

DRAFT / EMBARGOED

TIBET - Human Rights and Education
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BACKGROUND

In April 1949 the Chinese Nationalist government collapsed and on October 1st, in Peking, the People's Republic of China was inaugurated. In October 1949, Radio Peking announced that Tibet was a part of China and that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) would shortly march into Tibet to liberate Tibet from foreign imperialists. One year later, on 7th October 1950, some 35-50,000 troops of the PLA launched an attack centred on Chamdo, the regional capital of the Kham area of eastern Tibet. The tiny Tibetan army put up a brave resistance but was overwhelmed. After a pause, presumably to test world reaction, the PLA moved westwards to Lhasa where they assumed control. (1)

In the early years of their annexation of Tibet the communist authorities attempted to win over the Tibetans by persuasion and indoctrination, but when this failed and guerilla resistance continued they adopted more ruthless methods. In 1959, after an abortive uprising, the Dalai Lama fled to India and some 100,000 Tibetans followed as refugees. The atrocities subsequently committed by the Chinese on the Tibetans are now fairly well known.

As early as 1959 the International Commission of Jurists had concluded that Tibet was "at the very least a *de facto* independent state when the Seventeen-Point Agreement was signed [in 1951]. From 1913 to 1950 foreign relations were conducted exclusively by the government of Tibet and countries with whom Tibet had foreign relations are shown by official documents to have treated Tibet in practice as an independent state." The ICJ also found the communist Chinese guilty of genocide: "Genocide is the gravest crime known to the law of nations . . . It is submitted, with a full appreciation of the gravity of this accusation, that the evidence points at least to a *prime facie* case of genocide against the People's Republic of China. . . A summary of the rights denied to Tibetans points to a denial of almost everything that contributes to the dignity of man." (2) The ICJ report goes on: "The Tibetans were not allowed to participate in the cultural life of their own community, a culture which the Chinese have set out to destroy."

Tibet had made the grave mistake of not ensuring international recognition for itself, and if little was known about Tibet in 1959 even less was heard for the next twenty-eight years. The only news escaping from Tibet was filtered through the Chinese media. With the opening up of Tibet to tourism in the mid 1980s many thousands of ordinary travellers were able to understand what a handful of specialists had been claiming for years, namely, that Tibet and its culture had been virtually destroyed.

An *International Consultation on Tibet* meeting in London in July 1990 was uncompromising in its declaration, condemning China's colonial policy since the invasion in 1950, especially "the continuing violation of human rights including killings, torture and political imprisonment and practices amounting to cultural genocide." (3)

On May 23rd 1991 the US House of Representatives passed a resolution which concluded: "That it is the sense of Congress that Tibet, including those areas incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu and Qinghai, is an occupied country under the established principles of international law whose true representatives are the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile as recognized by the Tibetan people."

The Chinese, with a racial arrogance that is regrettable to say the least, have always considered the Tibetans to be 'barbarians' and backward. After more than forty years of rule from Peking, Tibetans inside Tibet are not only immeasurably backward in relation to other parts of China but are much more backward than their fellow-countrymen in India who have been free to receive education in their own tradition. This, alone, is a damning indictment of Chinese educational policy in Tibet.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The UNICEF Declaration of The Rights of the Child includes the following clause:

"The child is entitled to receive education which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture, and enable him on a basis

of equal opportunity to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society."

These conditions are certainly not currently being fulfilled in Tibet where a large proportion of children do not have access to education; where what education there is does not promote the child's native culture; and where equal opportunity does not exist for the Tibetan child.

The 1988 *General Survey of Tibet* (Peking) states that the TAR "may handle independent problems in education, science, culture, public health and physical culture in Tibet." This also is not being fulfilled: the syllabus is dictated from Peking; indigenous culture is not promoted; and what science is taught is available largely only through the medium of Chinese.

Access: Primary level: According to official Chinese figures, in 1986 there were just over 2,300 primary schools, 66 middle schools, 14 vocational schools and 3 institutions of higher education in the TAR. The principal problem for Tibetans is access to these educational institutions. Chinese statistics show that while in primary school Tibetans constitute 90% of the total number of students, in middle school Tibetans hold only 65% of the places, and in university and other institutions of higher education 66%. It follows from this that the children of Chinese immigrants, who officially constitute only 3.7% of the population of the TAR, hold 35% of the places a middle school and 34% of places in higher education.

Access: Secondary level: Tibetans, who must sit for middle school and university entrance exams in Chinese may appear at first sight to be marginally favoured in that they require 10% lower marks than their Chinese counterparts. But Tibetans are taking their exams in what is for them a *second language*; they come from schools where the quality of teachers is much lower than that enjoyed by Chinese children; and by all accounts the most decisive factor in securing a place at higher education is not qualifications alone, but *guanxi* (influence, contacts, use of relatives or friends). The system of *guanxi* is common throughout China. It was not found in Tibet. Since the decision-makers are Chinese it is obvious that Chinese parents can play the system with a success denied to Tibetans. What applies to opportunities for education applies equally to opportunities for jobs - the Chinese win every time. (4)

Children of Chinese government sponsored workers in Tibet are guaranteed places in good schools as 'compensation' for the 'hardship posting' to Tibet. Government cadres, both Tibetan and Chinese, can secure places for their children ahead of the average Tibetan irrespective of qualification. Tibetans report that the system of *guanxi* also results in the Chinese streams or the classes where Chinese pupils dominate having the best teachers.

