before been examined at any length or discussed publicly. Indeed, outside of a few notable exceptions, scholarship on China in general has dutifully avoided this sensitive and politically unfashionable subject. But the discourse of race in modern China is one that continues to persist – and with all too real consequences. I therefore commend the International Campaign for Tibet for initiating this timely project and for producing the first detailed report on racism and racial discrimination in Tibet. This is, I hope, the beginning of a serious and systematic study of how these complex social processes continue to impact the lives of ordinary Tibetans living under the conditions of colonization.

*Tseten Wangchuk*

WASHINGTON, DC, JULY 2001

# Introduction

J A M P A : T H E S T O R Y O F R A C I S M I N T I B E T

**A**s the United Nations World Conference Against Racism draws attention to the evils of racism and racial discrimination in all parts of the world, and as solutions are being explored to eradicate these phenomena, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) has undertaken a study of racism and racial discrimination in the People's Republic of China as it affects the Tibetan people.

The Chinese government, since the creation of the PRC, has adopted an official policy of racial and ethnic equality. All the peoples and ethnic groups within the present borders of the PRC, the so-called minority nationalities, are declared equal in the constitution and discrimination is prohibited by law. This is a significant achievement: in pre-revolution and especially imperial China, racism permeated the national identity as well as government policies. The revolutionary leaders of the PRC should, therefore, be given credit for this important change. The Chinese government has adopted many measures according to their strategy to reduce discrimination in Tibet. However, the overwhelming facts of the report show that Tibetans have faced numerous human rights violations that have been rooted in the racist nature of Chinese occupation.

In the first chapter of this study we look at the meaning of racism and racial discrimination, in particular, as they are used in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. We then explore the factors that have shaped the Tibetan and Chinese perceptions of each other in Chapter Two. In part due to the lack of contact between Tibetans and Chinese until the middle of last century, both the Tibetans and the Chinese developed negative stereotypical images of each other. With the advent of modern Chinese nationalism, traditional ethnocentric Chinese perceptions of the world and of the hierarchy of peoples were replaced by myths and ideologies designed to

rationalize the existence of a Chinese nation-state which would incorporate non-Chinese regions and peoples over which former “Chinese” empires had exercised influence. Although the approach was different, new Chinese attitudes incorporated many of the old ethnocentric Chinese perceptions. Most significant, as we see in Chapter Three, was the relegation of Tibetans and other Inner Asian nations and peoples to the status of minorities in the doctrine of the new Chinese Republic of 1911. Though theoretically “equal” to the other four nationalities or “races” of the Republic, the identities of Tibetans, Manchus, Mongols and Tatars were acknowledged only in terms of their contributions to Chinese culture and greatness. Communist ideologues combined this view with notions of class when the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was established. Now Tibetans were classed as just one of 56 so-called national minorities in the PRC, and were perceived as the most “backward” in terms of historical development and civilization. The Chinese people, as the “most revolutionary,” were destined to lead Tibetans and other non-Chinese peoples to higher stages of development.

Chairman Mao Zedong warned repeatedly against “Great Han Chauvinism,” which, he felt, was contrary to Marxist ideology and harmful to social progress and the unification of China. Yet the paternalistic attitude, displayed by his and subsequent government and Communist Party officials towards the Tibetans and other “minority nationalities,” was inherently racist. As stated above and examined in Chapter Four, the constitution of the PRC and subsequent laws and policies reject racism, including its manifestation as Han chauvinism and discrimination. Yet despite this stated position, the paternalistic and racist perceptions of Tibetans by the Chinese persist, by implication, in government-promoted myths of common “Chinese” ancestry and more openly in the propagation and implementation of China’s “civilizing mission” in Tibet.

Although it is official government policy to promote the myth of common ancestry of all 56 peoples or “nationalities” in the PRC, the Chinese consider only their own ethnic group, the Han, to belong to the “Chinese” racial or ethnic group. Peoples who do not physically and culturally resemble the Han, are not considered truly Chinese and are ranked lower in the ethnic hierarchy. For this reason, we use the term “Chinese” in this study rather than “Han” when distinguishing between the constituent peoples of the PRC.

In Chapter Five we look at the practice of the Chinese with respect to racism in China and Tibet today. Chinese racial prejudice is rooted in both the historical Chinese view of the world, in which China’s position is central, and in stereo-

types which are not actively discouraged, despite constitutional and official positions of equality of all nationalities. These stereotypes depict Tibetans as primitive, wild, and barbaric people with low intelligence and no education.

We find that the Tibetan experience of racism is particularly painful because it is played out in the context of colonialist repression, where racist attitudes and the perceived need of the colonial authorities to maintain power and suppress nationalist dissent are intertwined and often indistinguishable. Tibetans are faced with the choice to assimilate and relinquish their Tibetan identity, religion and culture or face repression and discrimination, as we see in Chapter Six.

Whereas Tibetans and visitors to Tibet report numerous manifestations of discriminatory behavior of Chinese towards Tibetans, it is often difficult to determine with certainty what the cause or causes of such behavior are. In some cases it may be that the conduct of government authorities or individual officials is motivated solely by racism towards Tibetans. In most cases, however, it would seem that this is determined by a mixture of political objectives to crush Tibetan nationalism and resistance to Chinese rule and of racist prejudice and animosity towards Tibetans. Thus, for example, the denigration and persecution of Tibetan religion and culture by the Chinese authorities, which persists to this day, result from racist attitudes towards Tibetans, but also from a Central Government policy aimed at combating Tibetan resistance to the occupation of their country. This, according to the Chinese government's 3rd Forum on Work in Tibet, held in 1994, is best achieved by eliminating the Tibetans' distinct national and cultural consciousness and religious faith and by assimilating Tibetans into the web of Chinese culture.

ICT is aware that racism and racial discrimination exist everywhere in the world, including by Tibetans against others. ICT is concerned with the denial by the government of the PRC, however, of the pervasiveness, and sometimes even the existence, of racism and racial discrimination in the PRC. Tackling the problem of racism and discrimination requires an acknowledgment of its existence by the authorities and a willingness to address the problem. ICT hopes that this study will demonstrate the need both to recognize and to combat racism and discrimination by Chinese authorities and individuals against the Tibetans in the PRC. In addition, ICT hopes that this study will help persuade the Chinese government to take the necessary initiatives in this regard. With these hopes in mind, we have made some recommendations at the end of the study.



# Chapter 1

JAMPA: THE STORY OF RACISM IN TIBET

## Racism and Racial Discrimination

*“There is a growing realization that racism, xenophobia and intolerance are the root causes of most of the conflicts and human rights violations that mar our world.”*

THEO-BEN GURIRAB (NAMIBIA), *UN General Assembly President*  
FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION  
20 MARCH 2000

*“Our age, like previous ages, has brought with it new forms of racial discrimination, no less odious than the old ones.”*

KOFI ANNAN, *UN Secretary-General*  
ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION  
21 MARCH 2000<sup>3</sup>

Racism and racial discrimination are not new phenomena. They have probably always existed and continue to exist to varying degrees in all societies today. As Kofi Annan stated, our age has brought with it new forms of racial discrimination, no less odious than the old ones. Racism took on a very explicit and formal character in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries with the rise of European colonialism and slavery. In the 20th century, extreme forms of racism were practiced by Nazi Germany, whose ideologues and scientists were the first to biologize race concepts through eugenic theory.<sup>4</sup> Nazis “used scientific research on blood

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3 United Nations Press Release SG/SM/7333 RD/897.

4 John Borneman, “State, Territory, and National Identity Formation in the Two Berlins, 1945-1995,” *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, eds. Akhil Gupta & James Ferguson, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 101.

types as a principle to distinguish *Menschen* (humans) from *Untermenschen* (subhumans)<sup>5</sup> and to scientifically justify their policies of internal purification and external expansion. Racism in America, which has existed since the European colonization of the continent, was exposed in the 1950s and '60s by the civil rights movement in the United States. Until the end of the 20th century, international action focused on racism in South Africa, where it was enshrined in the government's *apartheid* policy.

Today racism continues to exist and takes on many forms, some blatant, others subtler. Sometimes it is not recognized as racism. Russian treatment of Chechens and other peoples from the Caucasus, Ladino colonial behavior towards Mayans in Guatemala and Hutu attitudes towards the Batwa of Rwanda, are not often recognized as racist, yet they are. Increased immigration and refugee flows to Western European countries have led to renewed racist and xenophobic behavior there. In Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union racism contributes to ethnic conflicts. In many Asian countries, indigenous peoples experience racial discrimination and paternalism under the dominant population groups, which, in many instances, are also embodied in policies of their governments. In the experience of the victims, today's manifestations of racism are no less abhorrent than earlier ones.

Racism (or 'racialism') is defined in the Oxford Dictionary<sup>6</sup> as "the belief that human abilities, etc., depend on race and that some races are superior to others." Racism is also defined to mean "aggressive behavior, speech, etc., showing hostility between races."<sup>7</sup>

The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which China ratified in 1982, defines racial discrimination as follows:

...any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and

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5 Ibid.

6 *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (1989), 4th ed., s.v. "racism."

7 Ibid.



fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.<sup>8</sup>

Under Article 5 of CERD, racial discrimination includes violations of:

...the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights:

- (a) The right to equal treatment before the tribunals and all other organs administering justice;
- (b) The right to security of person and protection by the state against violence or bodily harm, whether inflicted by government officials or by any individual, group or institution;
- (c) Political rights, in particular the rights to participate in elections — to vote and to stand for election — on the basis of universal and equal suffrage, to take part in the government as well as in the conduct of public affairs at any level and to have equal access to public service;
- (d) Other civil rights;
- (e) Economic, social and cultural rights;
- (f) The right of access to any place or service intended for use by the general public, such as transport, hotels, restaurants, cafes, theaters and parks.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the above, involuntary migrations and the transfer of persons from one ethnic group into the territory of another ethnic group without the approval of the latter, often result from racial discrimination and can also constitute forms of racial discrimination if the object is to change the demographic composition of a region on ethnic lines.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the Asia-Pacific Seminar of Experts in preparation for the World Conference Against Racism concluded recently that there was a critical and close relationship between the

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8 United Nations. *International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination* (hereinafter CERD), (7 March 1966) Article 1 (660 U.N.T.S. 195).

9 Ibid., Article 5.

10 For more information, see “Human Rights Dimensions of Population Transfer,” Report of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) International Conference on Population Transfer held in Tallin, 1992.

## **Shots from Serf**



The 1963 propaganda film *Serf* portrays the main character, Jampa, as dark, enslaved, dirty and uneducated prior to the “liberation of Tibet” by China.

### **Shots from Serf**

*Throughout the report, we have incorporated pictures from the film Serf to help illustrate some of the negative stereotypes of Tibetans perceived by the Chinese and promoted by the government of the People’s Republic of China. As Tseten Wangchuk commented in the Preface, the significance of the film is not necessarily that it promotes popular stereotypes of Tibetans but that it summarily draws from longstanding beliefs that Tibetans are a savage and backwards people. Such images dramatically establish the racial divide detrimental to everyone involved and highlight the need for further discourse on race in Tibet and China.*

movement of people and discrimination, including such forms as racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.<sup>11</sup> From the above, it is evident that racism and racial discrimination can take on many forms and manifest in many different ways.

The CERD condemns all forms of racism and racial discrimination. In particular, it condemns “all propaganda and all organizations which are based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race or group of persons of one colour or ethnic origin, or which attempt to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination in any form....”<sup>12</sup> The CERD contains the most complete treatment and statement of international law concerning racism and racial discrimination. With 155 ratifications, it truly represents the opinion of the international community today.

Even before the CERD obtained numerous ratifications, the International Court of Justice found in 1971 that “[t]o establish... and to enforce, distinctions, exclusions, restrictions and limitations exclusively based on grounds of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which constitute a denial of fundamental rights is a flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the [UN] Charter.”<sup>13</sup>

At the time of writing, international efforts are focusing on the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR), which is to be held in South Africa in August 2001 under United Nations auspices. The conference will reaffirm the condemnation of all forms of racism and racial discrimination and the need to eradicate them. It is intended to be action oriented and focused on practical steps to eradicate racism. In particular, the conference will “highlight global efforts to promote the rights of vulnerable groups, such as minorities, indigenous people and migrants,”<sup>14</sup> a focus that is of immediate relevance to the topic of this paper: racism and racial discrimination against Tibetans.

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11 Asia-Pacific Seminar of Experts in Preparation for the World Conference Against Racism, “Conclusions and Recommendations (unedited version),” Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (World Conference Against Racism) of 5-7 September 2000, Bangkok, Thailand.

12 United Nations, CERD, Article 5.

13 International Court of Justice, Advisory opinion of June 21, 1971: Legal Consequences for States of the Continued Presence of South Africa in Namibia (South West Africa) Notwithstanding Security Council Resolution 276 (1970), 1971 I.C.J. 16, 57, Para. 131).

14 Bacre Ndiaye, Director of the New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a briefing to the Human Rights Committee on 21 March 2000. UN Press Release HR/CT/553, 21 March 2000.

As stated above, racism exists and is actively practiced in every region and every country in the world. Every country has been touched by racism, and racial discrimination has not been fully eradicated anywhere. International law makes governments responsible for preventing, prohibiting and punishing acts of racism and racial discrimination. Under international law, the doctrine of state responsibility holds governments directly responsible in this respect.<sup>15</sup> In many countries racism and racial discrimination are prohibited by law.<sup>16</sup> Yet, discrimination often continues in these countries without any serious effort by government authorities to prevent or punish racist and discriminatory activity. In some countries government authorities, including the police, are openly perpetrating such activity.

With these various conceptions of racism and racial discrimination in mind, we will, in this study, first examine the historical evolution of attitudes of the Chinese and Tibetans with respect to each other and touch on some of the reasons for those attitudes. We will then look at the policies and laws of the PRC with respect to racism and racial discrimination, especially as they relate to Tibetans. Finally, we will look at current manifestations of racism and racial discrimination in Tibet, the relation between the policies and laws, on the one hand, and practice, on the other.

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15 Consequently, the Committee set up to monitor and enforce the CERD is mandated to question and publicly criticize governments that have not taken sufficient effective measures to combat racism and racial discrimination in their country.

16 The former regime in South Africa was a good example of a government that espoused racism and racial discrimination as government policy. In many countries, including today's South Africa, laws exist that condemn racial discrimination and prohibit it. Additionally, even in nations including most West European ones, laws exist that prohibit racism and expressions of racism as a criminal offense. In some instances, this is enshrined in the constitution. In others, such as the United States, expressions of racism may be protected under provisions guaranteeing the right of free speech.

# Chapter 2

## JAMPA: THE STORY OF RACISM IN TIBET

### Origins of Tibetan and Chinese Perceptions of Each Other

Contacts between Tibetans and Chinese were, throughout history, very limited. Although the two neighboring nations exercised influence on each other's civilizations, there was little actual contact between the peoples. Tibet and China were both subjugated by the Mongol Khans in the 13th century. Manchu Emperors who conquered China also exercised political influence in Tibet in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Neither the Mongols, nor the Manchus were Chinese, although both the Manchus and the Mongols chose to establish empires centered in China. Neither administered Tibet as part of China. Thus, before the military advance of the People's Liberation Army into Tibet in 1949-50, China had not formally exercised sovereign control over Tibet, and the vast majority of members of the two peoples had little occasion to know one another.<sup>17</sup> This was different for the Tibetan and Chinese inhabitants of the border regions, who did have frequent exchanges with each other. It was also less applicable to the ruling elite of both countries, whose members did from time to time have occasion to meet.

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17 For discussion of historical political relations between Tibet, the Mongols, Manchus and Chinese, see M. van Walt van Praag, *The Status of Tibet: History Rights and Prospects in International Law* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987). See also Hugh E. Richardson, *A Short History of Tibet* (New York: Dutton, 1962); Melvyn Goldstein, *History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Tsung-lien Shên and Shên-chi Liu, *Tibet And the Tibetans* (Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1953). Regardless of shifting, often ambiguous, political relations between China and Tibet, cultural exchange between the two nations remained very limited throughout the Chinese Ming and Manchu Qing dynastic periods. It was nonexistent during the period of the Chinese Republic, which followed the Qing dynasty.

Despite the lack of contact between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples, the two groups developed prejudicial attitudes towards each other. Several factors helped shape the attitudes of Tibetans towards the Chinese, including: the border wars fought between Tibetans from Kham and Amdo<sup>18</sup> and warlords from the Chinese provinces of Sichuan and Gansu; irritations caused by the movement of Chinese settlers into border regions of Kham and Amdo; and, with the rise of Communism in China, the atheist creed the Chinese people increasingly represented.

In the border regions of Amdo and Kham, the conditions under which Tibetan and Chinese attitudes towards each other took root, were different from those in other parts of Tibet. Border wars between Tibetan chieftains and Sichuan warlords were a fairly constant fact of life, particularly in Kham. Tibetan racial perceptions of the Chinese developed through these armed conflicts and were spread throughout Tibet. After Tibet effectively declared its independence in 1913, tensions and armed clashes over territorial claims increased. Dochoek Kunchok Tendhar, a 61-year old ex-political prisoner and former schoolteacher born in Kham, related that:

As a young child, before I actually knew much about the Chinese, I used to see my grandparents and parents having fights with them over the borders. They, and other people from my region, would go out on horses and battle with the Chinese and then return to our village in the evening. During that time, I came to see the Chinese as very different, and even then, I had the feeling that they were ill intentioned and bad, like a people who had the devil's form—I thought their appearance had a strange, evil and devilish cast.<sup>19</sup>

Tibetans living in border regions of Amdo and Kham also had to contend with Chinese migration into Tibetan lands. Chinese farmers gradually moved into fertile valleys so that “the boundary between newly colonized Han lands

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18 Prior to its occupation by the People's Liberation Army (the “PLA”) in 1951, Tibet comprised three provinces: U-Tsang, Amdo and Kham. Today, roughly speaking, U-Tsang constitutes the Tibet Autonomous Region (the “TAR”) of China. The former provinces of Amdo and Kham (respectively, the north-eastern and southeastern regions of Tibet), by contrast, have been partitioned into 10 ‘autonomous Tibetan’ prefectures and 2 ‘autonomous Tibetan’ counties; these sections are under the jurisdiction of the Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai. Steven D. Marshall and Susette Ternent Cooke, CD-ROM, *Tibet Outside the TAR*, (Alliance for Research in Tibet, 1997).

19 Dochoek Kunchok Tendhar, Interview by Robert D. Sloane, 15 June 1998, Dharamsala, India.

and Tibetan territory [was] virtually impossible to fix at any given point in time: often the indigenous peoples were not so much pushed back by the colonists as engulfed by them.”<sup>20</sup> This trend—territorial expansion accomplished by saturating a foreign land with a large population of Chinese settlers—was not unique to Tibetan regions. The Chinese empire was created historically by means of a gradual process of expansion, absorption and assimilation of neighboring kingdoms.<sup>21</sup> Yet unlike certain other colonized peoples, the Chuang and Pai, for instance, “who considered assimilation desirable,”<sup>22</sup> Tibetans lacked any real cultural affinity with the Chinese settlers. Thus, rather than assimilating, Tibetans developed hostility towards the advancing Chinese.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Chinese Communist Party’s atheistic ideology penetrated farther into Tibet. Ven. Thupten Tsering, a 72-year old monk who fled to India in 1996, recalled that,

Prior to the Chinese invasion, I had little contact with [the Chinese]. I was studying in a monastery, and the only Chinese I knew of at that time were in Lhasa. But even then, before I got to know them, I had the impression that their intentions were bad; we heard they criticized Buddhism and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. That made us very suspicious.<sup>24</sup>

Before 1950, many Tibetans viewed the Chinese with, at the very least, an abiding sense of suspicion and, among Tibetans in some of the border regions administered by Chinese warlords, often with outright resentment and hostility.<sup>25</sup> Some of this mistrust also existed among Tibetans in other

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20 June Dreyer, *China’s Forty Millions : Minority Nationalities and National Integration in the People’s Republic Of China*, (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1976), 33.

