

Chinese Government's Blaming and Shaming Game: PART ONE

Since 10 March a series of massive demonstrations rocked all over Tibet¹. Beijing made several allegations. Beijing accused "the Dalai clique of masterminding" these demonstrations. Beijing said these demonstrations were "violent" and organised by "terrorists," and these demonstrations were aimed at "splitting Tibet from the motherland." Premier Wen Jiabao told the international media on 18 March 2008 that his government had "ample facts and plenty of evidence to prove that the recent riot in Lhasa was organised, premeditated, masterminded and incited by the Dalai Lama clique."

Official China claims that these demonstrations prove that His Holiness the Dalai Lama's advocacy of non-violence is just lip service. China says Dharamsala has become "the epicentre of lies," and "the government-in-exile has churned out groundless fabrication since the riot in Lhasa."

China claims that the appeals issued by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to our Chinese brothers and sisters are his attempt to "stir up more unrest in Tibet." The Chinese authorities said on 9 April that "the Dalai Clique's statements also attempted to stir up hostility between ethnic groups in Tibet and internationalize the so-called Tibet issue."

In fact the war of words is so intense from the Chinese side that they have already published a book called *Lies and Truth*. The lies are all on the Tibetan side and the truth is with Beijing. The book was launched on 4 April in Beijing by Sanlian, a unit of the China Publishing Group. The publishers claim the publication of *Lies and Truth* is the fastest ever in publishing history. The book was commissioned on 27 March and published on 3 April. The publisher of Sanlian, Zhang Weimin told China's CCTV that "We had to frame a response to demonstrate our position. We worked to show the true state of things to those unaware of the truth, and to rebut the axe-grinding, misleading reports of the western media."

The book consists of previously published articles. It regurgitates all the official allegations of Beijing that the "Dalai clique" is behind the current unrest in Tibet. *Lies and Truth* is an attempt to refute "the distortions" of the western media in its reporting of the current problems in Tibet. The book contains a large section in which all the "major achievements in economic, cultural and social development" in Tibet are explained.

Ultimately *Lies and Truth* is aimed at the Chinese people. The sweep of the western media and the breadth of its coverage of China's Tibet headache has shaken the Chinese people's faith in their own government and its handling of the Tibet issue. This has forced Beijing to make an attempt, however feeble, to explain its actions and policies to its own people.

¹*The term TIBET here means the whole of Tibet known as Cholka-Sum (U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo). It includes the present-day Chinese administrative areas of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region, Qinghai Province, two Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures and one Tibetan Autonomous County in Sichuan Province, one Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and one Tibetan Autonomous County in Gansu Province and one Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province.*

Who Is Behind the Unrest in Tibet?

The Chinese government's ongoing accusation that His Holiness the Dalai Lama organised the recent unrest in Tibet is nothing new. Ever since the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the Chinese leaders developed a rich and well-known tradition of blaming others for the disastrous consequences of their wrong policies. In a democratic society wrong policies can always be checked and corrected by the ballot box. In China, because of the Chinese Communist Party's monopoly of political power, this is not possible. In order to maintain a semblance of legitimacy, the leaders of the

day always find a scapegoat. Not being able to find a scapegoat is to admit your policies. Lord Action once commented on the "undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on the wrong." It comes as no surprise that the Chinese Communist Party believes, as Jasper Becker says, its control over the past is the key to its future" and on its ability to cover-up mistakes, however big, depends its survival.

Take the case of the greatest famine in China that took place between 1958 and 1961. About 30 million Chinese died of starvation during this period. At the time not a word of this man-made disaster was heard in the rest of the world. This disaster was brought about by Mao's Three Red Flags, a policy of transforming the whole organisational set-up into a military-like institution that functions with a sense of war-like urgency to attain unrealistic industrial and agricultural growth, so that China could march directly from a primarily agricultural-based to a full-fledged Communist and industrial society. Faced with unprecedented severe criticism from the ranks of his own leadership, Mao blamed the weather. He explained away the deaths of 30 million human beings by finger-pointing. The weather in China was fine but not Mao's policies. Until recently, the world was no wiser.