'Chinese streams': In the middle schools, students must choose to study either in the Tibetan stream (*Ch:Zang su ban*) or in the Chinese stream (*Ch:Han zu ban*). Subjects are the same but for one important difference: in the Tibetan stream students study Tibetan and Chinese but not English; in the Chinese stream they study Chinese and English, but not Tibetan. English is an important component of the university entrance exam and is essential for science and technology-based subjects.

Access: Tertiary level: At Tibet University (in Lhasa) lower marks are required for admission than at any other university in the PRC. Ostensibly this may appear again to make some allowance for the low achievement of Tibetan students, but in practice what happens is that less qualified Chinese students who are not resident in the TAR apply to study at the Tibet University and thus reduce the places available for Tibetans.

Overseas education: In contrast to the many thousands of Chinese students who are sent abroad to study each year, fewer than half a dozen Tibetan students all told have been granted this privilege.

Statistics for TAR, 1986

	Total no. of students	No. of Tibetan students
Primary level:	121,000	109,000 (90%)
Middle/Secondary:	21,950	14,200 (65%)
Vocational:	3,060	2,130 (70%)
Tertiary level:	2,860	1,900 (66%)

Source: Jing Wei (Ch 2, Section 27, pp42-43)

Before going on to examine the current state of education in Tibet it is worth considering the system that was in place before the Chinese invasion.

THE PAST

According to Hugh Richardson, for nine years Head of the British Mission in Lhasa (he remained until the Chinese invasion in 1950) "*the ability to read and write is fairly widespread*". Tibet has an extraordinarily rich literature and the famous three monastic universities of Drepung, Sera and Ganden produced scholars who could match those of any university in the world. This was before the Chinese invasion. The same could not be said now.

Before 1950 education in Tibet occurred largely in the thousands of monasteries where monks taught reading and writing and the memorizing of scriptures; this was available even to the children of nomads and peasant farmers if they wanted it, but in many cases they were reluctant that their children should give up time for what conferred little or no benefit. Secular schools existed in towns, and private tutoring could occur anywhere in exchange for a small fee (food, clothing material, for example). In the late 1940s the number of lay-schools in Lhasa varied between ten and thirteen. Education was also available for girls, though most girls left at around the age of 12. The Narong Shar school (near the Jokhang) for instance had about 200 pupils, about thirty being the children of the well-to-do, about fifty being their servants, and about 120 coming from the merchant or artisan class. Teachers were highly respected and the main incentive to become a teacher was the high respect and honour it conferred. The regime was tough, school continuing for seven days a week (except for holidays on the 15th and 30th of each month, and three weeks holiday at the New Year); tests were held twice a month (before the holidays of 15th and 30th) and there was an annual examination before the New Year. Discipline was strict; a pupil monitor would hover at the back of a class to catch inattentive pupils (I saw this method still in practice in the refugee schools in Darjeeling in the 1960s) and parents authorized the teacher to administer punishment. This was taken in good spirit, for Tibetan children are hardy.

British Influence: At the suggestion of Sir Charles Bell, four Tibetan boys, destined for Government Service, were sent to Rugby, a famous British boarding school; in 1923 an English School was established by Frank Ludlow at Gyantse, but closed after two years because of opposition from conservative monks. After 1933 (death of 13th Dalai Lama) the children of well-to-do Tibetans were sent for western-style education to schools like St. Joseph's or Mount Hermon in Darjeeling and quite large numbers of Tibetan children continued at these schools in the late '50s and early '60s. The benefits of this sort of schooling were so obvious that the Tibetan Government sanctioned the setting up of an English School in Lhasa in 1944, but its close was unfortunately speedily brought about by monastic conservatism again – in this case by the Abbot of Drepung – because it was feared that the school would pose a threat to the religious views of its pupils. A popular verse of the day reflects monastic opinion:

*"In the holy place of Lhasa
is that unholy English school"*.

Post-Chinese Invasion: The Chinese established some schools in 1952 and Tibetan teachers at that time were still well qualified (lay or monk government officials); by 1953 they had set up Socialist Schools, with Tibetan and Chinese teachers: Chinese language and literature were introduced and there was a lot of singing of propaganda songs and weekly political lectures. By 1954/55 the regime had become more harsh.

1955-80: Education during this period was a shambles; children of school age during this period constitute the lost generations. Richardson in his *History of Tibet* refers to the immense literature of Tibet and the tragedy of seeing Tibetan civilisation dying "*so long established, so literate and so polished.*" (5) Tibetan civilisation didn't interest the Chinese and they set out to eradicate Tibetan culture and language and to replace it with Chinese culture and history by forced indoctrination, propaganda, and the enforced transfer of large numbers of Tibetan children to schools in China.

Tibet had over 6,000 monasteries before 1950 and records were kept very efficiently by the government in Lhasa. By the end of the Cultural Revolution all except 13 of these had been destroyed. Since the monasteries functioned as schools and the monks were a significant proportion of the teachers, the effect of this on Tibetan education can be imagined. It is questionable whether it has yet recovered to the position it had reached before 1950. After the abortive uprising of 1959 the great monastic universities of Drepung, Sera and Ganden were closed [Tibetan exiles recreated them in India]. Twenty-six years were to pass before the Chinese replaced these three monastic universities with even one secular university, for the University

of Tibet was not founded until 1985, thirty-five years after the Chinese takeover.