21 Professor Warren Smith, Interview by Robert D. Sloane, 22 May 1998, Washington, DC.

22 Dreyer, *China’s Forty Millions*, 40.

23 “Tibet was unique among the frontier territories the CCP attempted to integrate into the Chinese state. Tibet had a much greater geographic, cultural and political distinctiveness than any other “national minority” area . . . Tibetans were united by a cultural and religious identity and a primarily latent but autochthonous nationalist consciousness.” Warren W. Smith, Jr., *Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1996), 360-61.

24 Venerable Thupten Tsering, Interview by Robert D. Sloane, 15 June 1998, Dharamsala, India.

25 Exceptions to this trend existed. Dreyer notes that some warlords, “despite their ruthlessness . . . had a reputation for equal treatment of minorities and for making an honest attempt to deal with grievances.” Dreyer, *China’s Forty Millions*, 40.

parts of the country. Overall, however, most ordinary Tibetans gave little thought to the Chinese until the invasion of Chinese forces into Tibet.<sup>26</sup>

Chinese views of Tibetans exhibit, on the one hand, the influence of similar historical factors, and on the other, prejudicial attitudes having less to do with Tibetans themselves than with traditional conceptions of their own racial and cultural identity. Chinese attitudes towards Tibetans, as well as towards other foreign cultures, were rooted in “one of the great preconceptions of China’s political life—the belief in the innate unity of the Chinese realm (*tian xia*, “all under Heaven”).”<sup>27</sup> In Confucian thought China was the geographic and cultural center of the world. The Chinese emperor was conceived as the “Son of Heaven,” charged with ensuring the unity, “peace, order, and prosperity” of the Chinese people.<sup>28</sup> All other peoples were barbarians who had to submit to the Emperor. From the Chinese viewpoint, the distinction between Chinese civilization and foreign ones was cultural *and* racial. As the Chinese expanded westward, the “barbaric foreigners” they encountered were encouraged to assimilate, adopt Chinese culture, and become absorbed into the Chinese civilization. The Confucian aphorism that one should “recompense justice with justice” contributed to a powerful strain in Chinese political thought that vindicated the idea that “barbaric uncivilized” peoples should be assimilated or eliminated.<sup>29</sup>

To be better understood, this ethnocentric view of the world should be viewed in the context of Chinese history. In the first place, before the nineteenth century, China had little awareness of “rival” empires comparable to itself in size, strength or cultural achievements. Moreover, unlike European nations, which “exploded” outwards in the second half of the past millennium due to the growth of naval commerce and colonial ambition, China underwent what renowned China scholar John K. Fairbank terms an “implosion.”<sup>30</sup>

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26 Dawa Norbu, “Self-determination in the Post-Soviet Era: A Case Study of Tibet,” *Journal of International Studies* 34, no. 3 (1977): 237: “The vast majority of common Tibetans had never seen the Han people before 1950.” See also Francisca van Holthoon, “Independent Study on Colonialism and Tibet,” in *UNPO Yearbook 1997*, (Hague, Netherlands: UNPO, 1998), 251.

27 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 10.

28 Ibid.

29 Lokesh Chandra, Interview by Robert D. Sloane. 2 June 1998, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.

30 Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 4-5: “For the ancient Chinese there was nowhere to go overseas, no great rival states to trade with and suffer invasion from.”



## **Shots from *Serf***



Prior to 1950, Tibet was underdeveloped and brutal punishments did occur. However, the film *Serf*, which was seen by millions upon millions of Chinese, portrayed all of Tibetan society as brutalized, as this image shows, by a small, elite aristocratic class. In reality, Tibet was not too different in terms of exploitation of peasants from many Asian societies, including China.

This led to dense population growth, cultural insulation and solidification of the existing social structure. At the same time, it accelerated China's development of the arts and technology, which instilled in the Chinese people a sense of cultural superiority.<sup>31</sup>

For several reasons, Tibetans, in particular, suffered from the Chinese stereotypes of being primitive, backward, uncivilized and superstitious. The geographic remoteness of the Tibetan plateau from China proper insulated each culture from the other. And despite economic relations, fluctuating political ties, and some intermingling in the border regions of Amdo and Kham, for the most part, Tibetan and Chinese culture developed wholly independently of one another.<sup>32</sup> This separation exacerbated the sense of foreignness and "barbarism" with which China already viewed foreign societies such as the Tibetans, Tatars and Mongols.<sup>33</sup>

Encounters between Tibetan nomadic groups and Chinese settlers further perpetuated the stereotype of Tibetans as "aggressive barbarians." In the first place, nomadic life *per se*, absent from traditional Chinese society, was equated with barbarism just as, in this ethnocentric perception, its opposite, sedentary life—settlement—was viewed as a prerequisite of civilization. Second, Tibetan nomadic groups frequently moved to higher altitude lands during the summer, but, as the seasons shifted, they would migrate back to the warmer, lower altitude regions where they lived during the winter. In the interim, Chinese settlers had sometimes established new communities on these same lands. From the Tibetan nomads' perspective, they were simply reclaiming territory that they traditionally occupied during the winter months. But for the Chinese settlers, the return of these Tibetans—and the inevitable conflicts that ensued—were "nomad raids" perpetrated by primitive clans.<sup>34</sup> Finally, Chinese prejudices of Tibetans as primitive derived from bias against certain deeply ingrained cultural strains in Tibetan life with which the Chinese lacked familiarity—in particular, cultural practices and rituals that re-

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31 *Ibid.*, 7.

32 Luciano Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early 18th Century*, (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1973), Reprint from monograph, 240-3. It should be noted, however, that among the Mongol and Manchu ruling elite (during the Yuan and Qing Dynasties, respectively) there was a great respect for Tibetan spiritual learning and culture. Both Mongol and Manchu emperors chose Tibetan Lamas to become not only their spiritual teachers and guides, but also, in a sense, the spiritual leaders of their empires. For further discussion of these relationships, see van Walt van Praag, *The Status of Tibet*, 5-6, 12-13.

33 *Ibid.*, 241.

34 Smith, *Tibetan Nation*.

flect the influence of Tibet's indigenous Bonpo religion, with its emphasis upon personal and nature deities.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, by the end of the first half of the twentieth century, the strong residual influence of Chinese ethnocentrism and scarce but often hostile contact between Chinese and Tibetans helped solidify the Chinese stereotype of Tibetans as a violent, backward, primitive and superstitious people.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, Tibetan attitudes towards the Chinese, as noted, were predominantly characterized by, at best, suspicion and mistrust; at worst, resentment and hostility. Writing from prison, the noted Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng captured the state of early-twentieth century Sino-Tibetan ethnic relations in his letter to Deng Xiaoping *On the Tibetan Question*:

[T]he extent of estrangement between the two peoples was larger than that between the governments... [I]n the minds of the Tibetans, deceitfulness (mostly of people in the Sichuan Province and Muslims in northwest China) had replaced the image of allies and defenders. In the minds of Chinese, who considered themselves as being enlightened, Tibetans became backward and ignorant, "half human, half beast," rather than subjects of the living Buddha.<sup>37</sup>

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35 Lokesh Chandra, Interview by Robert D. Sloane.

36 This portrayal of pre-communist Tibet still permeates Chinese propaganda. For one example of this type of depiction, see Hsi Chang-Hao and Kao Yuan-Mei, *Tibet Leaps Forward* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977); see also Pierre-Antoine Donnet, *Tibet: Survival in Question*, translated by Tica Broch, (Delhi: Zed Books, 1994), 42-49.

37 Letter from Wei Jingsheng to Deng Xiaoping, "On the Tibetan Question," 5 October 1992, in Wei Jingsheng, *The Courage to Stand Alone: Letters from Prison and Other Writings* (New York: Viking, 1997), 184.



# Chapter 3

JAMPA: THE STORY OF RACISM IN TIBET

## Formation of Current Chinese Policies and Practice in Tibet

Today's policies and practice of racism and racial discrimination in Tibet are as much the product of the historical development of perceptions of Tibetans by the Chinese as the result of specific ideologies and policies developed by the Nationalist and then the Communist rulers of China to deal with the Inner Asian peoples on the frontiers of China. This chapter will explore the origins and development of the so-called minority nationalities policy by the Kuomintang leaders of the Chinese Republic (1911-1948 on mainland China) and then the policies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its government (since 1948). In short, it is the early historical concepts such as the Confucian notion of unity (*tian xia*) that played a central role in Communist ideology and policy regarding Tibetans and other border peoples. Additionally, it will be shown that the spread of modern nationalism and Marxist-Leninist theories of social evolution has shaped the current Chinese attitudes, policies and practice with respect to Tibetans.

### *Origins of the Minority Nationalities Policy*

China's minority nationalities policy originated from the emergence of a reinvigorated Chinese nationalism. Nationalism in early 20th century China arose in part as a negative reaction against both Western imperialism and the perseverance of the alien Manchu dynasty.<sup>38</sup> Nationalism fostered unity (*tian xia*) essential to the survival of the Chinese race, *minzu*,<sup>39</sup> and reflected a

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38 Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 168. See also Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet*, 58.

39 The word *minzu* integrated both the notion of people (*min*) and the fiction of decent (*zu*) and implied the concept of tribe and race. Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 97, 108. See discussion in *ibid*, 107-111.

resurgence of patriotism rooted in “Great Hanism.” The Yellow Emperor, a mythical figure thought to have reigned from 2697 to 2597 BC, became a powerful symbol as the first ancestor (*shizu*) of the Han race and of the Chinese empire which had been invaded by the Mongolian barbarians, Manchus and the Western imperialists. “All were foreign races that had forcibly occupied the territory of the descendants of the Yellow Emperor, the Han race.”<sup>40</sup>

When the Manchu Qing dynasty finally collapsed in 1911, it was along the lines of the Western nation-state that China struggled to redefine itself, a concept in some tension with the more amorphous boundaries expressed by *tian xia*. At the same time, recognizing the continued importance to China’s security of the frontier “buffer territories,” China’s new leaders preserved the “colonialist-imperialist posture” toward Tibet, Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) and Mongolia.<sup>41</sup>

The problem the founders of the new Chinese Republic faced was how to reconstruct China as a nation-state based on a Chinese nationalism that conformed to the sentiment of *tian xia* while claiming sovereignty over the so-called frontier territories, supposedly inherited from the empire of the Manchus. The solution was the fabrication of a new two-part concept: (1) the Chinese state was re-defined as one nation; and (2) the non-Chinese peoples or minorities were portrayed “as sharing ‘Chinese’ origins.”<sup>42</sup> In this way, the new Chinese state could maintain the idea of a nation state based on a Chineseness, derived from a common—if fabricated—Chinese racial ancestry. This convoluted theory formed the basis for China’s future minority nationalities policy.

### ***Nationality Doctrine of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek***

#### **SUN YAT-SEN**

Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Chinese Republic, developed the *Minzu* doctrine, or the “doctrine of the national group.” This doctrine reflected both the new Chinese ethnocentrism and the old fears of imperialism that motivated Chinese nationalism.<sup>43</sup> Sun held that, whereas some states comprise many races and in some cases one race may form several states, China had

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40 Ibid, 116.

41 Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 167: “The Republic could not turn these Inner Asian territories loose without making them into a strategic menace.”

42 Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, 325.

43 Sun Yat-sen, *Sun Yat-sen: His Political & Social Ideals*, trans. & ed. Leonard Shihlien Hsü, (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1933), 163.

constituted a single race since the Ch'in and Han Dynasties (221-207 BC and 206 BC to 8 AD, respectively).<sup>44</sup> This doctrine in effect relegated the non-Chinese populations at times loosely encompassed by the Manchu Empire—Mongols, Manchus, Tibetans, and Uighurs (and other Tatars)—to the status of sub-groups or insignificant minorities of China.

Sun Yat-sen argued the issue by raising the specter of the threat to the survival of the nation-race:

Considering the law of survival of ancient and modern races, if we want to save China and to preserve the Chinese race, we must certainly promote nationalism. To make this principle luminous for China's salvation, we must first understand it clearly. The Chinese race totals four hundred million people; of mingled races there are only a few million Mongolians, a million or so Manchus, a few million Tibetans, and over a million Mohammedan Turks. These alien races do not number altogether more than ten million, so that for the most part, the Chinese people are of the Han or Chinese race with common blood, common language, common religion, and common customs – a single, pure race.<sup>45</sup>

Since he could not attack and practice imperialism at the same time, Sun revived a political fiction similar to *tian xia*. Unlike America, he argued, in which independent states were appropriately unified by confederation, in China, *unity* had been the historical norm.<sup>46</sup> In contrast with European imperialist aggressors, the argument continued, China's societal prestige was so great that minor nations *asked* to be annexed and felt it an honor to become

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44 Ibid., 165.

45 Sun Wen (Sun Yat-sen), *Sanminzhui* (the three principles), Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1927, pp. 4-5, as quoted in Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 124. While Sun defined China and evoked nationalism by emphasizing the overwhelming Chinese population, he also voiced fears that China must increase its population or it would risk racial annihilation at the hands of imperialist aggressors: "Suppose that our population does not increase during the next hundred years and that theirs [imperialists] grows several times larger; they may easily conquer our people, for their number will be much larger than ours. Then not only will our country will be partitioned by the Powers, but our nationality group will be absorbed by other nationality groups, just as the Mongols and the Manchus have been absorbed by us." Sun Yat-sen, in *Sun Yat-sen: His Political & Social Ideals*, 179.

46 Sun Yat-sen, *Sun Yat-sen: His Political & Social Ideals*, 225.

## **Shots from *Serf***



One of Jampa's friends, breaks the "chains of his enslavement" by the upper classes of Tibetan society and joins the Chinese Red Guards in their revolution to liberate Tibet. Shown here is the before and after picture of his personal "liberation."



tributary states of China.<sup>47</sup> Sun's rationalization of China's imperialist policies in relation to the nations on its frontiers contained an inherent contradiction. It relegated the Manchu, Mongol, Tatar and Tibetan peoples to the ranks of insignificant minorities of a new Chinese Republic, while at the same time proclaiming commitment to not just the unity, but also the equality of the "five nationalities" (the four mentioned and the Chinese nationality) that together were supposed to comprise this republic.<sup>48</sup>

### CHIANG KAI-SHEK

Chiang Kai-shek, who later became the president of Nationalist China, embraced Sun's theories. In his seminal book, *China's Destiny*, he presents a highly idealized view of China's "inherent virtues." Chiang furthermore makes dubious historical claims of common genealogical origins of China's "five nationalities,"<sup>49</sup> China's benevolence towards its neighbors,<sup>50</sup> and foreign imperialism's central role in inciting minority independence movements.<sup>51</sup> One of the book's central themes is the alleged "common destiny" of what Chiang calls the five "racial stocks" of the Chinese republic. Throughout history, Chiang claims, this common destiny "bound together the sentiments of these stocks into a central loyalty" and "influenced and remolded their original traits and characteristics."<sup>52</sup> Again, minority nationalities—here referred to as "racial stocks"—emerge as, at best, *contributors* to China's rich cultural heritage. But Chiang, like Sun, refused to concede that minority nationalities possess a separate cultural identity from the Chinese:

Within China's territory the customs of the various racial stocks and the modes of living in the various regions vary considerably. The sum-total of these different customs constitutes Chinese national culture, and the sum-total of these different modes of living makes up Chinese national life.<sup>53</sup>

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47 Ibid., 226.

48 Suisheng Zhao, "Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations," *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no.1 (Spring 2000): 25.

49 Chiang Kai-shek, *China's Destiny*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 10-14.

50 Ibid., 13.

51 Ibid., 57-58.

52 Ibid., 10.

53 Ibid., 8.

Whatever the historical relations between Tibetan rulers and Mongol and Manchu emperors of China implied about their country's political and legal status, Tibet's unique culture and civilization undeniably developed separately from those of China. Yet under the nationalities doctrines of the Chinese Republic, Tibetan culture was relegated as a mere "component" of the Chinese, i.e. Han, national identity. *China's Destiny* was widely distributed and subsidized, it was even part of the school curriculum. As a result, "Chiang's simplistic, indeed, false, version of China's relations with other peoples . . . became part of the consciousness of most Chinese."<sup>54</sup> Although the *Kuomintang* failed to maintain control over the nascent Chinese state, remnants of its ideological positions persisted among the Chinese Communists. While Communist ideology initially demanded certain modifications of the *Kuomintang* stance on the nationalities question, Mao Zedong's view of minority nationalities policy reflected many of the same prejudices found in *China's Destiny*. This has had a profound impact on Communist China's treatment of Tibetans in the past fifty years.

### ***The Impact of Communist Ideology: Lenin and Mao***

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) minority nationalities policy evolved from a peculiar blend of Chinese nationalism, the nationalities doctrines of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, and an adulterated version of Leninist nationalities theory. While the CCP initially promoted the right of 'minority nationalities' to self-determination, in the early 1930s—along with Mao's rise to power—its position shifted radically. By the time Tibet was occupied in 1951, minority nationalities were guaranteed little more than the right "to remain within China and receive the benefits of the Han revolution."<sup>55</sup> The Tibetan identity, previously relegated to a mere component of the Han national identity, was further marginalized by Marxist doctrines that recast it as yet another "false consciousness"—one that would ultimately vanish with socioeconomic development. This assumption also reinforced the Chinese stereotype of Tibetans as primitive and backward.

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54 Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, 329. In the 1920's readings on race politics became part of the school curricula and were incorporated in the text books. One primary school textbook presented the case as follows: "Mankind is divided into five races. The yellow and white races are relatively strong and intelligent. Because the other races are feeble and stupid, they are being exterminated by the white race. Only the yellow race competes with the white race. This is so-called evolution[...]. Among contemporary races that could be called superior, there are only the yellow and the white races. China is the yellow race. L. Wiegner, *Moralisme officiel des écoles, en 1920*, Hien-hien, 1921, 180 (original Chinese text) quoted in Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 163.

55 Norbu, "Self-determination in the Post-Soviet Era," 249.

## LENIN

Communist ideology, that of Lenin in particular, imparted new meaning to the term “nationality.” It no longer indicated a separate people defined by ethnic traits like language, customs and shared heritage. Instead, consistent with Marx’s view that all mental attitudes reflect class relations, nationality became primarily an *economic* classification. Lenin concerned himself “with the self-determination of the proletariat of each nationality rather than with self-determination of peoples and nations...”<sup>56</sup> He was convinced that, given the choice, the proletariat would not choose autonomy or separation, since local nationalism represented little more than a false consciousness perpetuated by the dominant bourgeois class.<sup>57</sup> Thus, “Lenin supported the right of national self-determination: but he subjected this right to conditions which eventually led to its extinction in practice.”<sup>58</sup>

As the CCP evolved, it adapted Lenin’s ideological stance to vindicate its policies on the rights and treatment of national minorities. The *communist* notion that, once the proletariat understood its “true” interests, it would choose to join the expanding Soviet state, resonated with the deeply ingrained *Chinese* notion that, once the barbarian populations became educated, liberated, and “civilized,” they would naturally choose integration into Chinese society. This attitude persists to this day.<sup>59</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the CCP policy towards minorities did not originate with these prejudicial assumptions. In fact, the CCP initially declared in no uncertain terms that:

...the Chinese Soviet Republic categorically and unconditionally recognizes the right of national minorities to self-determination...in districts like Mongolia, Tibet, Sinkiang, Yunnan, Kweichow and others, where the majority of the population belongs to non-Chinese nationalities.<sup>60</sup>

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56 Vladimir Lenin, ‘On Manifesto of American Social Democrats’, *Collected Works*, vol. 6, 327, quoted in David McLellan, *Marxism After Marx*, (London: Macmillan Press, 2nd ed., 1979), 102.