In 1962, the 10th Panchen Lama submitted a 70,000 character petition to the top Chinese leaders, including Mao. In this document, the Panchen Lama described the real situation prevailing in each and every part of Tibet. The Panchen Lama said that if the situation was not improved it would lead to the eradication of Tibetan Buddhism and culture and to the elimination of the Tibetans as a distinct nationality. Instead of respecting this courageous act and listening to the Panchen Lama's well-intentioned criticism, Mao condemned him as a "reactionary feudal overlord" and his petition as "a poisoned arrow shot at the Party." The Panchen Lama spent 14 years in solitary confinement and house arrest.

To regain his leadership role, damaged badly by his Great Leap Forward and Hundred Flowers campaign, Mao in 1966 unleashed the horror of the Cultural Revolution on the Chinese people. By 1976, the top and middle ranks of the Chinese leadership were decimated and the country was in chaos. Who was blamed for this mess? Not Mao, but the Gang of Four, which included his wife. Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, during her trials, said, "I was Chairman Mao's dog. Whoever he told me to bite, I bit." Mao, as usual, went unscathed. On the contrary, Deng Xiaoping, who assumed supreme power after Mao passed away in 1976, said that Mao was 70 percent good and 30 percent bad, despite the fact that he himself was a prime victim of the campaign and his son was crippled because of the violence.

The question is, if the Chinese government is able to hide crimes of such enormity from their own people and the world, how much more capable will they be to cover up their mistakes and the suffering these mistakes cause the people of Tibet?

In 1987, 1988 and 1989, Lhasa was rocked by a series of demonstrations. These demonstrations were brutally crushed and martial law was imposed in Lhasa in 1989. Once again the Chinese authorities pointed their accusing fingers at His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Similarly, China blamed the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement on "a few reactionaries." This event was the most momentous in modern China's troubled history. What began as a peaceful memorial demonstration following the death of the popular reform leader Hu Yaobang turned into a massive pro-democracy movement. This movement in the heart of Beijing was supported by an upsurge of protests in most Chinese cities. Troops of the People's Liberation Army fired upon the crowd and the city came under martial law. During the crisis a tearful Zhao Ziyang, premier then, met with the student leaders to end their protest. The students did not have any bad intention towards the Chinese Communist Party. They wanted an end to corruption and democracy, freedom and human rights. But a divided party leadership decided to meet their demands with violence. This ended the career of Zhao Ziyang. He was ousted from the post of the prime minister and was kept under tight house arrest. But the real victim of the brutal crackdown was the Chinese people who deserve so much more than their leaders are able to give

them in terms of respect, tolerance, human dignity and rights.

China is yet to give convincing accounts of the great famine from 1958 to 1961, nor of the horrors of the Cultural Revolution and its brutal suppression of the student protests in 1989. The Chinese people deserve an explanation for all this brutality.

The same is true of China's implacable application of brute force to end Tibet's current crisis. Neither blaming His Holiness the Dalai Lama nor using force as a means to resolve China's Tibet trouble is the correct way to handle the crisis. The seeds of the present crisis were sown when China reversed its relatively liberal policies implemented in Tibet.

The Third Tibet Work Forum and the Seeds of the Present Crisis

From July 20 to 23, 1994, Beijing staged the Third Forum on work in Tibet, which recommended the total destruction of an entire civilization flourishing on the Tibetan plateau for thousands of years.

The Third Forum on Tibet was convened by the top Chinese leadership and was presided over by the then President Jiang Zemin. The authorities have now enshrined this Work Forum as the most "important strategic policy to rejuvenate Tibet" and have hailed its directives as the new manifesto for party work on the plateau.