1980 Report of Dalai Lama's Third (Educational) Delegation to Tibet: The report, by Mrs. Pema Gyalpo, (Director of TCV, Dharamsala) is depressing reading. Despite fantastic Chinese claims that the number of schools had increased 300-fold, she was "shocked by the pitifully lower standard" of education, which in her view had "declined into a shameful and pitiful state". Frequently obstructions were put in the way of her visiting schools, and frequently schools were closed, used for other purposes, or flagrantly specially set up for her visit. Nevertheless she was able to visit 85 schools. 16 of these taught no Tibetan at all; 8 taught Tibetan only after primary level. A majority of pupils and teachers were Chinese: i.e. of the 39,844 students in these schools, only 17,660 (40%) were Tibetan. Of the 2,979 teachers, only 1,024 (30%) were Tibetan. By 1979 China had sent 55,000 students abroad for higher/specialist education; not one of these was Tibetan. In 1982, there were 8,000 Chinese students receiving higher education in the USA (including 8 from Inner Mongolia) but not one Tibetan had been sent for higher education anywhere in the West (i.e. for training as scientists, technicians, or managerial positions). Of 600 students from the TAR sent for higher education within China, only 60 were Tibetans. (The situation in Kham and Amdo, eastern provinces inhabited by Tibetans but already under Chinese control in 1950, is said to be worse.)

The Chinese authorities were unable to produce a single Tibetan graduate for the Third Delegation in 1980; in the same year TCV in Dharamsala sent 17 students to Indian universities. In 1982, 60 Tibetan students from refugee settlements in India were sent to USA for higher training, and several times that number to other western countries. The inequality of opportunity for higher education within Tibet is obvious; as is the enormous disparity between educational opportunities for Tibetans in Tibet as compared with opportunities for Tibetans in India. (6)

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

A magazine published in the TAR in Tibetan (*Bod-jong Lob-so*) which appears to give the party line is scathing in its criticism of the standard of educational provision in Tibet:

"In Tibet, the standard of education in primary and middle schools is poor; and that at the higher level can best be described by the proverb: 'You must eat, even if there is nothing to eat' . . . Due to the bad influence of corrupt ideology, education . . . has long been neglected."

The same article points out that of the 2,450 primary schools only 451 had been established by the government: the remainder were run by local people and were "neither well-established nor well run". The article states that only 45% of children of school-going age actually attend primary school (8); and only 10.96% go on to attend middle school (9): "In short, 55% of children of school-going age have no educational facilities whatsoever, and 89.04% of children attending primary school have no opportunity to go on to middle school. We are surprised and alarmed by these statistics". The article expresses concern for Tibet's future economic development because of the lack of adequately educated people: "People will be surprised to find that an increasing number of Tibetans are ignorant of science. It will be increasingly difficult to find appropriately educated Tibetans to work in economic development and construction, and in scientific and medical fields . . . A heavy 'leftist' influence has obstructed educational reform, and the establishment of government schools has been neglected . . . More serious than this, the importance of education is still not given due recognition." (*Bod-jong Lob-so*)

NOMADIC EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

With a vast territory and sparse population Tibet has poor communications and weak educational infrastructure. A large proportion of Tibetans are nomads and consequently scattered and mobile: "The worst defects of the educational system in Tibet are seen in the agricultural and nomadic areas. Research conducted in this field found that 60% of the Tibetan population is illiterate or semi-literate . . . Even today, up to 90% of the children of farmers and nomads do not have the opportunity to study beyond higher-primary level . . . This has a direct bearing on productivity and economic development." (*Bod-jong Lob-so*)

PRIMARY LEVEL:

Tibetan children are educated separately from the children of Chinese officials and immigrants. The quality of teachers in the Chinese schools is much higher than that of the teachers in Tibetan schools and

consequently Chinese children make faster progress. Tibetan children are considered 'stupid' and 'backward' but in reality they are deprived of an equal opportunity. An exception to the segregation outlined above are the children of Tibetan officials who go to school with the Chinese children. These children, like their parents, invariably speak and write Chinese better than they speak and write their own language. Since all school qualifying exams are in Chinese, Chinese speakers have an obvious advantage. Since jobs also go with the ability to speak Chinese there is a positive dis-incentive to learn Tibetan. Reporting on the sinicization that is being pursued inside Tibet with greater vigour than ever, Sherab Gyatso (Project Director of the Education Development and Resource Centre in Dharamsala) claims: *"Except in a few big towns and monasteries, the language is increasingly being corrupted and replaced by Chinese. The situation is especially pathetic in eastern and south-eastern Tibet [i.e. Amdo and Kham, the Tibetan provinces bordering China] where a majority of Tibetans now communicate in Chinese, even at home . . . It is said that local Tibetans in such areas have to go on horseback for days to locate somebody who can read and translate letters in Tibetan for them."* (Tibetan Review, September 1993)

Wherever you go in Tibet and at whatever time of year, large numbers of children of school-going age can be seen working in the fields or as herders or gatherers of yak-dung fuel. Enquiry reveals that there is no school for them to attend. Tibetan parents are keen for their children to do well and in the towns you can find parent-teacher meetings eagerly attended. But for many such opportunities do not exist.

Where state-run schools exist the Chinese lay down what is studied and pay salaries. The text-books are produced in Peking – even the ones in Tibetan. It was not until 1979 that school text books began to be translated into Tibetan for use at primary level. Books are free in state-run schools and since the 1984 Law on Regional Autonomy for National Minorities children pay no fees. This is not the case, of course, at the schools set up by parents. Also since 1984 much of the unpopular Chinese propaganda has been toned down and there is greater emphasis on the Tibetan language. But the history is, of course, still completely China-centred and references to Tibetan culture and history are dismissive. Moreover, the ascendancy of Chinese remains unquestioned: *"In upper levels of elementary schools and in Middle schools, Chinese language curriculum should be instituted to spread the common language used by the entire nation"* (Beijing Review, Dec. 7-13, 1987)

Classes are large and may contain from 40 to 60 children. The literacy rate for Tibet in 1986 was given officially as 31.8% just over half the rate of the next lowest literacy rate for any province in China: 68.2% of Tibetans are therefore illiterate.