57 Dreyer, *China’s Forty Millions*, 43.

58 McLellan, *Marxism after Marx*, 102.

59 For more information on contemporary Sino-Tibetan ethnic relations, see Chapter 4 of this report.

60 Chang Chih-I, “A Discussion of the National Question in the Chinese Revolution and of Actual Nationalities Policy” in George Moseley, *The Party and the National Question in China* (1966), 164, cited in Norbu, “Self-determination in the Post-Soviet Era,” 244.

This early position, adopted almost literally from certain Marxist-Leninist writings,<sup>61</sup> shifted drastically under the influence of two primary factors. First, the enduring Chinese concern with foreign imperialism, reinforced by the Japanese invasions of the 1930s,<sup>62</sup> as well as recognition of the Soviet Union's possible designs on Xinjiang,<sup>63</sup> brought about a renewed emphasis on national security and the need to maintain "buffer territories." Second, the Red Army's more or less contemporaneous experiences with minority populations during the "Long March" to elude the *Kuomintang* shattered the somewhat naïve ideological assumption—rooted in Leninist nationality theory and residual Han chauvinism—that such groups, given the choice, would welcome absorption into the new Chinese nation-state.<sup>64</sup> Instead, Chinese communist soldiers often found themselves faced, particularly in Kham and Amdo, with openly hostile populations who resented their presence. These two factors, combined with the ideological influence of Mao Zedong's leadership, engineered a drastic shift in CCP minority policies during the 1930s.

## MAO

With the establishment of the Communist state in 1949, "the discourse of race was officially abolished" in China.<sup>65</sup> Along with propaganda campaigns against racism, anthropologists came under severe criticism for having used disrespectful anthropometrical methods that insulted national minorities and were suspected to be intended to prove minority inferiority.<sup>66</sup> Mao opposed Han chauvinism as an "intolerable situation" that interfered with equitable relations between the nationalities.<sup>67</sup> He conceived of minority nationalities as "doubly oppressed by their traditional ruling class and by the KMT [*Kuomintang*] government."<sup>68</sup> But ironically, while he criticized the *Kuomintang*,

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61 The self-determination clause, according to Dreyer, "had probably been copied without much thought from the Soviet Union's constitution during a rather idealistic period that the party had long since outgrown." Dreyer, *China's Forty Millions*, 70.

62 Norbu, "Self-determination in the Post-Soviet Era," 245.

63 Dreyer, *China's Forty Millions*, 70.

64 *Ibid.*, 67-69.

65 Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 191.

66 *Ibid.*

67 Mao Tse-tung, Inner-Party Directive, "Criticize Han Chauvinism (March 6, 1953)," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung V*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), 73.

68 Norbu, "Self-determination in the Post-Soviet Era," 245.

imputing to them the blame for Han Chauvinism, Mao adopted the very ideological stance that Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek had developed. He too propagated the idea of an inherently unified China composed of multiple, coequal “Chinese” nationalities. In his view, it followed that “local-nationality chauvinism” should be opposed because it was harmful to the unity of the nationalities.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, his adaptation of Leninist nationalities doctrine effectively offered a non-culturally based rationale for Han leadership:

What Mao indicated in effect was that the national minorities should not have the right to self-determination; for that, according to him, was not in their long-term interests. Instead, they should remain within China and receive the benefits of the Han revolution. The underlying assumption was that the national minorities would not be able to develop without Han help.<sup>70</sup>

Communism, after all, declared itself the most advanced stage of economic, social and political development. Consequently, the Chinese were recast as “the most revolutionary people [who] can lead the non-Chinese peoples to a higher stage of historical development.”<sup>71</sup> The racial discourse was, in effect, merely reformulated in social terms of “class.” “Eugenics theories were increasingly applied to the individual’s social origins: the best people were ‘born red.’ During the Cultural Revolution, blood-lineage theories surfaced to prove biological inheritance of class attitudes.”<sup>72</sup> Liberation, enlightenment and modernization thus became the ideological banner under which the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) subjugated “national minorities.” With respect to Tibet in particular, far from promoting respect and equitable treatment of its unique culture and traditions, this attitude fueled preexisting Chinese biases of backwardness, barbarism and primitiveness.

Despite apparent support for minority equality and the repudiation of Han chauvinism, Mao too perceived the Chinese nation (*minzu*) as a culturally as well as racially distinct group. Mao’s idea of China as a nation-state of *unified* nationalities required that those elements of minority nationality cul-

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70 Norbu, “Self-determination in the Post-Soviet Era,” 249.

71 Ibid., 250. See also Hsieh Fu-min, “Carry Through the Socialist Education Movement Opposing Local Nationalism,” *Nationalities Unity*, no. 6 (March 1956), 271, cited in Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, 359-60.

72 Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 191, 192.

ture and expressions of distinct identity that interfered with “Chinese unity” had to be suppressed. Tibetan and other so-called minority nationalities had to follow the “revolutionary leadership” of the Chinese in social, political and economic development. Therefore, ethnic identity or cultural traditions of these nationalities conflicted with the leadership’s ideals of “progress,” “modernization,” “socialism” or “development,” would have to be suppressed as well. Tibet would especially suffer under this policy. Among the so-called “minority nationalities”—which included the Mongolians, Tibetans, the Uighur and other peoples of Xinjiang—Tibetan cultural characteristics and practices were the most problematic to “Chinese unity.”

# Chapter 4

JAMPA: THE STORY OF RACISM IN TIBET

## Official Policies of the People's Republic of China

*"In the struggle to safeguard the unity of the nationalities, it is necessary to combat big-nation chauvinism, mainly Han chauvinism, and to combat local national chauvinism. The state will do its utmost to promote the common prosperity of all the nationalities."*

PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

*"In old China, serious ethnic discrimination and oppression existed. ...After the founding of New China in 1949, the Chinese Government completely abolished all ethnic oppression and discrimination, and liberated ethnic minority people."*

PRC WHITE PAPER ON HUMAN RIGHTS, 2000<sup>73</sup>

**T**hus far, we have studied the evolution of Chinese political thought and policy with respect to other population groups. It appears from the previous chapters that a clear sense of superiority of the Chinese people and culture over others, in particular Tibetans, has existed for centuries. Despite the egalitarian and solidarity concepts of Communist ideology, the political expediency of establishing and maintaining Chinese control over the Inner Asian peoples (Tibetans, Uighurs and Mongolians) and Manchus led to concepts of Chinese unity that relegated Tibetans and others to the status of insignificant minorities within a greater China.<sup>74</sup>

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73 People's Republic of China, Information Office of the State Council, "50 Years of Progress in China's Human Rights," Full Text of PRC's Human Rights White Paper, 17 February 2000, (Beijing: Xinhua, 2000). FBIS translation. FBIS-CHI-2000-0217.

74 Zhao, "Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations," 25.

The following chapters will examine the present state of affairs. The Constitution of the PRC promulgates principles, which, if taken at face value, suggest a firm commitment for equality and against racial discrimination. This chapter will look beyond the surface to the meaning of the relevant provisions of the constitution, to the law on regional autonomy and to official policy statements. In doing so, we will seek to establish to what extent racism persists in the official policies of the PRC, in particular with regard to Tibetans.

Nowhere is China's official policy regarding racism more evident than in a speech made by China's Vice Foreign Minister Wang Guangya during the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting for the WCAR in February 2001.<sup>75</sup> It shows that in many ways, China's attitude toward racism has not changed significantly since Mao's time and that racism is still portrayed as a phenomena rooted in the West. This characterization of racism portrayed is one of a global class conflict, and thus nowhere in this speech is there any recognition that racism is an issue within China:

Colonialism and racism in the past brought tremendous adverse effects on the development of the countries and people in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The World Conference Against Racism should be committed to the early establishment of a new international political and economic order... so that all members of the international community, big or small, rich or poor, can coexist as equals and respect one another and that all can benefit from the process of globalization... [China] endured untold suffering by colonialism... At present the Chinese people of all ethnic groups are living in harmony.<sup>76</sup>

### ***Constitution of the PRC***

Article 4 of the Constitution stipulates that “[a]ll nationalities in the People's Republic of China are equal.” The same article goes on to declare:

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75 Wang Guangya, Statement at the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference Against Racism, Tehran, Iran, 19 February 2001, informal transcript. The full speech has been provided in Appendix A to this report.

76 Wang Guangya, Statement at the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference Against Racism.



## ***Shots from Serf***



The Chinese in the film are often portrayed as clean, content, happy, sensitive and helpful.

...[t]he state protects the lawful rights and interests of the minority nationalities and upholds and develops a relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all of China's nationalities. Discrimination and oppression of any nationality are prohibited; any act which undermines the unity of the nationalities or instigates division is prohibited.<sup>77</sup>

These provisions suggest both inclusive and protective policies towards “minority nationalities” in the PRC. The government, in policy statements and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda, made great efforts after the establishment of the PRC to portray China as the “Great Motherland” in which all ethnic groups constituted one family. Consistent with this image, the stronger family members would help the weaker ones. Thus, Chairman Mao explained to the young Dalai Lama, when they met in Beijing in 1954, that the Chinese came to Tibet to help Tibetans develop and modernize and that they would leave once this had been achieved. He added that in the future perhaps it would be Tibet's turn to help China.<sup>78</sup> As stated in Chapter 3, Mao also warned against “Han chauvinism” and ill treatment of minorities by Chinese cadres.<sup>79</sup>

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China opens with the proclamation that “China is a country with one of the longest histories in the world. The people of all of China's nationalities have jointly created a culture of grandeur and have a glorious revolutionary tradition.”<sup>80</sup>

These words establish the framework in which the whole document should be read and understood. They constitute a restatement of the myth of common ancestry of all peoples of the PRC and of the greatness of the Chinese people. This, according to China scholar Barry Sautman, feeds “a resurrected meta-myth that the Chinese are—and have been since prehistoric times—a homogenous people, the *zhonghua minzu* (Chinese nationality).”<sup>81</sup> According to these myths, resurrected by Deng Xiaoping and vigorously propagated

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77 Constitution of the People's Republic of China, promulgated on December 4, 1982, as amended in 1988 and 1993, Article 4.

78 Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People*, (New York: Potala Corp, 1983), 117.

79 Mao Tse-Tung, Inner Party Directive, Criticize Han Chauvinism (March 6, 1953), in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung V*, 73.

80 Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Preamble.

81 Barry Sautman, “Racial Nationalism and China's External Behavior,” *World Affairs*, (Fall 1997): 79.

today, all the peoples of the PRC are held to be descendants of the Yellow Emperor and, even earlier, of the dragon. The dragon and the Yellow Emperor are used as unifying symbols for all ethnic groups within the PRC, not just the Chinese (Han).<sup>82</sup> This is despite the fact that the non-Chinese peoples or minorities do not identify with the dragon but have other mythical animals as their symbols. For example, the Yellow Emperor cult, which was forbidden under Mao Zedong, is a legend of which the non-Chinese peoples do not at all identify. The emperor, Huang Di, legendary founder of the first Chinese state and “father of the race,” was a Chinese from the Han dynasty, is said to have been born in 2704 B.C.<sup>83</sup>

According to Sautman, “myths of biological distinctiveness purport to convince all PRC citizens of their primordial and unambiguous placement within the Chinese nation.”<sup>84</sup> This is true also of the other emblem resurrected by Deng Xiaoping, the Great Wall, which is today being presented as a great achievement of and monument to all the “nationalities of China.” Until recently, the Great Wall was portrayed as having been constructed to protect the Chinese from barbarian nomadic invaders, such as the Mongols, Tatars or Tibetans. Today these peoples are portrayed as having been co-authors and builders of this national emblem, a theory designed to show that they were always a part of the *zhonghua minzu*.<sup>85</sup>

The theory of the common ancestry of all of China’s nationalities is part of the PRC’s struggle against self-determination movements of Tibetans, Uighurs, and Mongolians, which are in large part based on these groups’ conviction of their distinct peoplehood. Thus, the PRC government goes to great lengths to promote the idea that Tibetans and Chinese are part of the same

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82 Ibid., 84.

83 Frank Dikötter, “Culture, “Race” and Nation: The Formation of National Identity in Twentieth Century China,” *Journal of International Affairs* 49, no.2 (Winter 1996), p. 594.

84 Ibid., 85.

85 Until the nineteenth century, the Chinese did not even have a name for the Great Wall, and during most of Chinese history, it was portrayed negatively as “a symbol not of national greatness but rather of dynastic evil.” Ibid., 85. The Great Wall became an emblem only after 1984, when Deng Xiaoping urged its restoration. Sautman writes: “Luo Zhewen, a leading scholar and member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, has termed the Great Wall “an embodiment of the spirit and force of the Chinese nation.” He has noted that the walls were built to ward off horse-borne invaders from the north and used in conflicts with peoples now regarded as minorities. Luo has nevertheless written that ‘the Great Wall is the joint achievement of all of China’s minority nationalities.’” For more information, see Luo Zhewen and Zhao Luo, *The Great Wall of China in History and Legend*, trans. Zeng Xianwu & Wang Zengfen, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1986).

race, that they both descend from the Peking Man, that their early cultures were identical and that Tibetans in fact descend from Chinese migrants who moved to the plateau from Gansu and neighboring regions.<sup>86</sup>

While the theories of common ancestry imply equality of the nationalities, as is indeed stated in the Constitution, there exists a deep-seated notion of hierarchy of the nationalities or races within the PRC. For examples, the Chinese regard only their own ethnic group, the Han, as Chinese, and as descendants of the Yellow Emperor.<sup>87</sup> As we shall see in the next chapter, they rank ethnic groups according to skin color. Tibetans, as a result, are considered far inferior to the Chinese race.

### *The overriding objective of political unity*

The objectives of China's construct of common ancestry and equality of nationalities becomes apparent, as do the tensions in these concepts, when they are interpreted in political terms as requiring political unity and subservience to the Chinese state. This is evident not only in the practical implementation of CCP policies and laws but also in the language of the laws themselves. For instance, Article 4 of the Constitution, quoted above, states unequivocally that "[d]iscrimination against and oppression of any nationality are prohibited."<sup>88</sup> But in the very same sentence, it asserts that "any act which undermines the unity of the nationalities or instigates division is prohibited."<sup>89</sup> Article 52, which comes after a number of articles enumerating the civil and political rights of citizens of the PRC, declares the duty of citizens "to safeguard the unification of the country and the unity of all its nationalities."<sup>90</sup> Acts celebrating the Tibetan, Uighur and Mongolian identities, almost by definition, become suspect as undermining this unity. The very existence of those distinct identities challenges this political notion of unity.<sup>91</sup>

The objective of the constitutional provisions dealing with "minority nationalities" and discrimination is, simply stated, the maintenance of a united and integrated Chinese state. The recognition of equality and prohi-

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86 Sautman, "Racial Nationalism," 86.

87 *Ibid.*, 84.

88 Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Art. 4.

89 *Ibid.*

90 *Ibid.*, Art. 52.

91 See Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy, Preface (1984), as an example.

bition of discrimination are not only subordinate to the political and territorial unity of the state, but also may serve as an instrument to achieve or maintain that unity. This is also reflected in the provisions on representation and autonomy.

Articles 59 and 65 provide for the right of “appropriate representation” of minority nationalities in the National People’s Congress (NPC), the highest representative body of the central government, and in its Standing Committee. Official sources in 1991 claimed that 15 percent of the deputies of the NPC came from minority nationalities.<sup>92</sup> The constitution also provides (in Section VI) for regional autonomy in areas where minority nationalities live in compact communities. The Chinese government, in its periodic report to the CERD Committee in 1999, declared that there were a total of 129 self-government regulations, 209 separate regulations and 64 provisions around the special conditions of governance for minority areas.<sup>93</sup> According to the 2000 White Paper on Human Rights, put out by the Information Office of the Chinese State Council:

If resolutions, decisions, orders and instructions from the higher-level state organs are not suited to the actual conditions of the autonomous areas, the organs of self-government of these areas may be flexible in carrying them out or may decide not to carry them out after gaining permission from the higher state organs.<sup>94</sup>

The 1984 Law on Regional National Autonomy states the same principle.<sup>95</sup> This right is qualified, however, by the requirement that any local decision is “in accordance with the plans for national and social develop-

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92 People’s Republic of China, Information Office of the State Council, “50 Years of Progress in China’s Human Rights,” Full Text of PRC’s 2000 Human Rights White Paper, 17 February 2000, (Beijing: Xinhua, 2000). FBIS translated text. FBIS-CHI-2000-0217.

93 People’s Republic of China, “Ninth Periodic Report of States Parties Due in 1999,” Para. 64.

94 Ibid. For a different perspective on Tibetan autonomy, from a Chinese intellectual, see also Wang Lixiong, “Tibet: PRC’s 21st Century Underbelly,” *Beijing Zhanlue Yu Guanli*, 2 January 1999, 21-33.

95 Law of the PRC on Regional National Autonomy, Preface (1984).

96 Ibid. For an analysis of the practical operation of regional autonomy in the TAR, see International Campaign for Tibet [hereafter ICT] and International Human Rights Law Group, *The Myth of Tibetan Autonomy: A Legal Analysis of the Status of Tibet* (Washington: 1994).

## ***Shots from Serf***



In this scene, Jampa is being cared for by a Chinese mobile medical unit, after the evil Tibetan aristocrat works Jampa to over-exhaustion.

ment,” and is taken “[u]nder the leadership of the Communist Party of China.”<sup>96</sup> Indeed, in the Chinese constitutional and legal system, the exercise of “local” autonomy is limited and must fully conform to Communist Party policies and directives and all autonomous organs must operate under the “uniform direction of the Central Government.”<sup>97</sup>

Some members of the minority nationalities have held very senior posts in the central government, such as that of vice-president or vice-chairman of the NPC Standing Committee.<sup>98</sup> Studies, however, have shown that the legal provisions on representation of Tibetans and other “minority nationalities” can easily be circumvented so that these people are not in a position to make important decisions. As Hungmao Tien points out:

While Peking can claim participation by all nationalities in the political process on the basis of percentage figures, their numbers have tended to be concentrated in less important organizations at the lower levels.<sup>99</sup>

Political representation at the local autonomous levels, despite the constitutional and legal provisions on autonomy, involve little decision making power. Thus, Tibetans are denied genuine autonomy in this manner.<sup>100</sup> Even more important is the fact that, in reality, it is the Chinese Communist Party and its organs, as opposed to the government bodies, that make policy and monopolize power. The CCP members dominate all government and army posts. This is in accordance with one of the Four Cardinal Principles on which Chinese politics is based: Leadership by the Communist Party.<sup>101</sup> Significantly, China’s autonomy laws remain silent on the role of ‘minorities’ in the CCP.<sup>102</sup> In fact, even in the Tibetan and other autonomous regions, top Chinese Party members and not citizens of the local “minority nationality” invariably occupy party posts.

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97 Law of the PRC on Regional National Autonomy, Preface (1984).

98 People’s Republic of China, “Ninth Periodic Reports of States Parties Due in 1999,” Para. 58 and 62.

99 Hungmao Tien, “Sinocization of National Minorities in China,” in *Current Scene*, Vol. XII, no. 12.

100 van Holthoon, “Independent Study on Colonialism and Tibet,” 252. See also, ICT & International Human Rights Law Group, *The Myth of Autonomy: A Legal Analysis of the Status of Tibet*.

101 *Ibid.*, 254.

102 *Ibid.*, 254

### **Paternalism**

One focus of the UN World Conference Against Racism is to highlight the lingering effects of “doctrines of discovery,” where Christian nations lay claim to “unoccupied lands” or lands belonging to “heathens” or “pagans.” This led to subsequent degrading impacts on the strength and growth of these indigenous communities.<sup>103</sup> Their mission was to “civilize.” Likewise, the mission to civilize finds expression in the words of Hu Jintao. When he spoke of the peaceful liberation of Tibet in July 2001, he credited China for its help to Tibet: “[China] ushered in a new era in Tibet to turn from darkness to light, from backwardness to progress, from poverty to affluence.”<sup>104</sup>

This is the fundamental philosophy of the missionary, whether they are Christian or communist. Yet, while today there is considerable skepticism internationally about the value of this missionary zeal to traditional peoples, Beijing lags far behind most nations in adopting less paternalistic attitudes toward non-Chinese people living within their current boundaries.