The significance of the Third Work Forum lies in the fact that it overturned the more liberal policies laid out for Tibet's "development" by the First and Second Work Forums held in 1980 and 1984. The first two work forums were initiated by the late Hu Yaobang, then Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party. This liberal leader is credited with masterminding a series of measures to improve the social, economic and political conditions in Tibet. The brief spell of liberalization markedly improved the living conditions of the majority of Tibetans and contributed to a more relaxed intellectual and social climate.

All these were reversed at the Third Work Forum. The Third Work Forum policy recommendations contained four key elements. China stepped up the scale of repression in Tibet. External propaganda work was escalated. The pace of economic development in Tibet and its corollary of encouraging more Chinese settlers and businessmen to take advantage of the economic boom on "the roof of the world" was also increased.

One main target of the current policy of repression is Tibetan Buddhism. Chinese leaders are increasingly alarmed by the proliferation of monasteries and temples which the period of liberalization spawned throughout Tibet: they are seen as the bastions of Tibetan nationalism. The authorities have set up "Democratic Management Committees" to control monasteries and nunneries and established "Work Inspection Teams" to supervise the "education" of monks and nuns.

What appalls the Tibetan people is China's all-out war on Tibetan culture. The leadership revived the old aphorisms once served up to the Tibetan people to justify their policies to destroy Tibetan Buddhism during the Cultural Revolution. Bewildered Tibetans were then told that just as there cannot be two suns in the sky, so there could not be both Buddhism and socialism in Tibet. Inevitably Buddhism had to give way to socialism. Today Buddhism is once again being blatantly sublimated to Chinese state power.

A major thrust is underway to break the bond of loyalty between the clergy in Tibet and His Holiness the Dalai Lama in India. Campaigns like "Strike Hard" and "Patriotic Re-education", unleashed in 1996, are aimed at crippling the rise of Tibetan Buddhism which the authorities suspect is weaning the loyalty of the Tibetan people away from the communist party and towards His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

One salient feature of the "Strike Hard" campaign is how differently it is interpreted in China and Tibet.

China's "Strike Hard" campaigns was started to weed out crime. Tibet's version was used as a political tool to eliminate those whom the authorities label "splittists". In Tibet, rather than combating crime, the authorities turn a blind eye to this social disease in the hope that it will erode the traditional morality of Tibetans and undermine Tibetan Buddhism.

In fact, at a secret meeting held in December 1999 in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, Chen Kuiyuan, the hardline Party Secretary of "TAR" recommended to the Central Chinese Government that an all-out effort must be made to eradicate Tibetan Buddhism and culture from the face of the earth so that no memory of them will be left in the minds of coming generations of Tibetans- except as museum pieces.

Chen Kuiyuan stated that the main cause of instability is the existence of the Dalai Lama and his Government-in-Exile in Dharamsala and these must be "uprooted". He recommended that Tibet, Tibetan people and Tibetan Buddhism - in other words the very name of Tibet- must be destroyed and the "Tibet Autonomous Region" be merged with provinces like Sichuan.

This total assault on Tibetan culture is heightened by comments made by the current party secretary in Tibet. Zhang Qingli said, "The communist party is like parents to the Tibetan people and are always considerate about what the children need. The party is the real Buddha for the Tibetans." On His Holiness the Dalai Lama Zhang Qingli said, "The Dalai is a devil with a human face but with a heart of a beast... Those who do not love their country are not qualified to be human beings." On the Tibetan struggle for greater freedoms, Zhang Qingli said, "We are currently in an intensely bloody and fiery struggle with the Dalai clique, a life-and-death struggle with the enemy."