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Between 5% and 10% of Tibetan children continue their education beyond primary level, depending on which statistics you accept. Here the going is even harder for Tibetan children for the medium of instruction is Chinese in all subjects except Tibetan itself: *"Except for the Tibetan language classes, all courses are taught mainly in Chinese in Middle and High schools."* (Beijing Review, Dec. 7-13, 1987)

The important subjects of Science, Maths and English are invariably taught entirely in Chinese, and mostly by Chinese teachers. According to official statistics, of 1,700 teachers working in secondary schools in the TAR in 1986, only 37.8% were Tibetan.

Because of the language difficulties (Tibetan children must learn specialised vocabularies before they can make any progress) Tibetans and Chinese are segregated; Tibetan classes drop behind and may not finish the syllabus required for the exam (in Chinese) at the end of the course. Of the 5-10% of Tibetan children who start a secondary course, only one third complete it. The majority of Tibetan children (i.e. those who are not privileged sons or daughters of Party officials) are not permitted to study English. Instead they must learn Chinese, with Tibetan as their second language. (Chinese pupils of course have English as their second language). In effect, this prevents Tibetan students from applying to study at the better universities in China; it makes it impossible for them to study science subjects at university; and it further handicaps their job prospects in relation to Chinese students.

It is worth quoting here the words of the late Panchen Lama, long thought to be a stooge of his Chinese masters. In a passionate and courageous speech on the 28th March 1987, he addressed the Sub-Committee of the National People's Congress in Beijing. Among other things he said: *"A few schools have been established in Tibet. But the quality of education in these schools is very poor . . . Now consider the educational disparity between the Tibetan and Chinese students. Whereas the Chinese students must get an*

aggregate of 250 points to pass their examinations, the Tibetans need to earn only 100 points. But the number of Chinese students passing the examination is much higher than that of Tibetans. This is because of the language barrier suffered by Tibetans. I have personally experienced this. Although I can speak Chinese, I frequently made big mistakes. This is because Chinese is not my mother tongue. I can never hope to compete with the Chinese as far as the Chinese language is concerned . . . I think it is very important for people of every nationality to learn and use their own language. The Central Government has frequently talked about the importance of learning and using the Tibetan language in Tibet. But it has done nothing to ensure its implementation . . . Last year, when I went abroad for a visit, I could not find anyone capable of translating between Tibetan and English. Therefore I had to use a Chinese translator and speak in Chinese. This must have given a very poor impression to the outsiders. This fact proves how poor is the standard of education in Tibet.

"In the whole of the Tibet Autonomous Region, no one has been able to translate Physics books into Tibetan. What are the authorities in TAR doing? Ninety-five per cent of Tibetans do not speak or understand Chinese."

TERTIARY LEVEL

The University of Tibet in Lhasa was set up in 1985, twenty-six years after the three great monastic universities had been destroyed. To what extent it may seriously deserve the title of university is debatable. The entry qualifications for the few Tibetans who get anywhere near qualifying is 10% fewer marks than Chinese students (180 points instead of 200): this is intended to compensate for the difficulty of qualifying in Chinese which for Tibetans is at best a second language. In practice, as mentioned earlier, the system of *guanxi* ensures that most places go to Chinese students, whether from the TAR or from China proper. Moreover, since most of the courses are entirely in the medium of Chinese, Tibetans are at a permanent disadvantage.

The result is that Tibetans are generally encouraged to go in for those areas of study in which the Chinese are not interested, namely, Tibetan studies and Tibetan medicine. If the aim of a true education is to foster a love of truth it must be questioned whether even these tertiary courses for Tibetans qualify since too often the study of Tibetan culture and history is hampered by the need to adhere to the accepted Chinese view of Tibetan history.

At Tibet University only 44% of the students are Tibetan: 56% are Chinese, although as mentioned before, Chinese officially constitute only 3.8% of the population. Only 27.3% of university teachers in the TAR are Tibetan according to the *Chinese Statistical Year Book* (1986).

With generous funding from the British Council and much expensive new equipment an English Language Faculty was set up with the aim of training Tibetans to teach English. The accounts by the various expatriate English teachers who have tried to help run the courses make depressing reading: inertia, bureaucracy, and a rapid turn-over of staff (in 1987 there were three Heads of Department) who could not be bothered to learn to use the equipment made for little progress. The one Tibetan teacher had to teach English through the medium of Chinese since this is the medium of instruction and the language in which English text-books are written.

The figures for the intake of the English department between 1988 and 1991 are as follows:

Year of Graduation	No. of Chinese Students	No. of Tibetan Students	No. of 1/2 Tibetan, 1/2 Chinese Students
1988	12 (74%)	2 (13%)	2 (13%)
1989	0	20 (83%)	4 (17%)
1990	11 (52%)	8 (38%)	2 (10%)
1991	33 (82%)	7 (18%)	0
Totals:	56	37	8

THE POLICY OF SINICIZATION

"In the whole of this newly-administered territory, the Chinese were trying to force their nationality on the people. Everyone was obliged to adopt a Chinese name . . . It was hoped that, by using these names and the Chinese language in the courts and in official business generally, Tibetan would gradually be

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supplanted by Chinese. Chinese place-names were also substituted for the Tibetan names. . .
Col. F. M. Bailey, British Political Officer who travelled widely in Tibet, writing of Chinese policy in eastern Tibet in 1911.