Tibetans today have been reduced to merely one of these 56 “ethnic minorities” who, together with the Han (Chinese), comprise China. Politically, China continues to suggest that Tibetans are a nationality subgroup of the Chinese and that Tibetans *require* leadership from the central government in order to develop. Article 4 of the Constitution provides that “[t]he state assists areas inhabited by minority nationalities accelerating their economic and cultural development according to the characteristics and needs of the various minority nationalities.” The same article states that these minority nationalities “have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs.” Taken together, the implication is that minority nationalities have “folkways and customs” but are in need of help from the Chinese to develop culturally and economically.

This paternalistic attitude of the PRC government towards Tibetans has been clearly stated from the very beginning of the Chinese occupation of Tibet to justify the integration of non-Chinese regions. In August 1957, Premier Zhou Enlai made a significant speech reflecting the sentiment that with-

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103 United Nations Department of Public Information, “Doctrines of Dispossession – Racism against Indigenous peoples,” in United Nations Press Kit for the World Conference Against Racism, DP/2193 – May 2001, 17. Also available online at <http://www.un.org/WCAR/e-kit/backgroundunder4.htm>.

104 Hu Jintao, “Full Text of Speech by Hu Jintao at Tibet’s Peaceful Liberation Celebration.”



out the Chinese, the Tibetans would be lost: “Without mutual assistance, especially assistance from the Han people, the minority peoples will find it difficult to make significant progress on their own.”<sup>105</sup>

On July 27, 1997, Namgyai, vice-chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) People’s Congress, proclaimed that, “All the progress made in Tibet is due to the concern of the central government and support from the people of the whole country.”<sup>106</sup> And Ragdi, executive deputy secretary of the TAR, opened his speech to the Third Plenary Session of the Fifth TAR Party Committee by commenting that Tibet “needed support and aid from people throughout the country due to the backward state of its economic and social development.”<sup>107</sup>

An array of “preferential policies” are in place in order to promote the development of minorities and these policies seemed to have impressed many observers and foreign delegations as to the good intentions of Beijing’s minority policies.<sup>108</sup> However, many Tibetans view these policies as thinly disguised tactics to integrate Tibetans into China. One point that is rarely made, according to one Tibetan from Xining, is that minorities do not have the right to forgo “preferential policies” and “aid” projects and any resistance to such “help” is interpreted as harming the unity of the nationalities.<sup>109</sup> According to one Chinese intellectual:

The official preferential treatment policy for minority nationalities is another way to confirm the Han Chinese belief that all minorities are backward, primitive barbarians that who need the help of their Han older brothers. As opposed to empowering

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105 Zhou Enlai as quoted in Tibet Information Network (TIN), *China’s Great Leap West*, (London: TIN, 2000), 29.

106 “China: Nationwide Support to Tibet,” *Beijing Review*, July 28, 1997, available at 1997 WL 10063235.

107 Tibet Information Network (TIN), “TIN News Review No. 26,” *News Review: Reports from Tibet, 1997*, (London: TIN, 1998), 50.

108 Wang Lixiong, a well-known scholar of Tibetan affairs, believes that the preferential policies are having much of their intended effect, but that “providing material assistance alone cannot satisfy.” Thus Tibetans will remain rebellious and contemptuous of preferential policies because of other repressive policies. Wang Lixiong, “The Dalai Lama is the Key for the solution of the issue of Tibet,” available online in Chinese at [http://www.chinesenewsnet.com/cgi-bin/newsfetch.cgi?unidoc=big5&src=MainNews/Opinion/Mon\\_October\\_30\\_19\\_22\\_32\\_2000.html](http://www.chinesenewsnet.com/cgi-bin/newsfetch.cgi?unidoc=big5&src=MainNews/Opinion/Mon_October_30_19_22_32_2000.html).

109 Anonymous Tibetan from Xining, “The Impact of Preferential Policies in Tibetan Areas,” unpublished paper, July 2001.

minorities, it is meant to encourage assimilation and the creation of a peaceful, unified, and essentially Han-dominated multinational state.<sup>110</sup>

Many other Chinese intellectuals recognize the intense paternalism and condescension in the way that China touts “preferential policies” and the stream of official proclamations that Tibet can only prosper under the leadership of the Communist Party and only in the “embrace of the big family of the motherland.”<sup>111</sup> According to Cao Changching, a Chinese writer who has studied Tibetan affairs, these notions are “based on prejudice and belittle the intelligence of the Tibetans.”<sup>112</sup>

The belief that the Chinese state and people have a “civilizing” mission in Tibet, is typical of the belief of all colonial powers that they have a civilizing mission in the colonies they rule. A recent study on Chinese colonialism in Tibet found much evidence of this colonial paternalism, which also undeniably includes racism.<sup>113</sup> The impact of this form of racism will be discussed in the next chapter.

### ***Eugenics laws and policies***

The recent introduction of eugenics laws, which appear to be inordinately targeted at Tibetans and minority peoples, is cause for grave concern because of its racist implications. Eugenics policies are policies aimed at prohibiting and terminating the birth of children who may have hereditary diseases, low IQs or abnormalities in order to purify or improve the ‘quality’ of a population or race. The policies become racist when they are tied to the notion that certain races or ethnic groups are less developed, less intelligent or more prone to mental retardation and other allegedly inherited conditions, which the state considers undesirable.

In October 1994 China’s legislature ratified a “eugenics and health protection law,” which was renamed the Maternal and Infant Health Care Law

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110 Suisheng Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations,” 26.

111 Hu Jintao, “Full Text of Speech by Hu Jintao at Tibet’s Peaceful Liberation Celebration.”

112 Cao Changching. “Independence: The Tibetan People’s Right,” in *Tibet Through Dissident Chinese Eyes*, eds. Cao Changching and James Seymour (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 21.

113 Cees Flinterman et al. “China’s Tibet: The World’s Largest Remaining Colony,” Report of a Fact-Finding Mission and Analysis of Colonialism and Chinese Rule in Tibet, April-May 1997, in *UNPO Yearbook 1997*, (The Hague: UNPO, 1998), 206-211, 258-262.

after strong criticism from outside the country against Chinese measures reminiscent of Nazi Germany's pseudo-scientific justifications and policies for racial purification. The law went into effect on June 1, 1995, although in some places local authorities had already tried to implement eugenics policies by sterilizing retarded people.<sup>114</sup> The law bans marriages between those "with certain genetic diseases of a serious nature" unless they agree to sterilization or long-term contraception. The measure also requires doctors to "advise" a couple to abort if they detect a hereditary disease or an abnormality (in practice the advice may be a decision to terminate, leaving little choice to the parents.)<sup>115</sup> The official New China News Agency quoted the Public Health ministry as stating, "China's better-births policy is totally different from the racist 'eugenics' policy pursued by Adolf Hitler during the Third Reich."<sup>116</sup> Instead, the agency explained, the policy is designed "to avoid new births of inferior quality and heighten the standards of the whole population."<sup>117</sup> Ironically, this explanation is strikingly similar to that given by German policy makers at that time.

From the perspective of racism and the treatment of Tibetans, the concern is that eugenics policies and laws will be used to limit the Tibetan population. Although hard evidence of such implementation of these laws is not as yet available, there are credible indications that this may indeed be the case. In explaining the need for the eugenics law and policies, the Minister of Public Health, Chen Minzhang, said it would provide "effective measures... to reduce inferior-quality births as quickly as possible." One of the causes for "abnormal births," including that of infants with low IQs, he explained, is the economic backwardness and the "lingering influence of outdated thinking" of some people. The Minister added: "Births of inferior quality are especially serious among the old revolutionary base, ethnic minorities, the frontier and economically poor areas. In some villages, no competent people can be found to work as accountants or cadres or can be recruited by the army because of long term isolation, backward production, consanguineous marriages and excessive births."<sup>118</sup> Given the experimentation with eugenics in Gansu prov-

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114 Charlene L. Fu, "Chinese Legislature Ratifies Eugenics," Associated Press, October 27, 1994.

115 Tom Post, Matt Forney, Charles S. Lee, "Quality Not Quantity," *Newsweek*, Nov. 28, 1994.

116 Steven Mufson, "China Softens Bill on Eugenics," *Washington Post*, December 30, 1993.

117 *Ibid.*

118 BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (quoting New China News Agency report, December 20, 1993), "Health Minister Presents Eugenics Law to NPC Standing Committee." December 22, 1993.

ince (a major part of which is Tibetan) a few years earlier, and the authorities' resulting claim of widespread retardation in the region,<sup>119</sup> the minister's words were indeed ominous. The potential for racist application of the law is real and dangerous. Only close monitoring can reveal the extent to which this is occurring.

From this brief examination of the most relevant constitutional and legal provisions, it can be concluded that despite lofty statements of principle concerning equality and protection of minorities, the constitution and the policies of the PRC have deep roots in a Chinese paternalism and chauvinism that have racist manifestations. The constitution and laws are designed to ensure first and foremost the political unity of China on the basis of Chinese domination of other peoples within the territory of the PRC. To this end, myths of common Chinese ancestry are propagated, which reduce Tibetans and other non-Chinese population groups to insignificant minorities whose distinct identity is not valued. Whenever the political objective of unity under leadership of the Chinese ruling elite is brought into question by expressions of distinct ethnic and cultural identity, such expressions may be suppressed. The basis for this legal and political framework within which all laws and policies are executed, is the blatantly racist concept of Chinese superiority and the inferiority of Tibetans and other so-called minority nationalities.

### ***Enforcement of Laws and Regulations***

Many regulations in China prohibit "anything that incites national division and undermines national unity" or which "offends the habits and customs of minority people."<sup>120</sup> Specifically, Article 249 of the Revised Criminal Law of the PRC, amended in 1997, reads: "Whoever incites national enmity or discrimination shall, if the circumstances are serious, be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment for not more than three years, or to criminal detention."<sup>121</sup> This article can be used to protect minorities but is often used to prosecute minorities who, ironically, allege that Chinese are discriminating against them, taking over their land or other infringements.

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119 Tom Post et al., *Newsweek*. Chinese sources claimed cretinism was so severe in that region, that there were entire "idiot villages" in which half the population suffered from mental retardation. *Ibid*.

120 People's Republic of China, "Ninth Periodic Report of States Parties Due in 1999." Para. 17.

121 Charles D. Paglee, *Chinalaw Web – PRC Criminal Law* (last modified April 7, 1998), available online at <http://www.qis.net/chinalaw/prclaw60.htm>. Also see People's Republic of China, "Ninth Periodic Report of States Parties Due in 1999." Para.48.

## ***Shots from Serf***



China's invasion of Tibet did bring more modern technologies, such as the telephone to Tibet. For decades, and still somewhat to this day, most of the technology remains in the hands of the military, the government and Party.

Article 250 of the Criminal Law is specifically written to protect minorities, and allows for imprisonment “when a publication carries an article designed to discriminate against or humiliate an ethnic group.”<sup>122</sup> It is unclear whether this applies to the publisher, the editor or the writer but it is often the publisher or the editor who is held accountable for content.

These articles are used in certain cases, but in scores of instances, authorities ignore them. Political expediency often determines whether someone is prosecuted, and if a publication is blatantly offensive to a minority group and that group protests, these articles are often used to enforce government policy. Also, administrative action is sometimes taken to ban a film or book without judicial action against the publisher. The Chinese government cites examples of banning a film which “hurt the feelings of some worshippers owing to its improper screenplay,” and destroying copies of a book that “hurt the feelings of ethnic minorities believing in Islam.”<sup>123</sup>

However, when a serious incident between a minority and a Chinese citizen occurs in one of the “minority regions” the government often resists supporting the minority against the settler population. Similarly in June 2001, one of China’s worst race riots in the last decade broke out in Xi’an, which has a large Muslim quarter. Triggered by an incident between a group of Chinese and Uighur students, hundreds of Chinese students surrounded a Uighur dorm, and threw scores of bricks through the dorm windows. Police had to be called in to defend the Uighurs, but according to one account, it took several calls for the police to react. A month later, two Uighurs had reportedly been expelled but no action had been taken against Chinese students.<sup>124</sup> In this instance, political considerations would have to be determined prior to any judicial action, and the extreme sensitivity of the incident may lead to inaction.

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122 Ibid.

123 People’s Republic of China, “Ninth Periodic Report of States Parties Due in 1999.” Para. 53.

124 Robert Marquand, “Roots of a race riot in China’s Wild West: A campus fight between majority Chinese and ethnic Uighurs last month mirrors tensions in Xinjiang province,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 18, 2001. Additionally this incident shows that resentment exists between Chinese students and Uighur students, partly because of the previously mentioned “preferential treatment” policies that allow minority students lower admission standards.

# Chapter 5

## JAMPA: THE STORY OF RACISM IN TIBET

### Racial Practices in China

There is ample evidence of racism when Chinese attitudes towards Tibetans, both within the ranks of the government and ordinary citizens, are closely examined. Government officials claim that race (*zhongzu*) is a foreign concept that is of no relevance in the People's Republic of China (PRC). They accuse the West of racism in its efforts to impose Western human rights values on China. According to China scholar Barry Sautman, "If racism (*zhongzu zhuyi*) has a place in sanctioned PRC discourse, it is in the assertion of its absence from China."<sup>125</sup> Deng Xiaoping reportedly told former U.S. President Jimmy Carter that "since New China was founded in 1949, there has never been any ethnic discrimination in the country."<sup>126</sup>

As shown in Chapter 4, it is official government policy to promote the myth of common ancestry of all 56 peoples or "nationalities" in the PRC. At the same time, and despite the official rhetoric, the Chinese rank these "races" hierarchically and consider only their own ethnic group, the Han, as belonging to the "Chinese" racial or ethnic group (*Zhongguo ren*). "Minorities who do not physically and culturally resemble the Han, are not viewed as authentic Chinese or descendants of the Yellow Emperor,"<sup>127</sup> and are considered inferior.

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125 Sautman, "Racial Nationalism," 79.

126 "Deng Xiaoping meets former U.S. President" *Xinhua*, June 29, 1987, quoted in Sautman, "Racial Nationalism," 80.

127 Sautman, "Racial Nationalism," 84. Thus, a pro-CCP Hong Kong newspaper stated that "only when people from mainland China and Taiwan and all Chinese, who speak the same language and share the same race, combine economically will it be possible to occupy a favourable place in the division of global economic blocs." Since Tibetans, Mongolians and Uighurs do not speak Chinese but have their own distinct languages, they are not, according to that writer, part of the Chinese people. Wen Wei Po, "Hong Kong Paper Calls on Taiwan President to Step Down," December 7, 1995, in BBC/SWB, 3 January 1996, cited in *Ibid.*, 80).

Dr. Frank Dikötter's research shows that "a racial consciousness existed in an embryonic form well before the arrival of Europeans in the nineteenth century."<sup>128</sup> Chinese definitions of race varied over time in terms of culture, type, lineage, nation, species, seed and class. Throughout these transformations of form the content has, however, remained consistent: a clear hierarchy of color preference existed centuries ago, and it continues to this day. Pale skin is preferred and prized over darker complexions. From ancient times, the Chinese called their complexion "white."<sup>129</sup> Within the confines of the PRC all ethnic groups are ranked. The Chinese are ranked at the top of the hierarchy, the Tibetans at the bottom. Internationally, the races are ranked in descending order as well, from the Chinese and related races, to Europeans (Caucasians), followed at quite some distance by "brown" peoples (Southeast Asians, Arabs, Indians) and, far below by Africans.<sup>130</sup>

The outbreak of anti-African racism in China, especially on university campuses, in the 1980's left no doubt about the depth of racial prejudice among the Chinese.<sup>131</sup> In 1986, for example, African students and foreign students reported that they were attacked by thrown bottles, stones, and bricks. Several students were injured, and African students demanded they be protected. Even though the Chinese officials tried to play the incident off as a solitary occurrence, African students reported that the incident highlighted the prejudice and harassment they were often subject to. Additionally, both Chinese and African students cited the spark of these fights as being over incidents of African men courting Chinese women. One African student told a Washington Post reporter that he was often heckled with the racial slur *heigui* meaning black devil.<sup>132</sup> A foreign correspondent in Beijing, who spoke

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128 Dikötter, *Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 2.

129 Ibid, 10.

130 Sautman, "Racial Nationalism," 81. An American journalist in Beijing, who spoke on condition of anonymity, emphasized that there is "a hierarchy in degrees of prejudice toward foreigners. Asians usually outrank Anglo-Europeans who in turn outrank blacks...The Chinese are extraordinarily racist toward blacks and other people darker than them." Foreign Correspondent, interview by Losang Rabgey, 10 December 1999, Boston, MA.

131 Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 194. Africans studying in China in the 1960s already complained of racism.

132 Daniel Southerland, "Frictions Between Chinese, Africans Surface; Student Clash Leads to Charges of Harassment, Prejudice," *Washington Post*, June 5, 1986. In early 1989, African students boycotted classes after another racial fight broke out after two African men brought Chinese dates to a dance. Nicholas D. Kristof, "China's Burst of Rage: A Show of Racism, And of Something More," *New York Times*, January 8, 1989.



on condition of anonymity, discussed what she witnessed in regards to racist attitudes against Africans in China:

You encounter evidence of racism among the Chinese on the streets, in offices, schools, and so on. Black people are consistently portrayed as, talked about as and thought of as subhuman. They are seen to be violent and over-sexed people. An African friend worked for a while at the China Daily and left the post early because her Chinese was good enough to overhear her co-workers make the almost daily racist comments about her and about blacks in general.<sup>133</sup>

Indeed, studies show that racism, Han chauvinism, in both its external and internal aspects, exists today as it did in the past. Han chauvinism may have receded in the period when Mao Zedong initially came to power due to the emphasis he placed on class struggle and solidarity, and due to his campaigns against Han chauvinism. As Mao's influence waned, however, so did these aspects of the Communist Party ideology, leaving only a Marxist hierarchy of "backward" or "primitive" and "advanced" peoples in place. As Sautman emphasizes in his analysis of the Marxist hierarchy of peoples: "This hierarchy reinforces racialized thinking and is accepted to some degree by minority as well as Han people."<sup>134</sup>

The propensity of Western academics and other professional China-watchers to use the term Han chauvinism obscures the true nature of racism in China. According to Dr. Don Wyatt, a scholar of Chinese history, Han chauvinism is "a racist ideology in its extreme form and in its more benign form it is about ethnic pride."<sup>135</sup> Tibetan historian Tsering Shakya states that Han chauvinism is "a patronizing attitude that discriminates and functions to look down on another culture or race."<sup>136</sup> He also equates Han chauvinism with

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133 Foreign correspondent in Beijing (see note 108), interview by Losang Rabgey.

134 Sautman, "Racial Nationalism," 81. Also see Gao Yuan, "In China, Black Isn't Beautiful," *New York Times*, January 25, 1989, A 23. One Tibetan from Lhasa who was educated in Beijing noted that even though Mao himself admitted to, spoke out against and outlawed Han chauvinism, still "not a single person has ever been arrested or sentenced for this crime. When even Mao admits that this is a major problem, why then was no one ever brought on those charges? It is because they never took their own policies seriously." Roundtable discussion, Dharamsala, June 1998.