What Tibetan, Chinese and Foreign Scholars Think of the Tibet Situation

That this hardline policy, and the abusive rhetoric accompanying it, has failed and disastrously so was made amply clear by the recent month-long demonstrations in Tibet. The top Chinese leaders have been informed that this hardline policy is wrong by no less a figure than Baba Phuntsok Wangyal, the founder of the Tibetan Communist Party, who played a key role in cementing Chinese Communist rule in Tibet. In his letter of 29 October 2004 addressed to President Hu Jintao, he said, "As far as how to solve the Tibetan issue is concerned, since the fundamental nature of the question is absolutely related with domestic matters, so under the premise regarding the sovereignty of the nation it is merely a demand for meaningful autonomy and slight changes in the administrative division policy. In addition, as to the essence and preconditions of this matter, every one of us can and should reach a common understanding. With this as a base, and after the Central Government and the Dalai Lama have reached a mutual understanding on the principles regarding national sovereignty, appropriate adjustments to the domestic administrative division policy and implementing the right to self-determination, both sides should officially declare in a political statement that friendly relations between them have been restored. Within such a friendly and harmonious environment, regarding the concrete formations, plans, and schedules for unifying the Tibetan autonomous regions- including temporarily establishing a transitional consultative department in order to assure the united autonomy of its fundamental content and destination being achieved - both sides should be strategic, far-sighted and generous, adhering to the brotherly relationship."

Wang Lixiong, a Beijing-based writer, reinforces Phuntsok Wangyal's argument. On 28 March 2008 his op-ed piece appeared on The Wall Street Journal. In this piece he says that China's current anti-splittism struggle is wrong. He says, "Having invested their careers in anti-splittism, these people cannot admit the idea is mistaken without losing face and, they fear, losing their own power and position as well."

Wang Lixiong says, "The most efficient route to peace in Tibet is through the Dalai Lama, whose return to Tibet would immediately alleviate a number of problems. Much of the current ill will, after

all, is the direct result of the Chinese government's verbal attacks on the Dalai Lama, who, for Tibetan monks, has an incomparably lofty status. To demand that monks denounce him is about as practical as asking that they vilify their own parents."

Wang Lixiong initiated the recent 12-point statement on Tibet by 30 Chinese intellectuals. In fact, since the statement was first issued, many more Chinese human rights and environmental activists, writers and scholars have signed up. The first point says. "At present the one-sided propaganda of the official Chinese media is having the effect of stirring up inter-ethnic animosity and aggravating an already tense situation. This is extremely detrimental to the long-term goal of safeguarding national unity. We call for this to be stopped."

The second point says, "We support the Dalai Lama's appeal for peace and hope that the ethnic conflict can be dealt with according to the principles of goodwill, peace and non-violence. We condemn any violent act against innocent people, strongly urge the Chinese government to stop the violent suppression and appeal to the Tibetan people likewise not to engage in violent activities." The statement urges the Chinese government to hold direct talks with His Holiness the Dalai Lama to resolve the issue.

Ruan Ming, a speechwriter for former CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang, has a different take on the tense situation in Tibet. Ruan Ming who lives in Taiwan told The Epoch Times on 26 March that "The Dalai Lama has always proposed a peaceful solution to Tibet issues and won the world's recognition. With that in mind, the CCP has framed the Dalai Lama for having 'carefully planned and stirred up the event.'" Ruan Ming added, "This is exactly how the CCP framed Zhao Ziyang for the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989 and accused Zhao of 'splitting the Party and supporting unrest.'" Ruan Ming added, "The Dalai Lama already said he would resign if the unrest continued. The Dalai Lama is influential globally and if he really retired, the CCP could greatly push and label the Tibetans as terrorists like the Xinjiang independence movement. This will give the CCP an excuse to ignore Tibetan appeals and further repress them."

On 27 March 2008, more than 70 Tibetologists sent an open letter to President Hu Jintao. In this letter, the scholars said, "As scholars engaged in Tibetan Studies, we are especially disturbed by what has been happening. The civilization we study is not simply a subject of academic enquiry; it is the heritage of a living people and one of the world's great cultural legacies...The attribution of the current unrest to the Dalai Lama represents a reluctance on the part of the Chinese government to acknowledge and engage with policy failures that are surely the true cause of popular discontent."