The deliberate – even fanatical – policy of sinicization which Bailey noted in 1911 has not changed. There is an assumption on the part of the Chinese that theirs is a superior civilization. All place names in Tibet have been sinicized so that they are often unrecognizable. In the TAR, at post offices, banks, in stores and wherever official business is transacted, Tibetan is of no use: it will not even be understood by the people who attend to you who will speak only in Chinese. Native Chinese speakers consider it beneath their dignity to learn the language of 'barbarians': thus, Professor E. L. Luttwak who visited Tibet in 1987 noted that Chinese officials who had been in Tibet since 1960 did not even know how to say 'please' and 'thank you' in Tibetan. (10) Professor Luttwak noted: "*Unlike the British in India . . . the Chinese can obviously see no virtue in the survival of local cultures and still less in the survival of local religion. Chinese colonialism is therefore oppressive not merely politically, but culturally. Thus, in Tibet it was clear that the literacy promoted by the regime was in Chinese and not in Tibetan. In the surprisingly large number of books we found in Lhasa, all the books were in Chinese, except for the Little Red Book of Mao's select quotations.*"

A year later, the writer of this chapter counted 408 different magazines for sale in Chinese in Lhasa's second book-shop; there was one magazine in Tibetan. A break-down of the categories revealed the largest proportion of Chinese magazines to be of the 'girlie' variety, followed by fantasy/adventure, sport and current affairs. The solitary magazine in Tibetan was religious and cultural in content. There was no popular reading in Tibetan.

The monasteries and nunneries of Tibet have traditionally been the great centres of learning and the custodians of Tibet's culture which is essentially a religious, Buddhist culture. All religious institutions in Tibet are closely controlled by the Chinese who have a special department to oversee and control religious activity. Tourists may see a few monks in monasteries now, but the transmission of *dharma*, the teachings of Buddhism, are severely limited. A very small number of monasteries are now being restored but it needs to be remembered that the Chinese destroyed over 6,000 monasteries in Tibet – almost all, in other words. Tibet's oldest building and therefore a cultural artefact of great significance to Tibetans, the 7th century Yumbulagang, was also destroyed though a replica was reconstructed in 1982. Every *dzong* or administrative centre in Tibet with the sole exception of the one at Gyantse was razed to the ground, as was the chief medical college on Chakpori (hill) opposite the Potala in Lhasa. It is hard to comprehend the scale of deliberate cultural destruction in Tibet.

PARTY CONTROL IN SCHOOLS

It might be hoped that Chinese policy towards Tibetan culture and education might have relaxed. Unfortunately the contrary is the case. As China has become increasingly worried at the sympathy Tibetans are gaining world-wide it has stepped up its determination to indoctrinate its own party line. Party leaders in Tibet began a drive to increase political control and control over the content of education at a meeting in Lhasa on July 19th, 1990. According to an announcement on local television: "*If socialism does not dominate schools, capitalism is bound to dominate schools,*" said Damzin, Deputy Secretary of the local Party Committee, who chaired the two-day meeting." The meeting called for Party organization in schools to be improved and said that the leading figures in Tibetan schools should be "*firmly held by those loyal to Marxism*". Top appointments in schools should go to cadres who are "*politically reliable and . . . who resolutely oppose splitism*." It should be mentioned here that all schools and all classes at university level contain informers whose job it is to report to the Party authorities any student or teacher who deviates from the Party line or hints at an interpretation of Tibetan affairs which is contrary to the official Party line.

In the same TV programme, Damzin said that a top priority was to teach students the correct version of Chinese Marxism, and to increase ideological and political education. It is "*the school's fundamental task to train builders and successors of the Socialist cause,*" said the Deputy Secretary. He also called for the formation of "*backbone work contingents*" – groups of political Party workers and teachers who are engaged in moral education in schools: the function of these groups was not made clear in the announcement.

The local Party Secretary, Hu Jintao, attended the meeting on 21st July and supported the call for increased Party control or 'leadership' in schools. In an unusually open comment he appeared to indicate that Party control even in schools depends on the use of repressive security and police work.

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According to the television report, published by the BBC Monitoring Service in the Summary of World Broadcasts on 1st August, Hu told the cadres "to improve the quality of education and . . . at the same time, he asked Party and government officials at all levels not to hesitate when making arrests or exerting control, and to basically pay attention and lend support to educational causes."

Local representatives at the meeting called for opposition to 'bourgeois liberalisation' in schools and for colleges to "strengthen education in Marxist doctrines on matters relating to ethnic minorities and religion." The report added that "Colleges are important places where both foreign and hostile forces fight to win the hearts and minds of China's youth" and therefore colleges must unswervingly accept the Party's leadership.

Private investment and Marxist Ideology

The drive to impose tighter ideological content in education stems from directives issued from Beijing as part of the reaction to the 1989 Democracy Movement in China. If implemented in Tibet it could create difficulties for those agencies and individuals (especially expatriate Tibetans) who currently invest large amounts of money in private educational projects in Tibet.

The conference report included an implicit reference to this sort of aid when one local delegate was described as calling for more privately-run schools and vocational colleges to be developed. The Chinese now are eager to attract foreign finance to support rural education in Tibet which is currently dramatically under-resourced. But there may be ideological difficulties in reconciling such schemes with the resistance foreigners and expatriate Tibetans feel towards political indoctrination.