135 Dr. Donald Wyatt, Telephone Interview by Losang Rabgey, 14 December 1999, Middlebury, VT.

136 Tsering Shakya, Telephone Interview by Losang Rabgey, 2 December 1999, London, UK.

big nationalism, as opposed to local nationalism. A veteran journalist explained that Han chauvinism refers to “the notion that the Han, who form the majority of the PRC population, are the superior race within China and that they have every right to control the territory and to put the priorities of the Han first and foremost. It is about the Han manifest destiny.”<sup>137</sup>

It appears that the Communist Party in China may be increasingly using and promoting Han chauvinism as a way of countering stronger demands from Tibetans and Uighurs for independence or meaningful autonomy. According to Liu Binyan, China analyst and writer:

Nationalism and Han Chauvinism are now the only effective instruments in the ideological arsenal of the CCP. Any disruption in the relationship with foreign countries or among ethnic minorities can be used to stir ‘patriotic’ sentiments of the people to support communist authorities.<sup>138</sup>

### *Tibetan experience of racism*

The official racial nationalist stance and the government rhetoric of unity and equality, comes up against a widespread Chinese conception of Tibetan inferiority and, to a lesser extent, a Chinese conception of the inferiority of other “minority nationalities.” Although official Chinese statements and publications rarely contain blatantly racist remarks regarding Tibetans, one frequently encounters highly paternalistic references to Tibetans being “backward” and undeveloped. Sometimes the adjective refers to economic or technological lack of development. But in many instances the reference is to cultural backwardness and the point is made that Tibetans need to adopt Chinese culture in order to raise their level of cultural development. Socially and economically, the Chinese view Tibetans as backward, uneducated, superstitious, primitive and barbaric. Tibetan religion, language, dress and social customs are frequently ridiculed and described as outdated—appropriate subjects for a museum, perhaps, but unsuited to the requirements of modern social and economic life.<sup>139</sup>

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137 Foreign correspondent, Interview by Losang Rabgey.

138 Liu Binyan, quoted in Drew Gladney, “Ethnic Separatism in China: Threat or Smoke?” *Wall Street Journal*, July 9, 1996.

139 van Holthoon, “Independent Study on Colonialism and Tibet,” 258-260.

Chinese development scholars Wang Xiaoqiang and Bai Nanfeng amply display this prejudice in their book *The Poverty of Plenty*.<sup>140</sup> The volume analyzes differences in economic growth and poverty conditions between the eastern coastal provinces and western regions of the PRC, including those that comprise Tibet. The study seems to be a *bona fide* attempt to ascertain the reasons for this disparity, reflecting the authors' recognition that "China's ethnic unity and social stability is closely tied up with economic growth and prosperity in these regions."<sup>141</sup> Yet Wang and Bai make frequent reference, particularly when discussing Tibet, to "the quality of human resources" and "backwardness." In fact, the authors expressly conclude that "the *intrinsic determinant* of backwardness is the poor quality of human resources."<sup>142</sup> In fairness Wang and Bai appear to be suggesting—not genetic inferiority—but something like lack of education, misguided values or outdated modes of thought. In particular, they conclude that backwardness results from a "general lack of entrepreneurial spirit and an excessive adherence to old ways."<sup>143</sup>

Jigme Ngapo, a Tibetan raised and educated among the elite Party members in Beijing, explains that the Chinese consider themselves to be "the most advanced and civilized culture and people. Others are less civilized."<sup>144</sup> A Chinese veteran journalist, who wishes to remain anonymous, believes that racism comes from the "almost barely hidden assumption that the Han culture is a superior culture. It is descendent from a long historical feeling that non-Han peoples are barbarians."<sup>145</sup>

Many visitors to Tibet, including some Chinese who visit the region, report that Chinese regularly make openly racist comments with respect to Tibetans, especially about their intelligence, appearance, customs and habits.<sup>146</sup> In reaction to one such comment by Jiang Ping, who dismissed the notion that Tibetans have a rich cultural tradition as "useless nonsense," two hundred Tibetans at the National Minorities Institute, in Beijing, reportedly

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140 Wang Xiao-Qiang & Bai Nanfeng, *The Poverty of Plenty*, Translated by Angela Knox, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

141 *Ibid.*, 11.

142 *Ibid.*, 23 (emphasis added).

143 *Ibid.*, 38

144 Jigme Ngapo, Interview by Losang Rabgey, 2 December 1999. Washington, DC.

145 Anonymous Chinese veteran journalist, Telephone Interview by Losang Rabgey, 7 December 1999, Cambridge, MA.

146 Donnet, *Tibet: Survival in Question*, 171.

## ***Shots from Serf***



The film intersperses some real documentary footage to showing a Tibetan woman screaming during a rally in support of Mao's revolution in Tibet.

boycotted classes in 1992.<sup>147</sup> Jiang Ping was a National People's Congress (NPC) representative and vice chair of the United Front Work Department.

Racism can be particularly oppressive when played out in a context of colonialism. It is especially difficult to ascertain the impact of racism in such a situation, because the affected people may not feel free to speak about it. This appears to be very much the case in Tibet, where expression of displeasure with the present situation under Chinese rule can be severely punished by the authorities. In order to understand the experience of Tibetans with respect to racism, the International Campaign for Tibet convened a roundtable discussion in Washington, DC, in December 1998. Approximately twenty Tibetans, who had spent most of their lives in Tibet and/or China proper, participated and relayed their personal experiences.<sup>148</sup> From their experiences it became clear that Tibetans in Tibet and China feel that they are viewed and labeled by the Chinese as racially different and inferior to the Chinese and as uncivilized, unintelligent, and backward.

When a Tibetan student in Beijing met Chinese fellow students, one participant recalled, the Chinese students were surprised that it was possible for a Tibetan to be clean and articulate. A participant from Amdo remarked that he often witnessed Chinese passengers harassing and kicking out Tibetan passengers from the city buses. Another participant witnessed a Chinese police officer beating a Tibetan cart driver while yelling obscenities at him and calling him, "dirty stupid Tibetan." Many of the other discussants experienced the Chinese fastidiously covering their mouths and noses while in physical proximity to Tibetans for fear of contact with filth and disease. Several other participants noted that Tibetans are often refused service in the more upscale establishments in Tibet and China just because they are Tibetan. Many participants emphasized the special difficulty Tibetans face to obtaining permits, contracts, tickets, housing, and so on.<sup>149</sup>

One Tibetan participant from Lhasa emphasized that, "[W]hen the Chinese discriminate against Tibetans, it is against the Tibetans as a race." In an interview, conducted in June of 1998, the Ven. Gyaltsen Choetsso, a 28-year old nun originally from Takse, said that, "sometimes [the Chinese] compare us to animals, even saying that we are less than the animals."<sup>150</sup> Another Ti-

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147 ICT, "Tibetans Stage Boycott," *Tibet Press Watch*, No. 4, (Washington, DC: ICT, 1992), 2.

148 Roundtable Discussion involving Tibetans raised under Chinese occupation and educated under Chinese educational system, sponsored by ICT, 5 December 1998, Washington, DC.

149 Ibid.

150 Ven. Gyaltsen Choetsso, interview by Robert D. Sloane, 17 June 1998, Dharamsala, India.

betan, a young farmer from Amdo who requested anonymity, remarked that ethnic prejudice was not this severe in her region. Prior to her journey into exile, she lived in a rural area in which the Tibetan and Chinese communities were largely segregated, insulating each group from the other. But along the route to India, she noticed that, in some ethnically mixed regions, “when Tibetans approach, Chinese people will cover their mouth with a handkerchief.”<sup>151</sup>

Feature films produced in the PRC typically portrayed Tibetans as dark, stupid, barbarians or victims of a feudal system who are misled by religious institutions and the aristocracy. In films such as *Serf*, featuring a downtrodden Tibetan named Jampa, it is the liberation by China that brings about a bright new world for Tibetans. *Serf* was produced in 1963 by a film production company funded by the People’s Liberation Army, and was played throughout China for many years. As mentioned in the Preface, *Serf* has become the seminal film on Tibet for an entire generation of Chinese citizens. One round table participant noted from her personal experiences:

Most Chinese you meet will know about this film. For most Chinese people in China, this film is one of the only introductions they’ve ever had to Tibet and Tibetans, and so, their view of Tibetans is obviously derogatory.<sup>152</sup>

A university-educated Tibetan from Amdo pointed out during the roundtable discussions that Chinese writers and intellectuals also do their part in promoting racist portrayals of Tibetans:

In 1986 Majen, a Chinese novelist, wrote a book entitled *The People with Tongues Hanging Out*. [He wrote] that Tibetans are in-bred animals [and that] Tibetans come from one man and one woman who had incestuous sexual relations. There was a huge outcry among Tibetans and so he was not allowed to publish this novel. Moreover, Majen was made to apologize to Tibetans for writing this book.<sup>153</sup>

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151 Farmer from Amdo, interview by Robert D. Sloane, 20 June 1998, Dharamsala, India.

152 Roundtable Discussant, Washington, DC.

153 Roundtable Discussant, Washington, DC.

Several Tibetans recalled incidents in which Chinese individuals who expressed interest or enthusiasm in some aspect of Tibetan culture suffered criticism and ridicule from their own communities.

From the above, it appears that Chinese individuals and, in many cases officials, display overt racism towards Tibetans. It also appears that, at least in some instances, the government does respond to Tibetan protests at such behavior. It also bears emphasis that many Tibetans attributed these motivations to the Chinese *government* and not to the ordinary Chinese person, many of whom they believed were victims of the PRC propaganda.<sup>154</sup>

Tibetans experience the Chinese presence in Tibet as alien domination. “They are foreigners and occupiers,” Chomphel, the Undersecretary of the Office of the Tibetan Reception Centre in Dharamsala, India, stated.<sup>155</sup> Studies have found that Han settlers also view Tibetans as an alien culture:

Tibetans and Chinese view each other as foreigners or ‘alien’ peoples. All Chinese contacted emphasized that they were different from Tibetans. They stressed that the Tibetan language was very different from Chinese, and that ...the Tibetan culture and life-style were very different.<sup>156</sup>

As a result, despite efforts by the PRC government to downplay distinctions between Chinese and Tibetans, to emphasize the inseparability of Tibetans and Chinese (the “two inseparables”) and to encourage the “unity” of the nationalities, individual Chinese and Tibetans maintain highly separate and distinct identities and view the other as outsiders.

### ***Pressures to assimilate to avoid effects of racism***

Interviews with Tibetans and research in Tibet indicate that many Tibetans experience strong pressure to behave like the Chinese, to dress like them, and even to hide their Tibetan identity. Those who are successful at this report better treatment by the Chinese than when they act as Tibetans. This is true in the work environment as well as in social contact.

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154 Roundtable Discussant, Washington, DC.

155 Sonam Chomphel, Undersecretary, Office of the Tibetan Reception Centre, Interview by Robert D. Sloane, 11 June 1998, Dharamsala, India.

156 Flinterman et al., “China’s Tibet: The World’s Largest Remaining Colony,” 214.

Because Tibetan was only recognized as one of the official languages in Tibet, despite intense campaigning by Tibetans, there is often strong pressure to use the Chinese language.<sup>157</sup> In most jobs, there is little chance of promotion unless they do so. In the field of education, especially advanced education, a degree of assimilation is imperative.<sup>158</sup> Dhupa Tharchin, a recently exiled 31-year old incarnate lama, confirmed:

[T]he Chinese say that if Tibetans behave in Chinese ways, eat Chinese food, dress in the Chinese fashion and practice Chinese customs, then they will be happier, more successful and lead more meaningful lives. They teach that the Chinese way of life is more attuned to educated, cultured people, whereas Tibetan ways of eating, dressing and so forth, are barbaric, outdated and unsuited to modern life.<sup>159</sup>

Despite the pressures to assimilate, only few Tibetans actually do, mainly in urban and border areas.<sup>160</sup> Among the Tibetan population, explained Dhupa Tharchin, “about 95 per cent remain loyal to our religion and our nation; they respect His Holiness the Dalai Lama and struggle for independence.” Others interviewed put the figure at 90 per cent. Some Tibetans, known as *Hanhua*—a term applied to non-Han who have been acculturated by Han cultural norms, do adopt Chinese mannerisms and ideological stances, sometimes by choice, more often of necessity. This group, however, represents a small percentage and its members are viewed with disdain, sometimes as traitors by other Tibetans.

There are numerous instances of Tibetan cadres expressing their own regrets at having to implement Chinese government policies. One such cadre, who participated in enforcing the monastic reeducation policies promulgated by the Third Forum, later apologized to the monk he had expelled. He ex-

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157 For more information on the pressures of speaking Chinese, faced by Tibetans, see Panchen Lama, “The Panchen Lama Speaks,” Address given to the TAR Standing Committee Meeting of the National People’s Congress, Beijing, 28 March 1987, (Dharamsala: Tibetan Government-in-Exile, Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), 1991). 6-7.

158 van Holthoon, “Independent Study on Colonialism and Tibet,” 261-2 and Flinterman et al., “China’s Tibet: The World’s Largest Remaining Colony,” 208-210.

159 Dhupa Tharchin, Interview by Robert D. Sloane, 22 June 1998, Dharamsala, India.

160 van Holthoon, “Independent Study on Colonialism and Tibet,” 260.



pressed anxiety about participating in the anti-religious campaign, but he asked for the monk's understanding as he "had no choice because he had to support his wife and family; it was the only way he could get a job."<sup>161</sup> The Ven. Yeshe Dogden similarly remarked that Tibetan cadres working in Chinese government offices enjoy many benefits, including financial ones. "But they are Chinese puppets, and we don't think they really enjoy freedom. They are just clerks with no real power who have to write what is directed by the Chinese government."<sup>162</sup>

More and more often, according to Dawa Tsering, who was educated in Tibetan and Chinese schools, younger Tibetans "are embarrassed to be Tibetan and they try hard to appear as Chinese as possible, to get respect...to not be degraded and looked down on."<sup>163</sup> Another Tibetan interviewed concurred with this view:

A lot of Tibetans now say they wish they were Chinese. This has been the greatest success of racism because [the Chinese] succeeded in convincing Tibetans to hate themselves and to want to not just imitate their oppressors but to actually *become* them.<sup>164</sup>

More commonly, Tibetans reach some sort of middle ground between assimilation and maintaining their identity. Many Tibetans adopt certain Chinese habits of dress or language, for instance, while remaining otherwise Tibetan in the hopes of preserving the Tibetan identity in ways that are ideologically and legally acceptable. They outwardly express loyalty towards the Chinese, while at the same time quietly clinging to their cultural identity as Tibetans.<sup>165</sup> Many fear that the decline of traditional Tibetan culture and the large increase of Chinese settlements and resulting cultural pre-dominance in Tibet will result in the destruction of the Tibetan culture and identity.<sup>166</sup>

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161 Anonymous former Tibetan cadre, interview by Robert D. Sloane, 15 June 1998, Dharamsala, India.

162 Ven. Yeshe Dogden, Leader, Gu-Chu-Sum Movement of Tibet, interview by Robert D. Sloane, 12 June 1998, Dharamsala, India.

163 Dawa Tsering, a roundtable discussant, Washington, DC.

164 Anonymous roundtable discussant, Washington, DC.

165 Norbu, "Self-determination in the Post-Soviet Era."

166 Dhupa Tharchin, interview by Robert D. Sloane.

Younger Tibetans suffer particularly acutely from racial prejudice, discrimination and related pressures. Whereas the older generations remain anchored in their Tibetan identity, younger people have no experience of pre-colonial Tibet to draw from. Younger Tibetans grow up in a society in which they are viewed by the colonizer as inferior and as second-class citizens in their own homeland.<sup>167</sup>

One Tibetan exile in India, described what accounts for these urban youth subcultures:

[T]o find a good job, we Tibetans have to resort to things like criticizing His Holiness the Dalai Lama. So many of us Tibetans are in a kind of dilemma and we get frustrated and mentally depressed... [W]e're in a dilemma, because, at the practical level, without betraying Tibet and His Holiness, on the issue of getting a job, the roads are closed. From this frustration, many Tibetans take to drinking and gambling.<sup>168</sup>

From the above, it is clear that despite government propaganda about equality, Chinese racist attitudes towards Tibetans are openly expressed and lead to the oppression of Tibetans for asserting their distinct identity. The impact of racism under colonialism in Tibet engenders an identity crisis: Tibetans are punished because they possess an ethno-cultural identity wholly separate from that of the Chinese.

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<sup>167</sup> According to psychologist Eric Erikson, among others, to develop a healthy self-concept, each individual must be able to integrate his or her ego within the prevailing societal system and social institutions. Consequently, for ethnic minorities, crises of identity often result from tacit doubts regarding their ethnic dignity, which arise as a result of the devaluation of ethnic minority culture within the predominant social order. For more information, see Nimmi Hutnik, *Ethnic Minority Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1991).

<sup>168</sup> Anonymous, interview by Robert D. Sloane, 15 June 1998, Dharamsala, India.

# Chapter 6

JAMPA: THE STORY OF RACISM IN TIBET

## Racial Discrimination in Tibet

*“Deng Xiaoping is reported to have told U.S. President Jimmy Carter that, ‘since New China was founded in 1949, there has never been any ethnic discrimination in the country.’”*

REUTERS STORY, 1988.<sup>169</sup>

Previous chapters have demonstrated the strength and persistence of racist attitudes and actions perpetuated in China. Despite early warnings by Mao Zedong against “Han chauvinism,” racism against Tibetans and other non-Chinese peoples of the PRC persists to this day. Similarly racism against South Asians and Africans is especially strong among the Chinese. Tibetans also exhibit racist feelings towards the Chinese, as we saw in the previous chapter. Indeed, racism exists and manifests everywhere. What is significant in the PRC, however, is that—despite constitutional provisions and Chinese government policy statements and legislation—the government authorities themselves persistently display racist attitudes towards Tibetans and others. In this Chapter we explore how this racism translates into systematic discriminatory acts against Tibetans.

Racial discrimination is defined in Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), cited in Chapter 1 of this study, as:

any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the

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<sup>169</sup> A. Roche, “Chinese Party Chief Says Racism Common Everywhere but China,” Reuters, 25 April 1988, quoted in Sautman, “Racial Nationalism,” 80.

purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social cultural or any other field of public life.

In past decades, international concern has been repeatedly expressed by governments, NGOs, and individuals at the gross and systematic violations of civil and political rights, listed in Article 5 of the CERD, by Chinese authorities in Tibet. At each session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and, at times, also in the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, United Nations member states and NGOs with consultative status, voice these concerns. United Nations special rapporteurs as well as the CERD Committee have repeatedly complained about human rights violations and persistent manifestations of discrimination in Tibet. In these and many other fora, concerns are also expressed at the restrictions placed on human rights in China proper. The violations perpetrated against the Tibetan people and the Uighurs of East Turkestan (Xinjiang) are consistently singled out because they target a specific ethnic group and, as such, are discriminatory in character. Thus, for example, the European Parliament recently adopted a resolution on priorities with respect to the UN Commission on Human Rights, in which it condemned “the continued and severe violation of human rights in Tibet and the ongoing discrimination practiced against Tibetan people by the authorities of the People’s Republic of China on the basis of race or ethnic origin, or religious, cultural or political beliefs.”<sup>170</sup>

These official expressions of concern confirm the persistent reports from Tibetans and foreign observers in Tibet of ill treatment, including discriminatory treatment, of Tibetans. Despite this, it is extremely difficult to show that these occurrences, however frequent and serious, constitute systematic discrimination, especially by the authorities. What does emerge from a study of the treatment of Tibetans and Chinese in Tibet, is a pattern of conduct by Chinese settlers and by Chinese government officials that results in different and inferior treatment of Tibetans as compared to Chinese. The difficulty we encounter is not showing this discriminatory treatment, but its discriminatory and racist intent.

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<sup>170</sup> European Parliament, *European Parliament resolution on the EU human rights priorities and recommendations for the upcoming session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva*, Provisional edition, 18 January 2001. Pt. 14.

## ***Shots from Serf***



Towards the end of the film, a Chinese soldier sacrifices his life to save Jampa. The theme of Chinese sacrificing their lives and careers to help “civilize” Tibet endures to this day.

There are many factors that potentially contribute to the inferior treatment Tibetans are subjected to. These include:

- (1) *Racist attitudes.* In previous chapters we have seen the persistence of racist attitudes among the Chinese, including government officials. These attitudes and prejudices certainly contribute to the behaviour of the individual Chinese officials and lay persons in Tibet;
- (2) *Official policies.* Government policies intended to achieve a political aim, such as the suppression of nationalist sentiment among Tibetans, can have obvious discriminatory effects;
- (3) *Corruption.* Corruption among government officials is prevalent throughout the PRC as it is in Tibet. All kinds of advantages and special treatment are available with the payment of bribes, the exchange of favors, and connections of friends and relatives. The Chinese in Tibet have easier access to officials, especially Chinese officials of the CCP, the government and the PLA than do the Tibetans. They also are more likely to have family, friends or regional ties. It also appears that the Chinese are more apt to use bribery of officials than are the Tibetans. All these factors lead to greater favoritism shown to Chinese in Tibet than to Tibetans; and
- (4) *Ethnic tensions.* Not only the Chinese harbor racist prejudices against Tibetans. Tibetans also hold prejudices against the Chinese as well as resenting them for occupying Tibet and settling there in large numbers. Tibetan attitudes to the Chinese also contribute to the Chinese behavior towards Tibetans, including the denial of equal treatment or of special favors by officials.

There are a number of areas in which the discriminatory treatment of Tibetans in Tibet is most pronounced and also more easily identifiable. These include freedom of expression and the treatment of Tibetans accused of political offenses, freedom of movement and residence, the treatment of Tibetan religion and culture, employment practices, access to health services and to education and training, and other social and economic rights.

### ***Freedom of expression and treatment of Tibetans accused of political offenses***

According to Chinese law, all citizens have a right to equal treatment before the courts. In practice, however, Tibetans and Chinese are not treated

equally. This results in a relatively much higher number of political prisoners among Tibetans than among the Chinese. The number of Tibetan political prisoners in proportion to the Tibetan population is many times higher than the number of Chinese political prisoners. According to Human Rights Watch, “the proportion of ‘counterrevolutionaries’ to common criminals in Tibetan jails today is almost 21 times higher than in China proper.”<sup>171</sup>

Most Tibetan prisoners are in jail for political offenses linked to the expression of their ethnic, cultural and religious identity. Whereas it is not a crime for Chinese people to express their loyalty to Chinese culture, spiritual tradition, and even ethnicity, for Tibetans to do so is *prima facie* suspect, and in many cases subject to criminal prosecution. The Chinese government quickly interprets such expressions by Tibetans as a political challenge to its claim of sovereignty over Tibet and as “counterrevolutionary,” “splittist” or “anti-socialist” criminal behavior. Following the Third National Forum on Work in Tibet, held in 1994, which reviewed the Chinese government’s Tibet policy, the authorities have intensified their attack on ‘splittism’ by portraying the most basic elements of Tibetan culture, including language and religion, as threats to national unity and ‘disguised’ forms of separatism.<sup>172</sup>

It would be too simplistic to conclude that the higher proportion of political prisoners in Tibet can be attributable to racism or prejudice against Tibetans or from the fact that there is an ongoing independence movement. Both undoubtedly contribute to this fact, but it is impossible to unravel the complex social, ethnic political factors leading to such phenomena. Freedom of opinion and expression is seriously violated throughout the PRC. Political dissidents are arrested and sentenced to long jail terms. But Tibetans, as well as Mongolians, Uighurs, and other ethnic groups deemed minorities are proportionately, the greatest victims of this repression. Besides the large numbers of Tibetan political prisoners, TIN notes that the length of sentences given to Tibetans has been increasing and that sentences are generally longer than those handed out to their Chinese counterparts.<sup>173</sup> The special targeting

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171 Asia Watch, Division of Human Rights Watch, *Detained in China and Tibet: A Directory of Political and Religious Prisoners*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994).

172 Steven D. Marshall, *Hostile Elements: A Study of Political Imprisonment in Tibet, 1987-1998*, (London: Tibet Information Network, 1999), 6. Additionally, a report by the Tibetan Government in Exile discusses the impacts of the Third Forum. See Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), *China’s Current Policy on Tibet: Life-and-Death Struggle to Crush an Ancient Civilization*, (Dharamsala: Central Tibetan Administration, 2000).

173 Marshall, *Suppressing Dissent*, 7.

of Tibetans is also evident in the climate of fear that has been created in Tibet to prevent Tibetans from expressing themselves freely. This situation is well documented and has been discussed at the UN Commission on Human Rights on many occasions.<sup>174</sup>

Once detained, Tibetans are subjected to torture and other forms of violence and bodily harm more frequently than are Chinese. This, despite the fact that, officially, the legal safeguards for Tibetans detained or imprisoned are the same as those that exist for others in China.<sup>175</sup> In practice, Tibetans who are detained, often arbitrarily, for “endangering national security,” by expressing support for the Dalai Lama or for protesting Chinese policies in Tibet are routinely beaten and tortured, in violation of Chinese law.<sup>176</sup> More Tibetan prisoners die as a result of physical abuse, deprivation, and torture than are killed in formal executions. Since 1987, 37 Tibetan political prisoners have died as a direct result of abuse – a rate of one in 50. In Tibet’s Drapchi Prison alone, the rate of death from abuse for political prisoners is one in 31.<sup>177</sup> The United Nations Committee Against Torture expressed its concern in 1996 that “the special environment that exists in Tibet continues to create conditions that result in alleged maltreatment and even death of persons held in police custody and prisons.”<sup>178</sup>

Vicious forms of torture are commonplace throughout China today and to show that it is systematically worse in one area compared to others is difficult given the fact that there are no methods to objectively compare the vari-

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174 *Ibid.*, 8.

175 United States Department of State, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-2000,” released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. February 2001.

176 Recent legislation, including 1997 revisions of China’s Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) prohibits torture as a means to coerce confessions during interrogation. In practice, however, during interrogation, detention, and imprisonment, Tibetan prisoners are routinely subjected to beatings and other abuse. The most sensitive parts of the body, such as genitalia, ears, mouth, head, and neck are targeted in beatings by prison guards and policemen. International Commission of Jurists (Hereinafter ICJ), *Tibet: Human Rights and the Rule of Law*, (Geneva: ICJ, 1997), 18. According to Amnesty International, prisoners report having been forced to stay in painful positions for hours at a time, and having been tortured with electric shock devices and with batons and with ankle-, hand- and thumb cuffs. Amnesty International, *Annual Report 2000* (London: Amnesty International, 2000). TIN reports that prisoners and detainees are deprived of food and water. TIN has also noted an increase in the subjection of prisoners and detainees to military style drill exercises until the victims are physically so exhausted that they collapse whereupon they are again beaten. Marshall, *Suppressing Dissent*, 42.

177 Marshall, *Suppressing Dissent*, 7.

178 United Nations, Committee Against Torture, “Concluding Observations of the Committee Against Torture: China,” 9 July 1996, A/51/44, Para. 149e.



eties of torture. However, it is indisputable that when the Chinese authorities torture Tibetans, the legacy of decades of ethnic strife frequently becomes part of the equation. Often, ethnic Tibetans impose torture to detainees in Tibet, but they work under Chinese officials who are always in the background. Moreover, this torture is very much the result of directives and policies of the Chinese authorities, not of the Tibetans themselves.

Even when Tibetans perpetrate the torture and the victims are Tibetans, racism can still be present and result in more brutal torture. Racism can so permeate a society that members of an oppressed minority can internalize stereotypes and prejudices and unleash them on each other. This is well documented in many societies and could be documented in Tibet if such research was allowed.

A report on the situation of children in Tibet released on March 21, 2001 by the International Lawyers Committee for Tibet documents for the first time the routine practice of torturing children arrested for “political” offenses. The report also reveals that children are detained in deplorable conditions, often without notice to their families, and held for months or even years without a trial or access to a lawyer.<sup>179</sup>

The frequency of Tibetan involuntary disappearances should also be considered to understand the severity of discrimination against Tibetans in Tibet. Annually, the UN Center for Human Rights receives many reports of involuntary disappearances in Tibet. The report of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances submitted to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1998, for example, noted that out of 87 cases of disappearance reported to have occurred in the PRC between 1988 and 1996, the majority concerned Tibetans, some who had been alleged to have engaged in political activities. Others are reported to have disappeared following the thirtieth anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Tibet Autonomous Region. During the period under review by the committee, the Government provided information on six individual cases.<sup>180</sup> A disproportionate number of these cases under review are Tibetans.

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179 International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet (hereinafter ICLT), *A Generation in Peril: The Lives of Tibetan Children Under Chinese Rule*, (Berkeley: ICLT, 2001), 17-36.

180 United Nations, Commission on Human Rights, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), “Civil and Political Rights, Including Questions of: Disappearances and Summary Executions,” Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, 28 December 1998, E/CN.4/1999/62. Para. 80 and 81.

## ***Shots from Serf***



Jampa is forced to carry an aristocrat on his back. The aristocrats, who were being aggressively purged when the film was made, are portrayed as mean, selfish people.

### *Freedom of movement and residence*

Tibetans are severely restricted in their movement, both within Tibet and across borders. Tibetans are not permitted to move to another village or town without obtaining a “*hukou*,” a residence permit from the government authorities. In theory, a Chinese citizen who wishes to move and do business in Lhasa and other towns and villages in Tibet also needs such a permit. However, in practice, the rule is enforced unequally. Chinese have a much easier time obtaining a “*hukou*” than Tibetans. Tibetans ascribe this to the fact that often the Chinese settle in large numbers in Tibet, especially in the cities, while Tibetans are prevented by the authorities from changing residence. The importance of the *hukou* is declining today but in the past, not having a proper *hukou* made life much more difficult because *hukous* were necessary for buying food staples and for obtaining other services from the government.<sup>181</sup> It should also be noted that whereas the Chinese authorities have actively encouraged the migration of Chinese settlers into Tibetan cities for the past decades, in other areas of the PRC, such migration has been restricted.<sup>182</sup>

The policy of sending large numbers of Chinese settlers to Tibet also results in racial conflicts, a phenomena that has been alluded to in Chinese academic journals:

The number, quality and composition of migrants into Tibet also should be changed... Their toll and impact on the Tibetan society, economy and even values are not to be underestimated. The Tibetan government [referring to the Tibetan Autonomous Region government, not the Tibetan Government-in-Exile] often rejects free migrants into Tibet from elsewhere in the country in an attempt to maintain social stability and avoid racial conflicts.<sup>183</sup>

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181 Tibet Support Group UK, “NEW MAJORITY: Chinese Population Transfer Into Tibet,” (London: Tibet Support Group UK, 1995), 46. (In 1996, the Tibet Support Group UK changed its name to Free Tibet Campaign.)

182 Scott Leckie, *Destruction by Design: Human Rights Violations In Tibet*, (The Netherlands: Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, 1994), 153.

183 Li Li, “An Analysis of the Migration of the Tibetan Population in 1986 and 1987,” *Chinese Journal of Population Science* 2, No. 1, 1990.

The CERD Committee expressed its misgivings “with respect to reports concerning incentives granted to members of the Han nationality to settle in autonomous areas, as this may result in substantial changes in the demographic composition and in the character of the local society of those areas.”<sup>184</sup> Since the Chinese invasion of Tibet, millions of Chinese settlers have come to Tibet. Some have been sent there by the government, others have been given incentives to settle there.<sup>185</sup> The highest policy making forum on economic development in Tibet stipulated that Chinese are “encouraged and supported” to move to Tibet, and they will receive “preferential conditions.”<sup>186</sup> Most have gone to Tibet in search of economic opportunities, made more attractive by special government loans and other measures designed to accelerate the transfer of Chinese to Tibet.<sup>187</sup> This policy of population transfer is not unique to Tibet. China has moved 14 million Chinese into Inner Mongolia and 13 million into East Turkestan. (Xinjiang), drastically changing the demographic composition of those two non-Chinese regions.<sup>188</sup>

Not only is the Chinese policy of population transfer highly detrimental to the survival of the Tibetan identity and culture, it undermines the equality and very autonomy which Tibetans and other “minority nationalities” are entitled to enjoy “where they live in concentrated communities,” under the Constitution of the PRC.<sup>189</sup> As the policy results in demographic changes that dilute the Tibetan population, the constitutional basis for the right to autonomy is eventually removed. The policy is inherently discriminative because it involves providing privileges and a special status to the alien

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184 United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD Committee), “Concluding Observations on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: China,” 27 September 1996, CERD/C/304/Add.15, Para. 13.

185 “Chinese Officials Open Tibet’ Job Market to Chinese Workers,” *Tibetan Environment & Development News*, Issue #5, Aug. 1992, 1. Susan Lawrence, “Two People, One Land,” *U.S. News & World Report*, July, 1993. Workers in state-run enterprises are paid more in Tibet than in anywhere else in China. Liu Guonguog & Liang Wensen, *China’s Economy in the Year 2000*, (Beijing, 1987).

186 “Tibet Paper on Studying Forum Guidelines,” *Xizang Ribao*, Lhasa, in Chinese 4 Aug 94 BBC SWb 21 August 1994.

187 Tibet Support Group UK, “NEW MAJORITY,” 99.

188 Testimony of Sidney Jones, Executive Director of Asia Watch, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, July 28, 1992.

189 “All nationalities in the People’s Republic of China are equal... Regional autonomy is practiced in areas where people of minority nationalities live in concentrated communities.” Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, Art. 4. (1993).

transferees at the expense of the indigenous Tibetan population, which is never asked to give its consent.<sup>190</sup>

The Chinese policy of population transfer is being accelerated dramatically under the current “large-scale Western Development” program.<sup>191</sup> Official Chinese government statements have characterized the anticipated changes in ethnic mix that will result from Chinese influx as “improving the quality of population” in Tibetan areas.<sup>192</sup> These statements are an evident reflection of the racist undertones of the Chinese development policy priorities in Tibet.

### ***Religious and cultural freedom***

Among the most consistent human rights violations by the Chinese authorities in Tibet in the past decades is the suppression of religious and cultural freedom. At times this repression has been relaxed, but since the occupation of Tibet by Chinese forces, the practice of Tibetan Buddhism has been and is being severely restricted in Tibet. It is no coincidence that over the past decades, approximately half of Tibetan political prisoners are Buddhist monks and nuns.<sup>193</sup>

Denial of religious and cultural freedom is intertwined with the campaigns against the worship of the Dalai Lama. Recognition of reincarnate monks is now being taken over by the Communist Party in an attempt to

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190 The World Bank was asked by China, and initially agreed, to fund a project in Dulan County in Qinghai (formerly Amdo province) intended to resettle 58,000 Chinese farmers into a Tibetan area. The declared intent of the project was poverty reduction but Tibetans felt it was one more project designed to facilitate the settlement of Chinese in their region. Tibetans from Dulan complained about the project, which, they said, would worsen their plight. They wrote, in a letter smuggled out of Tibet:

[The Chinese] have captured our grasslands and treat the Tibetans and the Mongolians slightly. Civic services, like post offices, stores, and hospitals, use only Chinese as the medium of communication. Farmers and nomads are treated with disdain. This is the case also for joining schools and government jobs.

Anonymous Dulan Area Tibetans, “Translation of Statement from Tibetans in Dulan Area,” Letter to the Dalai Lama, 14 May 1999, quoted in ICT, “China Western Poverty Reduction Project: 1999 World Bank and Related Documents,” (Washington, DC: ICT, 1999). Under pressure from Tibetans and their supporters, the World Bank was forced to reconsider its involvement in the project and, in July 2000, China withdrew its request for World Bank financing.

191 TIN, *China’s Great Leap West*, 25-35.

192 Marshall, *Suppressing Dissent*, 9.

193 The Tibet Information Network estimates that as of January 2001, 74% of Tibetan political prisoners currently detained are monks and nuns. Marshall, *Suppressing Dissent*, 7.

prevent the Dalai Lama from having the traditional role that he would play. Photographs of the Dalai Lama are also now banned in many public places and in many monasteries. This has had enormous religious and cultural repercussions for Tibetans in ways that the Chinese leadership seems unable to comprehend.<sup>194</sup>

Chinese authorities openly discriminate against Tibetans on the basis of their religious beliefs and traditions, which they sometimes characterize as “superstition.” Wherever the authorities see any religious manifestation by Tibetans as contributing to “splittist” sentiments, which could disrupt the unity of the Chinese state, Tibetan culture is repressed. Not all aspects of culture fall into this category, but many are suspect, especially religious and traditional aspects, which permeate Tibetan culture. In addition, because of the atheistic nature of the Chinese Communist Party and the government, Tibetans who practice their religion, especially if they do so openly, are denied employment in government or party offices.<sup>195</sup>

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is restricted throughout the PRC, but this takes on a different and more repressive character in Tibet, because of the inextricable link of Tibetan Buddhism to the Tibetan culture and identity. It is the very expression of Tibetan cultural, religious, and ethnic identity that is considered threatening to the national unity of the PRC and harmful to socialist progress.<sup>196</sup>

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD Committee), emphasizing the connection between religion and identity in Tibet, concluded in 1996:

Taking into consideration that a distinctive religion is essential to the identity of several minority nationalities, concern is expressed with regard to the actual enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion in the State, particularly in the Muslim parts of Xinjiang and in Tibet, including the preservation of places of worship and the exercise of religious rights by members of all ethnic groups.<sup>197</sup>

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194 Wang Lixiong, “The Dalai Lama is the Key for the solution of the issue of Tibet.”

195 International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), *A Season to Purge: Religious Repression in Tibet*, (Washington: ICT, 1996), 31.

196 Ronald Schwartz, *Circle of Protest* (New York: Columbia University, 1994), 218-219.

197 United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, “Concluding Observations,” Para. 14.

Furthermore, the CERD Committee expressed its concern at “the disparities in access to economic, social and cultural benefits by different ethnic groups.” In its report, the committee also made the critical link between economic disparities among ethnic groups and racial discrimination:

[w]hile the difficulties in providing such benefits to regions far removed from the capital and developed economic regions are appreciated, the effects of the differing levels of economic development of different regions and their impact on different communities are of concern, as they may generate racial discrimination towards disadvantaged groups.

The Committee warned that, “efforts with respect to economic development and national modernization should not deprive members of such ethnic groups to their right to their own culture, in particular their traditional ways of life.”<sup>198</sup>

Religion is often portrayed by Chinese as a hindrance to economic growth and a manifestation of old and backward lifestyles.<sup>199</sup> These discriminatory attitudes, which are prevalent amongst many Chinese, particularly those in the Communist Party, are often found in official publications and constitute a type of discrimination identified by CERD as a priority. While these attitudes are prevalent in government and party circles, they are having an even more direct impact today in Tibet because they are also found in a growing number of Chinese settlers in Tibetan areas. A major reason that monks are fleeing from Tibet to India is because of “inferiority complexes created by the racism and material superiority of recent Chinese immigrants.”<sup>200</sup>

### ***Employment practices***

Racism and prejudice permeate the field of employment much as it does in many other countries where racial tension is high between a dominant group in power and a minority. The Chinese government also contributes to this in many ways, such as when the authorities initiate investment and de-

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198 Ibid., Para. 18.

199 ICT, *A Season to Purge*, 63-66.

200 David Germano, “Re-membering the Dismembered Body of Tibet: Contemporary Tibetan Visionary Movements in the People’s Republic of China,” in *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, eds., Melvyn Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 55.

velopment projects in Tibet, and typically import Chinese skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labor from Chinese provinces.<sup>201</sup> Tibetans experience this as blatant discrimination.<sup>202</sup> In the current “Western Development Projects” launched in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, Chinese and foreign investors are encouraged to invest in projects to develop those regions. The benefits of these investments accrue primarily to Chinese settlers.<sup>203</sup> These projects employ mostly Chinese individuals, even if they need to be attracted from distant provinces. Additionally, it is the Chinese entrepreneurs who overwhelmingly benefit from the collateral business that will be generated by the projects.