Current private educational projects in Tibet include a village school near Lhasa, initiated by Sonam Jamyangling, a Tibetan living in Sweden; and a major project involving the setting up of clinics, schools and a university in Kham (eastern Tibet), initiated by Akong Rinpoche, a Tibetan lama based in Scotland.

REPRESSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who had reason to know the nature of brutal repression, denounced the Chinese authorities in Tibet as "more brutal and inhumane than any other communist regime in the world". Jonathan Mirsky, one of the leading reporters on China (currently for *The Times*) has said "China is the worst place to be a human being that I have ever been". (11) Arbitrary arrests, imprisonment without trial, degrading torture and extra-judicial executions are regularly reported from Tibet by Amnesty International, Asia Watch, TIN and other concerned bodies. Teachers, students, monks and nuns are among those most frequently targeted by the security forces.

Amnesty International published a report, *PRC: Repression in Tibet 1987-1992*, in which it details a number of long-term political prisoners subjected to "degrading and inhuman treatment". Among other prisoners of conscience are a number of minors (children under 18), all nuns. AI states that "At least 200 civilians were killed by security forces in successive incidents, including violent riots, between 1987 and 1990 . . . The Government of the PRC has never permitted Amnesty International to conduct research in Tibet . . . and many letters have remained unanswered". Among Amnesty's Appeal Cases were the following:

Yulo Dawa Tsering, a 56-year old monk and teacher, sentenced to 10 years imprisonment on 19th January 1989 for speaking to an Italian tourist and expressing support for the Dalai Lama. Yulo Dawa Tsering had previously been imprisoned 'for life' in 1959, for taking part in the Tibetan uprising. He was released in 1979, after serving 20 years.

Jampel Changchub, Buddhist monk from Drepung monastery, sentenced at a mass rally, on 30th November 1991 to 19 years imprisonment for possessing 'reactionary literature': this included a Tibetan translation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Dorje Wangdu, a 33-year old radio mechanic, sentenced to 3 years in a labour camp for suggesting that his friends should wear Tibetan clothes on a Chinese national holiday; also for possessing a 'reactionary poster'. The Lhasa Municipal order which condemned him without trial on 26th September 1991 does not explain which was illegal about his activity.

Dawa Kyizom, a 20-year old secondary school student in Lhasa, sentenced without trial or opportunity for defence to a 3-year term of 're-education through labour' for giving a Tibetan nationalist flag to a Buddhist monk.

Dawa Dolma, a 23-year old middle-school teacher in Lhasa was detained for supposedly writing reactionary songs and urging her pupils to read them. Although released temporarily to take care of her one-year old child, in February 1992 it was reported that she had been imprisoned again and sentenced to 5 years.

Jigme Zangpo, a Tibetan primary school teacher, currently serving a 19-year sentence in prison for shouting out pro-independence slogans: he received an additional 8 years for shouting slogans while in jail. Jigme Zangpo comes from Gyantse. In 1959 he received a 15-year jail sentence for allegedly "*corrupting the minds of children with counter-revolutionary ideas*". As a teacher at Number One Primary School in Lhasa he had failed to report to the authorities a child who had written 'Down with Chairman Mao' on the wall of the school toilets. After his release, he received a second 15-year sentence for shouting slogans criticising Deng Xiaoping, and another 4 years while in jail for shouting independence slogans. If he completes his present sentence he will have spent a total of 42 years in jail for peacefully protesting Tibet's rights. If he shouts no more slogans he will be due for release in 2010 when he will be 81.

Lobsang Yonten, a 64-year old monk and teacher, originally arrested in 1960 after the Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule. He served 26 years in jail before release in 1986. He survived by giving private classes in Tibetan but was arrested again on 13th May 1993 for allegedly having "*stolen state secrets and being engaged in separatist activities*". This usually means that he was going to hand over to a foreigner a list of Tibetans in prison.

Tenzin Dekyong, a 15-year old girl, among 25 Tibetans arrested in a pro-independence demonstration in Lhasa on 13th March 1993. She was a novice at the Michungri nunnery and has been taken to Gutsa prison, 4 kilometres east of Lhasa. Gutsa is notorious for the use of torture.

Migmar, a schoolboy who spent a year in prison after taking part in a demonstration was arrested on 6th March 1989 and released on 6th March 1990 but was told that he must not resume his schooling.

Lkakpa Tsering, a 14-year old boy attending Number One Middle School in Lhasa was detained by police on 4th November 1989 for forming a "*counter-revolutionary organisation*". Along with five other boys he was publicly accused by the authorities of making and distributing pro-independence leaflets. He was sentenced to 2 years in an adult prison (Drapchi), three kilometres north of Lhasa.

These are some examples from among many. Students and teachers are constantly under suspicion and surveillance. For example, students at the University of Tibet made preparations for a protest march on 30th May 1993. The students, who are from the Department of Higher Tibetan Studies had planned to march through Lhasa but were prevented from doing so by the university authorities who – although it was a Sunday – organised special classes for the day and then locked students and staff in the campus. In a political meeting in the afternoon, the students were told that if they joined, watched or discussed any demonstration they would be expelled.

TIBETAN EDUCATION IN EXILE (IN INDIA)

The achievements of the Tibetan refugee community in exile in India are immensely impressive and show what Tibetans can do when they can run their own affairs. Although the schools were founded to maintain cultural identity, they have incorporated advanced ideas and technology. They are modern and progressive. Teachers are dedicated and highly motivated. In 1984, the 84 Tibetan schools in India, Nepal and Bhutan were teaching 37,500 pupils, and there were 555 trained Tibetan teachers. The medium of instruction is English and the subjects taught are Tibetan, Hindi, English, Maths, Science, History and Geography. In addition Tibetan music and dance, arts and handicrafts are taught; and PT and sports are widely practised; competitions are entered for and prizes awarded. There is all-round care of the children with gardening plots available in many schools and dispensaries and regular health check-ups. In fact many Tibetan schools in India closely resemble English boarding schools.

In the 15 years ending in 1984, 757 Tibetans had been sent through university courses and of these 258 had gone on to do post-graduate work. (It should be remembered that the Chinese authorities in Tibet could not produce a single Tibetan graduate to the visiting Delegation in 1980). Nothing like this has been achieved

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inside Tibet, though there are sixty times as many Tibetans under Chinese control as there are in exile in India.

Apart from academic excellence, Tibetan schools in India also supply vocational training for things like *thangka* painting, wood carving, metal craft, carpet weaving etc.

Central Schools for Tibetans, Bir

This school is a major embarrassment for the Chinese government. It was started in 1986 to meet the needs of the large quantities of young Tibetan people still getting out of Tibet and specifically in search of the education that they cannot get in Tibet. Along with the TCV (Tibetan Children's Village, Dharamsala), this school contains in the region of 2000 students who have recently come from Tibet; the older ones (16-18+) go to Bir. Many of these have never attended school before: some of them do not even know how to hold a pen. Many want to learn English, Maths and Science – three important subjects from which, even if they had been to school in Tibet, an inadequate knowledge of Chinese would have excluded them. Crash courses are laid on to enable them to catch up and rejoin their correct age groups. Although conditions and facilities in the Bir school are squalid there is an immense sense of purpose and enthusiasm – a purpose and enthusiasm sadly lacking in schools in Tibet.

The Chinese authorities refused the offer of the Dalai Lama to send teachers to Tibet in 1980 to help raise standards; the result is that students who can are taking considerable risks to get the education they want in India.

CONCLUSIONS

The most striking difference to a person who visits schools in Tibet and schools for Tibetan refugees in India lies in the area of morale. Tibetan refugee schools in India are lively, bustling, cheerful places; relationships between teachers and pupils are very close; there is an air of happy competition and purpose. Schools in Tibet by contrast may be apathetic or tense, pervaded by an air of mistrust and fear that some casual expression may be reported to the authorities as seditious.

Schools in Tibet have an *apartheid* system, where children of Chinese parents sit separately from children of Tibetan parents, and this continues through university. Tibetan children are divided even amongst themselves, between those whose parents occupy privileged positions and who speak Chinese, and the majority who do not. In middle schools there are streamed Tibetan classes and Chinese classes, with the privileged Tibetan children joining the Chinese classes.

The Chinese control everything in Tibet, including the media, publications and education. They have not shown goodwill towards Tibetan culture but have tried to eradicate it ("*cultural genocide*" was the phrase used by the International Consultation on Tibet (London, 1990).

The Chinese regime is a classically colonial one in that it justifies its presence in Tibet on the grounds that Tibetans are too ignorant to run their own affairs while keeping the indigenous population perpetually at a disadvantage by limiting their educational opportunities.

Religious education which is very important to Tibetans is kept under strict control by the Chinese whose regime is avowedly atheist and has the stated intention of encouraging the demise of religion. Monks and nuns are persecuted and feature strongly among those imprisoned and tortured.

Opportunities for further education, and for the jobs that depend on further education, are minimal for Tibetans because of the examinations system which is in Chinese and because of the system of *guanxi* which is alien to Tibetans. The effect is a high level of unemployment among the Tibetan population (in contrast to the immigrant Chinese who have many perks and privileges for coming to Tibet, a 'hardship' area) leading in itself to demoralisation. The demoralisation of Tibetan youth is further encouraged by the availability of alcohol cheaper than anywhere else in China, drugs and gambling.

Important subjects for job prospects which include English, Maths, Science and Technology are denied to the majority of Tibetans because they are taught only in Chinese.

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Many Tibetan children (45.6% according to the *Beijing Review*, 1990) receive no education at all; 68.2% of Tibetans in Tibet are illiterate.

THE WAY FORWARD

If the situation in Tibet is to improve there need to be more Tibetan teachers with good qualifications in all subjects.

To achieve this it is essential that the Tibetan Language becomes the medium of instruction throughout the educational system, from primary school to university. Text-books in all subjects beyond primary level are urgently required. Tibetans should be allowed to choose English as their second language in place of Chinese if they wish.

Tibetan needs to become the official language, not just in the letter as it is at present, but in reality: it needs to be used as the language of administration and commerce; Chinese officials and administrators who work in Tibet should learn and use Tibetan, rather than expect Tibetans to use Chinese. Until this happens the system of education currently prevailing for Tibetans will continue the vicious cycle of deprivation and disadvantage.

John Billington, 23/12/93

Footnotes:

- (1) Estimates of the number of PLA troops vary. For a first-hand account, see *Captured in Tibet*, by Robert Ford, George Harrap & Cp, 1957
- (2) *Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic*, International Commission of Jurists, Geneva, 1960
- (3) *Tibet - An International Consultation*, published by International Alert, 379 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DE
- (4) The system of *guanxi* is attested to in countless interviews and is a major cause of discontent among Tibetans. See for example interviews conducted by TIN, May 25th, 1990.
- (5) *Tibet and its History*, by Hugh Richardson, Oxford, 1962
- (6) *Metok, Three months in Tibet*, by Mrs Pema Gyalpo, Winter 1980 (TCV, Dharamsala)
- (7) *Secular Education in Lhasa*, by Chendun Surkang Goldstein
- (8) The statistics here are confusing. *Beijing Review 1990* gives the percentage of children attending primary school as 54%. Whichever figure is accepted it is very low.
- (9) Here again figures do not match. According to the official Chinese census of 1982 (*Zhongguo 1982 Nian Rentrou Pucha Ziliao* [1985] 240)
- (10) Professor Lutwak . . . (article to be located)
- (11) Jonathan Mirsky in a talk at the Dartington Hall Literary Festival, 28.8.92

GENEVA SPEECH

As I try to speak on behalf of the 6 million Tibetans in Tibet who suffer human rights violations each and every day, to verbalise the cumulative suffering of 48 years of repression and inhumanity, to recount the stories of countless individuals who have lost their lives, their family, their friends, their human dignity - I find myself faced with an impossible task.