In 1996, the CERD Committee expressed concern at “the under-representation in business in some areas of persons of minority groups, which may be indicative of structural obstacles to their enjoyment of increases in economic prosperity.”<sup>204</sup> The Committee also expressed concern about “allegations that members of minority nationalities may not enjoy the same working conditions as persons of Han origin.”<sup>205</sup>

It is clear from the context of their comments that CERD Committee members had Tibet and Xinjiang foremost in their minds. Chinese business entrepreneurs make up the vast majority of business owners in Tibet. Special permits and restrictions make it difficult for Tibetans to get ahead. Business licenses and other permits are easier for Chinese entrepreneurs to obtain because it is usually their fellow Chinese who are responsible for granting the required permission. Beyond these practical difficulties, while the Chinese government has provided special incentives to Chinese entrepreneurs to establish businesses in Tibet, they have not provided the same to Tibetan entrepreneurs.<sup>206</sup>

It was stated above that, Tibetans who do not abandon their religious beliefs—and very few Tibetans do—are discriminated against in government

201 “High Stakes: Beijing investment brings ever-greater numbers of Han Chinese into the region,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 22, 1995.

202 Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (hereinafter TCHRD), *Racial Discrimination in Tibet*, (Dharamsala: TCHRD, 2000), 8-30. John Pomfret, “A Less Tibetan Tibet: Many Residents Fear Chinese Migration Will Dilute Culture,” *Washington Post*, October 31, 1999, A-31.

203 Tseten Wangchuk Sharlo, “China’s Reforms in Tibet: Issues and Dilemmas,” *The Journal of Contemporary China* 1, No. 1, Fall 1992, 55-60.

204 United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, “Concluding Observations.” Para. 16.

205 *Ibid.*

206 Geoffrey Crothal, “Han entrepreneurs invade Tibet,” *South China Morning Post*, Oct. 2, 1992.



and Chinese Communist Party employment. To some extent this is also true in the private sector, where Tibetans who do not shed their cultural and religious identity often find it difficult to obtain employment in Chinese enterprises.

Government statistics show that Tibetans occupy a sizable proportion of public offices in Tibet and also, proportionately, in representative organs of the central Chinese government.<sup>207</sup> Indeed, this is largely in keeping with constitutional and other legal requirements.<sup>208</sup> Yet, it is the Chinese inside Tibet who overwhelmingly hold the positions of real political power. In the PRC the distinction between government and CCP positions is very significant. The first are subordinate to the latter. Tibetans may occupy many positions in government, but extremely few in the Party. No Secretary of the TAR branch of the CCP, the position of greatest authority in the region, since the CCP effectively rules Tibet, has ever been Tibetan.<sup>209</sup> But even at the government level, posts filled by a Tibetan are “counter balanced” by a Chinese official who often holds more real power than the Tibetan. This phenomenon has increased since the defection of Agya Rinpoche and the Karmapa, which increased the levels of mistrust between Chinese authorities and Tibetan officials in Tibet.<sup>210</sup>

In government offices, Tibetan officials face discrimination. They are treated poorly compared to Chinese officials and encounter more difficulties in obtaining promotions. “Tibetans can speak Tibetan at home and at work,” a *Newsweek* story quoted a Lhasa intellectual who has a government job, “But in order to get ahead, you must speak Chinese.” “The Chinese feel they are [all] of the same blood and hence it is very difficult [for Tibetans] to get higher posts,” explained a former government official interviewed by the Tibet Information Network (TIN) in 1999.<sup>211</sup> Tibetans often suppress their cultural identity in order to

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207 According to official Chinese government statistics, members of the Tibetan and other “national minorities” now account for 84.6 percent of the chair/ vice-chair positions of the Standing Committee of the People’s Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region; for 80 percent of the members of the Standing Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Regional People’s Congress; and for 74.4 percent of the chair/ vice-chair positions of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

208 Law of the PRC on Regional National Autonomy, Art. 17 (1984); see also ICT & International Human Rights Law Group, *The Myth of National Autonomy*, 30-32.

209 ICJ, *Tibet: Human Rights and the Rule of Law*, 96-97.

210 Melinda Liu, “Tibet: China’s Kosovo?” *Newsweek*, May 25, 1999. TIN News Update, Agya Rinpoche belatedly removed from office, June 27, 2000, available online <http://www.tibetinfo.net>.

211 Tibet Information Network, “Prayer beads not permitted in the office,” *News Review: Reports from Tibet*, 1999, (London: TIN, 2000), 60.

succeed by not wearing traditional Tibetan dress, carry rosaries or sometimes even to speak openly of their distinct cultural traditions.<sup>212</sup>

### ***Access to public health and medical care***

The Chinese government has made a point of emphasizing the improvements in health care in Tibet since the Chinese takeover in 1951. Indeed, overall, medical facilities and access to western medicine have greatly increased in the past fifty years. Before the Chinese armies marched into Lhasa Tibetans had access to Tibetan medicine, but not to western or Chinese medicine. However, after half a century of Chinese administration, Tibetans have access to far inferior health care than do their Chinese counterparts.<sup>213</sup> This is true not only if we compare the situation in Tibet with that in China proper, but even if we confine the investigation to Tibet itself.

Accounts from Tibetans reveal that discriminatory procedures keep many Tibetans from receiving adequate medical care.<sup>214</sup> The Chinese in Tibet are said to receive better care and experience less bureaucratic hassle. By focusing on providing medical facilities and infrastructure in urban areas, where most of the Chinese settlers live, and not in rural areas, where a greater proportion of Tibetans reside, the discriminatory impact is felt more acutely.<sup>215</sup>

Special concern has been expressed by human rights organizations in regards to the healthcare available to Tibetan women and children.<sup>216</sup> In one authoritative report released recently, investigators report that most Tibetan families cannot afford healthcare for their children, when it is available. Tibetan children suffer rates of infant mortality and malnutrition (including severe growth stunting) higher than any region of China.<sup>217</sup> A prominent study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, found that the extensive

212 Melinda Liu, "China Invades Tibet – Again: An inside look at how Beijing now uses money and migrants to control the frontier," *Newsweek*, April 10, 1995.

213 Eric Eckholm, "Study Links Malnutrition to Stunted Growth of Tibet's Children," *New York Times*, Feb. 1, 2001.

214 TCHRD, *Racial Discrimination in Tibet*, 54.

215 For more information on documented healthcare discrimination against Tibetans see Tibetan Government-in-Exile, Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), "Racial Discrimination in Tibet: A Report Submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination," June 2001. 16-17.

216 TIN, "Increased Restrictions on Birth of Children in Tibet," 9 February 2000, in TIN, *News Review: Reports from Tibet, 2000*, (London: TIN, 2001), 101.

217 ICLT, *A Generation In Peril*, 74.

growth retardation among Tibetan children was linked to malnutrition and other social factors.<sup>218</sup> A 1998 PRC Ministry of Health report indicates that the mortality rate of pregnant women in Tibet is six times greater than the mortality rate of pregnant women in the PRC as a whole. Whereas 387 out of every 100,000 Tibetan pregnant women die in childbirth, the death rate for Chinese women is 63 out of every 100,000.<sup>219</sup>

Of particular concern is the implementation of the 1995 “Law on mother and child health care” and its impact on Tibetans. There are indications, as we have seen in Chapter 4, above, that this eugenics law may be misused to restrict births of Tibetans and other so-called minorities that are considered inferior by the Chinese central or local authorities. Accounts from Tibetan refugees in India have confirmed that these abuses in birth control policies against Tibetan women are occurring.<sup>220</sup>

### ***Access to education and training***

The Chinese government has increased the access to modern education for much of the Tibetan population since the PRC took control in 1951. There were hardly any modern schools in Tibet before the Chinese invasion, although religious education, which included a number of secular subjects, was highly developed. Yet, despite these advances, the literacy rate of Tibetans today is alarmingly low, much lower than that of the Chinese. Overall, the education which Tibetans have access to is far inferior to that provided to the Chinese, even in Tibet itself. As a result, Tibetans are disadvantaged vis à vis their Chinese counterparts. This is compounded by the language difficulties Tibetans experience in Chinese medium secondary schools and higher education institutions.<sup>221</sup> No less important, is the deprivation of Tibetan children of their right to enjoy education about their own culture.

Statistics show that the semi-literacy or the illiteracy rate in the TAR is 72.8 percent as compared to a Chinese average of 22.8%.<sup>222</sup> The Chinese are

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218 Nancy Harris, M.D., et. al., “Nutritional and health Status of Tibetan Children Living at High Altitudes,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 344, no. 5, 1 February 2001, 341.

219 Xinhua News Agency, “Hemorrhaging biggest killer of Chinese women in childbirth,” Beijing, May 26, 1998. The UN Development Programme reported a more recent average maternal mortality rate in China as being 65 out of every 100,000 in their *Human Development Report 2000*.

220 TCHRD, *Racial Discrimination in Tibet*, 41.

221 Marcus Brauchli, “To Integrate Tibet, China’s New Approach Tries Economic Lures,” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 14, 1997.

222 John Pomfret, “In Tibet, a Struggle of the Soul,” *Washington Post*, Friday, July 16 1999, page A-01.

quick to claim that the high illiteracy rate is due to the inherent backwardness of Tibetans and the legacy of “feudal” times. Yet this argument is undermined by the tremendous success in the field of education of Tibetans in exile.<sup>223</sup> Despite the difficult conditions of life as refugees, Tibetans have built their own schools in India and Nepal that produces new generations of highly educated Tibetans in all fields.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed its concern that the education Tibetan children obtain is inferior and decreases Tibetan children’s abilities to reach higher levels of education. In its concluding observations in 1996, the Committee stated:

[The Committee is] concerned about reports that school attendance in minority areas, including the Tibet Autonomous Region, is lagging behind, that the quality of education is inferior and that insufficient efforts have been made to develop a bilingual education system which would include adequate teaching in Chinese. These shortcomings may disadvantage Tibetan and other minority pupils applying to secondary and higher level schools.<sup>224</sup>

Although the Law on Regional National Autonomy requires that the Tibetan language should be the medium of education in primary schools where Tibetan pupils form the majority, this is far from being the case throughout Tibet.<sup>225</sup> In 1997, the Deputy Secretary of the TAR Communist Party announced that to “allow grade 1-3 boys and girls to be taught only in the Tibetan language will do no good to their children’s growth.”<sup>226</sup> A year earlier,

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223 TCHRD, *Racial Discrimination in Tibet*, 59.

224 United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, “Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: China,” 7 June 1996, CRC/C/15/Add.56, Para. 19.

225 A UNPO mission that traveled to Lhasa found that “a handful of Chinese students in a classroom automatically entails that the language of education is Chinese.” Flinterman, et al., “China’s Tibet: The World’s Largest Remaining Colony,” 208. Article 10 of the 1984 Law on Regional National Autonomy stipulates that the local governments in each autonomous area should guarantee that the residents have the freedom to use and develop their spoken and written languages. Article 37 of the same law requires that in elementary schools with a majority of “minority nationality” students, the language of the minority nationality should have priority. At the senior level, the Chinese language should be the medium of education.

226 Tibet Information Network (TIN), “Policy Shift in Teaching in Tibet,” *News Updates*, 6 May 1997, revised April 1998, available online at <http://www.tibetinfo.net/news-updates/nu060597.htm>. Also see Catriona Bass, *Education in Tibet: Policy and Practice Since 1950* (Zed & TIN: London, 1998), 237.

## **Shots from *Serf***



Jampa, imprisoned by his aristocratic feudal lord, yearns to break free.

Chinese authorities shut down four experimental Tibetan-medium classes in secondary schools.<sup>227</sup> The reasons for the end of these Tibetan language programs in secondary schools and the diminishing Tibetan language curricula in primary schools, is that there has been a lack of successful implementation due to the inadequate efforts on the part of government officials. Funding and training for teachers has not been provided nor has a consistent policy been established.<sup>228</sup> Clearly, a proper balance has to be found in providing Tibetan children with education in their mother tongue, while also ensuring their mastery of the Chinese language, so they can fully participate in the Chinese dominated society they live in.

The language issue is not the only problem. Because of the Chinese authorities' attitude towards Tibetan culture in schools, Tibetan children are subjected to ridicule in schools if they, or even their parents, express interest in Tibetan religious beliefs, traditions or culture. Children whose parents can afford the high education fees find a curriculum geared towards cultural assimilation and children have been physically punished if they express a desire to learn about the Dalai Lama or Tibetan history.<sup>229</sup> The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child warned that China's "State intervention in religious principles seems to be most unfortunate for the whole generation of boys and girls among the Tibetan population."<sup>230</sup> Parents too are put under pressure and instructed to "help rid [the children] of the bad influence of religion." The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child concluded that "a review be undertaken of measures to ensure that children in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and other minority areas are guaranteed full opportunities to develop knowledge about their own language and culture."<sup>231</sup>

In the area of education, unlike political imprisonment, there is a more open debate about how to reform education so that it is not as much a vehicle for assimilation but geared towards needs of Tibetans. Even this debate is a sensitive one, and Tibetans must be extremely careful about the terminology and the arguments they use in criticizing the existing system and proposing new solutions. A paper written by a young intellectual from

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227 TIN, "Policy Shift in Teaching in Tibet."

228 Bass, 237-239.

229 ICLT, *A Generation In Peril*, 48.

230 United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, "Concluding Observations." Para. 20.

231 *Ibid.* Para. 40.

eastern Tibet, who wishes to remain anonymous, highlights insightful definitions of some of the problems of educational discrimination and offers several intriguing solutions:

1. The Chinese must examine existing regulations and laws, which blindly discriminate against Tibetan culture and language. The central government should not dictate the system of minority education.
2. The government should allow the local Tibetan educational institutions to design their own textbooks and the content of teaching materials. Centralized education is basically Han Chinese education. Giving authority to the local educational institutions is the first step in changing the current policies.
3. Existing preferential policies block minority students from the mainstream educational system and the work force. Giving minority students the same chance to compete as Chinese students is central to changing policies. Tibetans should have the chance to go to “regular” universities if the student meets the academic requirements.
4. If the Chinese government wants to have some preferential policies for minorities, the Chinese government could create a better admissions testing system similar to those for foreign students in foreign countries such as the TOEFL system in the United States. Under such regulations, if the minority student wants to attend a regular university in China, the government can require minorities to take Chinese competency examinations. Then minority students will not be discriminated against or resented on the basis of their language and ethnicity.
5. When minority students take the national examination (except for the Chinese language competency test), the student should have the choice of which language to use. Such regulations will give equal opportunities to minority students, and the minority people’s language, culture and identities are equally respected.<sup>232</sup>

While these suggestions may provoke greater questions on the subject, at the very least, his proposals provoke a discussion that needs to be further ham-

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232 Anonymous Tibetan from Xining, “The Impact of Preferential Policies in Tibetan Areas,” unpublished paper, July 2001.

mered out in order to remedy the situation of racial discrimination in the education of Tibetans in Tibet.

As demonstrated in this chapter, Tibetans are denied the enjoyment of many of their civil and political rights and their economic, social and cultural rights in ways that are discriminatory. While we have seen that different factors, besides racist attitudes, may influence Chinese discriminatory behavior, the impact on Tibetans is profound. Seen from their perspective, Tibetans experience the systematic violation of their rights in terms of racist oppression by a people and a system that consider themselves superior to them and that are determined to impose their political, cultural and ideological norms on the Tibetans in classical colonial fashion.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

JAMPA: THE STORY OF RACISM IN TIBET

The present study shows that racism is deeply embedded in China, and therefore in the administration of occupied Tibet. We have seen that racism exists among the Chinese (Han) majority with respect to so-called minority nationalities as well as to peoples outside the People's Republic of China (PRC). Apparent in this research is that within the PRC, racism is severe with respect to Tibetans, partially as a result of the enormous volume of propaganda denigrating Tibet's traditional systems and glorifying the systems of Communist China. Racism towards blacks from Africa has been likewise extreme and manifested towards peoples outside the PRC's borders. It is evident, however, that Tibetans also harbor racist prejudices towards the Chinese, albeit less pronounced partially because Tibetans have no governmental power over Chinese.

The PRC government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have, since the founding of the PRC, proclaimed the equality of all "nationalities" and spoken out against "great Han chauvinism" and minority discrimination. The Constitution of the PRC and its laws prohibit racial discrimination. But two principal factors ensure that China's deep-seated racism against Tibetans and others persists. The first factor is the racist underpinning of the Chinese Communist concept of the social superiority of the Chinese (Han) socialist revolution and the consequent leadership role of the Chinese people with respect to the Tibetan and other "backward" peoples of the "Great Motherland." According to this racialized myth, the Tibetans and other less advanced peoples must transform themselves in the image of the Chinese for their own empowerment. In other words, as was true in the imperial days, it is the Chinese civilization and the political, social, and scientific achievements and ideals personified by the Chinese people, which serve as a beacon and standard

to emulate. The superiority-inferiority relationship, which these theories and propaganda imply, is unmistakable, links to racism, and contradicts the declarations of opposition to racism and discrimination that the CCP and the PRC government have made publicly.

The second and most important factor that perpetuates racism and discrimination is the Chinese government's steadfast denial of the existence of systematic racism and racial discrimination in China. CCP Chairman Zhao Ziyang stated in 1988, that racial discrimination is common "everywhere in the world except China."<sup>233</sup> This attitude, more than any other factor, is likely to make it virtually impossible to address racist behavior and abuses in China and Tibet. As long as the roots, manifestations and remedies for racism in China cannot be discussed, little significant progress can be made towards eradicating it. Thus, the power of denial is one of the strongest forces that prevent the alleviation of racism in the PRC.

In addition to the above two factors, it must be recognized that Chinese nationalism, embedded in an ethnocentric historiography of Chinese greatness and superiority over all other "barbarian" peoples, also has a major influence on Chinese perceptions of others. This is especially true of the way in which the Chinese view non-conformist Tibetans and others who openly resist Chinese dominance. These "dissenters" are thereby seen as harming the greatness of the Chinese people and its political expression, the Chinese state. This also exemplifies how foreign occupation is among the sources of racial and discriminatory practices.<sup>234</sup>

Recognizing the existence of racism and its manifestations in China would be a first and crucial step in the eradication of racism and discrimination in the PRC. The International Campaign for Tibet therefore presents the following recommendations to the PRC, the Tibetan people and the international community:

### **Recommendations to People's Republic of China (PRC):**

- The PRC should acknowledge and expressly recognize the existence of systematic racism in the PRC and its harmful effects. Such acknowl-

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233 A. Roche, "Chinese Party Chief Says Racism Common Everywhere but China," Reuters News Service, April 25, 1988, quoted in Sautman, "Racial Nationalism," 80.

234 This language, stating that foreign occupation is among the sources of racism was in an early draft of the official United Nations Programme of Action, A/CONF.189/PC.2/27, 3.

edgment should also include the links between Han chauvinism, paternalism, and racism. The government should initiate a public discussion and education campaign on the issue, for which it should mobilize substantial resources. It could seek the assistance of the United Nations in the form of advisory services provided by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

- The PRC government should create a commission to undertake a thorough review of the Constitution and laws of the PRC and repeal any language that is paternalistic or could otherwise contribute to racist and discriminatory perceptions and actions. The commission should consist of members of all ethnic groups in the PRC who have a good understanding of the perceptions and feelings of their respective peoples.
- The PRC government should commission a revision of all school and university textbooks to remove and revise any portions and references that contain racist elements or that could contribute to the perpetration of racist and discriminatory perceptions and actions.
- The PRC government should invite the UN Special Rapporteur on Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia to visit Tibet and examine Chinese policies and practices with respect to the Tibetans and to make specific recommendations on ways to combat any manifestations of racism and racial discrimination he/she may find there.
- The PRC government should be much more aggressive and systematic in the prevention and prosecution of racism and racial discrimination. Victims should have the right to individually initiate legal proceedings without fear of retribution. In Tibet in particular, the discriminatory application of laws, regulations and policies should be strictly prohibited and punished.

## **Recommendations to the Tibetan Government-in-Exile**

- The Tibetan Government-in-Exile should conscientiously implement recommendations from the WCAR Program of Action in Tibetan communities in exile. This should include the promotion and development of education about racism within Tibetan communities in exile and in Tibet.
- The Tibetan Government-in-Exile should acknowledge and address racism perpetrated by Tibetans against other peoples, such as Chinese

and others, both in Tibet and in Tibetan communities in exile.

- The Tibetan Government-in-Exile, and Tibetan NGOs, should regularly and systematically provide the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, the CERD Committee and the Special Rapporteur on Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia with accurate information on racism and racial discrimination in Tibet.
- The Tibetan Government-in-Exile, and Tibetan NGOs should work more closely with Chinese NGOs around the world to work towards ending racism against Tibetans in Tibet and against ethnic Chinese living as minorities around the world.

# Appendix A

J A M P A : T H E S T O R Y O F R A C I S M I N T I B E T

**STATEMENT BY H. E. MR. WANG GUANGYA**  
VICE FOREIGN MINISTER  
OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA  
AT THE ASIAN REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR  
WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM

Teheran, 19 February 2001

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, please allow me to congratulate, on behalf of the Chinese Government, on the successful convocation of the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting for World Conference Against Racism and on your election as Chairman of the meeting. I am convinced that your outstanding ability will guide this meeting to success.

My appreciation also goes to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting this grand meeting of Asia in the beautiful city of Teheran. In the United Nations' history of human rights protection, Teheran has earned an important place. The Proclamation of Teheran adopted in 1968 was and still is an important document on the international human rights protection. Today, it is of great significance that we meet here again to discuss the strategies against racism in the new century.

Mr. Chairman,

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of racist acts are all gross violations of human rights. Colonialism and racism represented a

dark page in the annals of human history. Today when the world has entered the 21st century, peace, tranquility and happiness are the aspirations of mankind. However, the world is not a tranquil place. Regional conflicts triggered by territorial, religious and other disputes keep cropping up. The dregs of racism have surfaced again and it even developed anew in some regions and countries. To oppose racism, both in old and new forms, has become an important task for us in promoting and protecting human rights. The World Conference Against Racism to be held according to the decision in Resolution 52/111 of the UN General Assembly will be a historic event of major influence in the international human rights field in the new century. This Regional Preparatory Meeting of Asia is a significant part of the Conference and will demonstrate our Asian countries' determination and confidence in the fight against racism.

The Chinese Government maintains that the World Conference and the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting should make efforts in the following areas:

First, the positive results achieved by the international community in opposing racism should be fully affirmed, and continued efforts should be made to press ahead with the cause against racism. Since the founding of the United Nations, promoting and protecting human rights and the fundamental freedoms have become one of the objectives for the endeavor of the international community. The United Nations has declared three consecutive "Decades to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination" and achieved a lot of successes. The notorious social system of racial segregation has been abolished and equality and harmony among the races have become the common demand of the international community and the people of all countries.

However, it should also be noted that the outdated and pernicious influences of racism and racial discrimination have not been eliminated completely, and sometimes they even get a good deal of support. In recent years, racism of new forms has developed. In some Western developed countries, there have appeared phenomena like xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination against immigrant workers, neo-fascism and neo-Nazism. These acts have seriously violated the basic human rights and infringed upon the equality and dignity of humanity, thus posing a stern challenge to the cause of international human rights protection.

Looking back at the last century, we see that great changes have taken place on earth. Looking forward to the future, there is still a long way to go. We

hope that the World Conference Against Racism can, on the basis of summing up historical experience, draw on collective wisdom and absorb useful ideas, propose goals for combating and finally rooting out racism in the new century and formulate effective measures, so as to promote the international human rights cause through international cooperation.

Secondly, priorities should be given and solutions found to urgent issues facing the international community, especially the developing countries. Slave trade, genocide and apartheid that existed in history were monstrous crimes committed by racists against the human society. We associate ourselves with the consensus reached by Latin American and African countries in their Regional Preparatory Meetings, which calls for strengthened international cooperation to remove the influences of colonialism and give compensation to the victims of the crimes perpetrated by colonialism and racism.

Colonialism and racism in the past brought tremendous adverse effects on the development of the countries and people in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Today, the rapid development of economic globalization is having an enormous impact on the vast number of developing countries and has triggered political and social turmoil in some countries. Many developing countries face severe challenges in their state sovereignty and economic security and are being marginalized. The World Conference Against Racism should be committed to the early establishment of a new international political and economic order which is just and reasonable, and help the developing countries get out of difficulty as soon as possible so that all members of the international community, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, can coexist as equals and respect one another and that all can benefit from the process of globalization, thus eventually promoting the common development and prosperity of all humanity.

Thirdly, Asian countries should strengthen their solidarity to contribute to the World Conference Against Racism. Asia is one of the birthplaces of human history and civilization and has made important and indelible contributions to the development and progress of human society. Asia is vast in size, huge in population and rich in resources. It has diversified cultures. It has tremendous potentials for cooperation and development. The fine cultural tradition of mutual tolerance, mutual respect and valuing social and collective rights and interests has laid a favorable foundation for the amicable coexistence and common development of Asian countries. In the past, Asia suffered deeply

from the scourge of colonialism, with territories invaded and occupied, people enslaved, resources plundered and the social and economic development impaired. Thanks to their common efforts, the Asian countries have won their independence and liberation and finally stood up on the world arena.

The sovereignty and independence of the Asian countries today are hard won. In the process of working together to defend the sovereignty of the Asian countries, promote national and regional economic development and support the international community's fight against racism and racial segregation, we should strengthen solidarity rather than creating division, and cooperate closely rather than enlarging differences. We are confident that, with the joint efforts of Asian countries, the declaration and program of action to be adopted at the current meeting will have significant influence on the fight of the international community against racism.

Mr. Chairman,

In the past, China shared a similar lot with most developing countries in Asia, endured untold suffering by colonialism. More than half a century ago, the Chinese people overthrew imperialism, colonialism and feudalism and won a new lease of life for the country and the nation, thus embarking on the road to all-round development. At present, the Chinese people of all ethnic groups are living in harmony and have achieved remarkable successes in the economic and social development. They never enjoyed such a high level of human rights in history as they do now.

China was among the first countries to sign the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and has supported and participated in the UN's cause of "Three Decades to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination" for three decades. The Chinese Government has taken an active part in the preparatory work for the World Conference Against Racism and offered donations to the conference. In this regard, activities will be organized at the national level to promote the Conference. The Chinese Government is ready to work with other countries to make the conference a complete success.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.



# Appendix B

JAMPA: THE STORY OF RACISM IN TIBET

**SUI SHENG ZHAO**

“CHINESE NATIONALISM AND ITS INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATIONS,”

*POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY*. SPRING 2000.

EXCERPTS OF PP 25-28

The PRC government once made a policy of systematic assimilation of ethnic minorities in order to create a single Chinese nation. This policy was justified by the claim that the Han as the more developed and majority nationality had the responsibility of helping backward ethnic minorities to move as quickly as possible into communist society. Under the assimilation policy, the PRC government adopted a variety of measures, including large scale migration of the Han people to the ethnic minority areas, the recruitment of ethnic minorities into the party and government bureaucracies, the development of infrastructure in minority areas to improve their economy, and the encouragement of the minorities to learn the Han language and other cultural practices. However, the chauvinist assimilation policy was not very successful and inevitably stimulated resistance from ethnic minorities. Han migration into minority territories exacerbated anti-Han sentiments. Tibetans expelled the Chinese officials and troops and declared independence in the 1959 uprising, which resulted in a bloody suppression of the Tibetan separatist movement by Beijing and forced the fourteenth Dalai Lama into exile in India...

China's "affirmative policy" is to give the minority nationalities enough power, education, or economic success to keep them from making independent demands and is not based on any philosophy of equality or any desire to celebrate differences. The Chinese people remain completely at ease with racial stereotypes, and the Han's bias against the minorities is commonplace. The Han have continued to use derogatory terms referring to the minorities. For instance, *xongnu* (slave-like people) is used to refer to ethnic minorities in the north and

*nanman* (south barbarous) is for the ethnic groups in the south. To a certain extent, the official preferential treatment policy for minority nationalities is another way to confirm the Han belief that all minorities are backward, primitive barbarians who need the help of their Han older brothers. As opposed to empowering minorities, it is meant to encourage assimilation and the creation of a peaceful, unified, and essentially Han-dominated multinational state. Treatment of minorities in the popular press and the creation of a minority theme park (a side-show in Beijing and Shenzhen where curious Han can have their pictures taken with minorities) make continued Han chauvinism painfully apparent.<sup>1</sup>

In this case, ethnic nationalism among Tibetans, Uighurs, other Muslims, and Mongols has stayed alive and is evident in the upsurge of separatist demonstrations and movements in Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang in the 1990s. These ethnic minorities are bitter about the personal and collective (ethnic) suffering they have experienced under the Han Chinese rule. They see themselves “engaged in a struggle to keep culture and national identity afloat in a world of one billion Han.”<sup>2</sup> In Tibet, for example, ethnic nationalism has developed into a state-seeking separatist movement that has won certain international sympathy. The PRC government has labeled these ethnic nationalists “splittists” (*fenlie zhuyi fenzhi*) and made every effort to eradicate Tibetan nationalism.<sup>3</sup> Minority nationalities in other parts of China, particularly the Zhuang in Guangxi and the Miao and the Yi in the Southwest, are already highly sinicised and are being peacefully integrated into the neighboring population. A strong policy of nationalism with inevitable emphasis on Han history and culture can “only serve to accentuate their ethnic and historical differences, and generate previously nonexistent antagonisms.”<sup>4</sup>

Under these circumstances, it would be counterproductive if the PRC government overplays Chinese nationalism, which appeals largely to the Han history and nation and may cause resentments among minority nationalities. Ethnic separatists could also take over the official nationalist appeals to make an ethnic interpretation for their own causes.

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1 For one study, see Tim Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China* (London: Routledge, 1998).

2 Melvyn C. Goldstein, “Outside Instigation and the Disturbances in Tibet,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 4 (Fall 1993): 94-95.

3 Warren W. Smith, Jr., *Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).

4 Fong-ching Chen, “Chinese Nationalism: A New Global Perspective,” *The Stockholm Journal of East Asian Studies* 6 (1995): 13.

# Appendix C

J A M P A : T H E S T O R Y O F R A C I S M I N T I B E T

## **PRC Objection Letter**

MISSION PERMANENTE DE LA REPUBLIQUE POPULAIRE DE CHINE  
A GENEVE  
11, CHEMIN DE SURVILLE – 1213 PETIT-LANCY, GENEVE  
TEL (022) 792 25 48

GJ/083/2000

8 November 2000

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Secretariat of the World Conference against Racism and, with reference to the latter's Note dated 1 November 2000, in which comments from Permanent Missions are invited on the accreditation of 36 non-governmental organizations to the World Conference and its Preparatory Committees, has the honor to forward the following comments:

The Chinese government attaches great importance to the World Conference and its Preparatory Committees and maintains broad participation will help enrich the discussions and brief fruitful results to the Conference.

We have noticed with great concern that Human Rights in China (United States) and International Campaign for Tibet (United States) have applied to be accredited to participate in the World Conference and its Preparatory

Committees. These two organizations are political ones and have always aimed at and been engaged in subversive activities against China. It would be a serious violation of the Purposes and Principles of the Charter of the United Nations if such organizations were accredited. In 1999, Human Rights in China applied for consultative status with ECOSOC. As its activities seriously violated the principles of the UN Charter, the ECOSOC refused its application. International Campaign for Tibet has been engaged in the activities of splitting China in recent years, which seriously violates the territorial integrity of sovereign state. The Chinese government is absolutely opposed to and strongly requests the OHCHR and the Secretariat of the World Conference to reject the applications of Human Rights in China (United States) and International Campaign for Tibet (United States).

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the OHCHR and the Secretariat of the World Conference the assurances of its highest consideration.

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE PEOPLE'S  
REPUBLIC OF CHINA TO THE UNOG

OHCHR  
SECRETARIAT OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM

# Appendix D

JAMPA: THE STORY OF RACISM IN TIBET

## ICT Response to PRC Objection

January 17, 2001

Laurie Wiseberg  
NGO Liaison for the World Conference Against Racism  
United Nations  
High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneve 10  
SWITZERLAND

Dear Ms. Wiseberg:

We are in receipt of your letter of November 20, 2000 informing us that the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China in Geneva has opposed our accreditation to the World Conference Against Racism. We are extremely concerned by this development and believe strongly that we meet the requirements for accreditation. Moreover, as an organization, we have been working hard on many issues relating to racism in China and believe that we can make a very positive contribution.

As stated in paragraph 28 of resolution 52/111 passed by the General Assembly, the purposes of the Conference include reviewing progress made in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; considering ways and means to better combat racism; increasing the level of awareness about the scourges of racism; reviewing the political, historical, economic, social, cultural and other factors leading to racism. These have all been integral activities of the International Campaign for Tibet with respect to the experience of the Tibetan people.

The Conference is open to interested non-governmental organizations based on “its competence and the relevance of its activities to the conference.” The International Campaign for Tibet has a long and substantial record of activities that combat racism and racial discrimination. There should be little doubt that serious problems exist in China with respect to discrimination. No country in the world has successively eliminated the scourge of racism, and China, a large country made of many “nationalities,” is no exception.

ICT’s areas of expertise conform closely to areas identified in Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, such as the right to equal treatment before the law, the right to security of person, the right to leave any country, including one’s own, and to return to one’s country, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the right to equal pay for equal work, the right to public health, medical care, social security and social services and the right to equal participation in cultural activities. All of these rights are affected by discrimination against Tibetans based on their race, descent, or national or ethnic origin.

Since its founding 13 years ago, ICT has worked to document and combat the many manifestations of racism, which still occur in Tibet today. The government of the People’s Republic of China has devoted considerable resources to eradicate some forms of discrimination, but still they persist. In other areas, ICT has documented severe abuses, which are perpetuated by individuals and agencies under control of the government.

Discrimination against Tibetans is also influenced by historical and contemporary stereotypes of Tibetans as a primitive, backward, uncivilized and superstitious people. ICT has collaborated with dozens of organizations which promote forms of Tibetan culture to help dispel notions that Tibetans and Tibetan culture is primitive and backward. ICT firmly believes that such activities have done much to promote a mutual respect and admiration of Tibetan and Chinese cultures.

Racism and racial discrimination is a phenomenon that exists in both Chinese and Tibetan communities. Racist attitudes are not uncommon amongst Tibetans living in Tibet and those living abroad. Since ICT’s founding we have hosted countless dialogues between Chinese and Tibetans to begin to overcome the deep divisions and distrust that contribute to racism.

Moreover, since our founding, 13 years ago, our mandate has remained consistent: to monitor and promote internationally recognized human rights

in Tibet. For example, every year we rigorously monitor and promote the right to freedom of conscience and religion. Restrictions on monasteries and nunneries and abuses against monks and nuns in Tibet are, in part, shaped by attitudes and stereotypes which this Conference is designed to address.

ICT has also monitored China's efforts to develop programs that would be described in the United States as "affirmative action." China has a principle of "giving priority to people of local ethnic groups," such as lowering the pass marks for admission to schools for ethnic minorities. This helps to overcome problems to which racism and discrimination have contributed. It also underscores the type of issue that ICT has studied and worked on over the years, and an area where our input could help to further overcome current problems in Tibet today.

ICT is extremely concerned with the allegations of the Permanent Mission of the PRC in Geneva that ICT is "engaged in subversive activities against China" and "activities of splitting China." ICT is not engaged in subversive activities and does not support "splitting China." Furthermore, ICT does not and has not propagated principles contrary to or in violation of the charter of the UN. ICT is an independent organization which monitors and acts to protect the human rights of the Tibetan people. This is fully in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

China claims that ICT supports separatism (splittism), which is untrue. There is no evidence at all of ICT proposing separatism. ICT's mandate prohibits it from taking a position on political questions surrounding Tibet. Thus, we take no position as to whether Tibet should be part of China, autonomous, independent or any other type of association. The ICT supports the right of peoples to self-determination, a principle enshrined in the UN Charter and in the International Covenants of Human Rights. This is not at all the same as supporting separatism, since self-determination can lead to many solutions that do not involve separation and independence.

ICT has supported calls for a negotiated and peaceful solution to the situation in Tibet. This too, is entirely in keeping with the objectives of the UN Charter. The Secretary General has been emphasizing the importance of dialogue and the role of NGOs in promoting peace and opposing violence.

The World Conference Against Racism is extremely important to this organization and to individual members of our staff, many of whom have expertise in this area from working in other organizations that address the scourge of racism. It is difficult for us to imagine what legitimate basis there could be

for excluding this organization, which has conscientiously devoted enormous resources to the very issues that this Conference is tackling. We would like to ask whether the objection by any government to the inclusion of any organization, could be sufficient to exclude an otherwise meritorious organization.

We understand that if the Secretariat decides not to recommend ICT to the Preparatory Committee, that we will have another opportunity to respond. However, we hope and trust that that will not be necessary. We would also very much appreciate the opportunity to send a representative to the Asian Regional Meeting in Tehran in late February, pending the decision of the Secretariat.

We sincerely appeal to the Secretariat to recommend ICT to the preparatory committee for accreditation. If you need any further information, materials or clarifications, do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

John Ackerly  
President

Bhuchung Tsering,  
Director



# Appendix E

J A M P A : T H E S T O R Y O F R A C I S M I N T I B E T

PETITION OF THE WCAR ASIA-PACIFIC NGO NETWORKING MEETING  
TO THE WCAR PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

KATHMANDU, NEPAL, APRIL 27-29, 2001

The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) attending the Asia-Pacific Network Meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal, in connection with the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, declare our support to three NGOs working on Asia whose requests for accreditation to the Conference have been blocked.

Human Rights in China, the International Campaign for Tibet and the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy each filed applications for participation in the World Conference Against Racism in accordance with established procedures for NGOs not in consultative status. The Conference Secretariat subsequently accepted their applications. However, when the applications were circulated to member states, the Government of China opposed them. The Bureau decided to submit the question of the accreditation of these NGOs to the Preparatory Committee which will meet for its second session from 21 May— 1 June 2001.

We believe that the review of these applications by the Bureau of the Conference did not meet expected standards of objectivity. This is evidenced by the comments of the Chinese Government, which contended that these organizations were “engaged in subversive activities against China” or in “activities of splitting China.” The Chinese Government has failed to present any evidence to sustain this allegation.

All of these NGOs enjoy a reputation of seriousness and professionalism within the international NGO community. We strongly believe that all their activities are in accordance with the fundamental human rights principles put forward by the United Nations, including in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Their work has made an invaluable contribution to a better understanding of the human rights situation in the People's Republic of China and Tibet, including the situations leading to various forms of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. From a procedural standpoint as well as from a substantive aspect, their applications are strong ones. Therefore, we believe that Human Rights in China, International Campaign for Tibet and the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy should be granted accreditation.

As a matter of principle, objective consideration should be given to every application before any decision is made. Accordingly, we request that the Second Preparatory Committee invite representatives of these three NGOs to present their organizations and their work, as a way to reply to the Chinese Government's unsubstantiated allegations. We urge all governments to consider their applications on their merits, and to vote in favor of granting them accreditation to the World Conference Against Racism.

Discriminating against NGOs solely because they monitor and document the human rights situation of one particular member state sharply contradicts the spirit of the upcoming Conference. If all member states opposed NGOs that examine their own human rights situations and make constructive proposals on how abuses can be redressed, few NGOs indeed would attend the Conference. As a result, the extensive human rights violations occurring worldwide, including various forms of discriminatory practices, would fail to be addressed.

We call on all concerned to give this issue your utmost attention.

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