The sorrow experienced since the People's Republic of China invaded Tibetans' homeland in 1949 can never be adequately described. We resort to the technicalities of international legal discourse in an attempt to put these sufferings into words - we speak of States Parties' violations, of breaches of conventional obligations, of international legal duties - and sometimes we forget the hopeless sum of individual pain and desperation behind these terms.

Yes, the PRC as a States Party to several United Nations human rights conventions has breached countless duties, violated innumerable principles and broken international laws. It has also caused unspeakable human suffering on a massive scale, acted immorally, unethically and inhumanely.

We speak of a person being denied his or her fundamental rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion, deprived of his or her right to due process and humane prison conditions. This is how we might describe one case in the international arena. But how would an 18 year old nun, imprisoned for participating in a peaceful six-nun demonstration for Tibetan independence, interrogated at least once daily each and every day until her release six years later tell the same story?

During interrogation sessions I was made to hang from the ceiling for one hour or more with my hands tied behind my back. While in this position, I was rotated and beaten with twisted jute ropes. Electric wires - specially made for the purpose - were wrapped around my fingers and I was given electric shocks. This was the most painful. At the same time I was being kicked and burnt with cigarettes ... If we were caught reciting Buddhist texts we would be given electric shocks in the mouth with an electric baton, and when caught prostrating we were made to prostrate in water and ice ...

This is one glimpse of one individual's life in a Chinese prison in Tibet. There are currently 1018 Tibetan prisoners behind bars as a result of actions as harmless as possessing a picture of the Dalai Lama, of drawing the Tibetan national flag, of whispering "Free Tibet" loud enough to be overheard. Each and every one is living in fear and hopelessness and silence. They will have to wait perhaps five, perhaps ten, perhaps 18 years before they are released and maybe then they will ^{have} a chance to tell their stories if they reach a land where one has nothing to fear from speaking aloud. Eight stories will never be told - in 1996 eight Tibetans died from torture and ill-treatment at the hands of Chinese officials.

In 1960 the UN General Assembly was "gravely concerned: that the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people were being forcibly denied, in 1961 it "note[d] with deep anxiety the severe hardships which the suppression of the distinctive cultural and religious life of the Tibetan people has inflicted" and in 1965 it "solemnly renew[ed] its call for the cessation of all practices which deprive the Tibetan people of their human rights and fundamental freedoms".

From 1965, with the exception of one resolution by the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, the UN fell mute on the subject of Tibet. So what do these internationally endorsed words mean for the Tibetan people today?

In 1996 China's Strike Hard campaign was launched in Tibet against Tibetan "splittists". Targetting religious initiates, Chinese "workteams" have been sent in to Tibetan monasteries and nunneries to forcibly "re-educate" and, if unsuccessful, to arrest, expel and sometimes even kill. Expulsions now number some 1340, arrests number 110 and there have been two known deaths in relation to the "Patriotic Re-education" campaign. Linking religion with political dissidence, Chinese authorities vowed in November 1996 to launch a "Last Battle", sinisterly reminiscent of Hitler's "Final Solution", aimed at eradicating any vestiges of the Dalai Lama's influence from all levels of society.

As a result of Chinese policies of population transfer, there are today an estimated 7.5 million non-Tibetans in Tibet. The 6 million Tibetan are now a minority group in their own land and face substantial loss of opportunities in employment, housing, education and other social services.

The preservation of the Tibetan identity is simultaneously being destroyed. The Tibetan culture is a rich and ancient mix of distinct language, religious practices, spiritual beliefs, dress, music and literature, arts and architecture, history and folk lore, medical and political systems, environmental respect, festivals and social customs. Where the physical introduction of another race has the effect of marginalising the other, these cultural characteristics will be irretrievably lost.

This is perhaps the most critical and immediate threat that Tibetans face today . There is no word for this phenomenon taking place in Tibet - it encompasses the horror of the "Holocaust", the racial injustice of "Apartheid", the inhumanity of "ethnic cleansing" - but it has its own distinct sorrow and suffering. It is a genocide undoubtedly, but a genocide many times over - a racial, cultural and religious genocide. And, as such, it demands the immediate attention of the international community to prevent its continuance.

Tibet is one of the great humanitarian failures of the UN to date. There can be no adequate explanation for the yawning gap between the initial commitments of the UN Charter, commitments strongly and consensually confirmed in the 1993 Vienna

Declaration and the lack of action for the 32 years since the last General Assembly resolution.

In a world where matters of global trade and economic power speak much louder than human voices full of pain and despair, it is crucial that the voices of the international community be raised. To use their free voices to condemn the ongoing human rights violations in Tibet, importantly, to connect actions to those words and to take steps to restore the rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people. This is my request on behalf of the 6 million Tibetans who cannot effectively speak or act for themselves.