

Zhang Boshu: the way to resolve the Tibet issue

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Here is an assessment of the Tibet situation by Zhang Boshu (张博树) of the [CASS Philosophy Institute in Beijing](#), translated for CDT by a reader who wishes to remain anonymous:

Zhang was born in Beijing in 1955. He received an MA in economics from Zhongguo Renmin Daxue in 1982 and in 1985 passed the entrance examination for the Institute of Philosophy of the graduate school of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. His research has been on critical theory in continental Europe in modern western philosophy. He obtained MA and PhD degrees in philosophy in 1988 and 1991. He has held a post in the Philosophy Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences from 1991 to the present. In recent years he has striven to understand the lessons of success and failure in the history of the past century of China's democratic transition and institutional modernization. He has gradually settled upon criticism of 20th Century Chinese despotism as his main research topic.

Ever since March, the issue of Tibet and the Olympics have been stirred up together, drawing the attention of the entire world. Short sighted politicians in our own country have been pleased that their petty schemes to stir up nationalist sentiment have been so successful. This not only manipulates domestic opinion but also uses so-called "mainstream public opinion" to oppose the criticisms coming from international society. On the other hand, this serves to push for the consolidation of the situation in Tibet in the hope of getting through the Olympics peacefully. They did not realize that the Tibet issue has already become a major factor affecting China's future. Solving the Tibet issue will take courage and great wisdom. Petty scheming could ruin Tibet and ruin China.

How did the Tibet issue arise?

The Tibet issue is first of all a human rights issue.

Although the authorities are not willing to admit it, I want to say it plainly. This problem that plagues the leadership of the Communist Party, if we look at its origin, was created by the Chinese Communist Party itself as the ruler of China.

We don't have to look too far back in history. Whether in fact the relationship between the Tibet government and Beijing from the Yuan Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty was one of relatives or of equals is a matter of dispute among academics. For now, we don't need to pay any attention to controversy. What is most important is that from 1912 onwards, Tibet was for a long period in a de facto "state of independence". That situation continued until 1951 when the Tibet local government signed an agreement with the Beijing central government — the "Seventeen Point Agreement on the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet". The document was moderate and constructive. The agreement stressed that Tibet is part of China but also recognized that Tibet's current system would not change and that the Dalai Lama's position would not change. We can call that the earliest version of "One Country, Two Systems" in contemporary China.

In 1954, the 19 year-old Dalai Lama and 16-year old Panchen Lama both went to Beijing to take part in the First National People's Congress, attending as honored guests of Mao Zedong. They were appointed Vice Chair of the NPC and Vice Chair of the National People's Consultative Congress, respectively. Tibet's future seemed bright. Problems began to appear in 1955. Mao Zedong's utopian socialist social transformation began to accelerate that year.

Ripples spread from the Chinese interior to Changdu and the Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Yunnan, Qinghai, and Gansu Provinces. In these areas, which were not bound by the 17 Point Agreement, “democratic reform” broke out on a spectacular scale. Radical local Communist Party leaders sought to carry out “democratic reform” and “socialist transformation” simultaneously so as “to make spectacular progress in just one step”. They struck hard against the masters of the serfs and their “representatives”, confiscating the lands and property of monasteries and forcing collectivization, slandering the religious beliefs of Tibetan people, and forcing upper class people, lamas and monks to “reform their thinking”.

The result was that they stirred up dissatisfaction and resistance among the Tibetan people. During 1956 - 1958, armed conflicts in the Tibetan areas grew larger and larger in scale. When one died out another arose but were soon put down by campaigns by the PLA to put down rebellion and wipe out rebels. Tens of thousands of Kam and Amdo region Tibetans fled across the Jinsha River into Tibet. This sowed the seeds for the 1959 Lhasa “rebellion”. These historical circumstances led to the “rebellion” and indeed were a necessary condition for that event to occur.

There is no need to go into detail about what happened after that. The victorious “suppression of the rebellion” at Lhasa showed that the central government had achieved absolute control of all the Tibetan areas including Tibet itself. It also marked the rapid move of Tibet towards “socialism”. Chinese of my age grew up hearing songs like “The Red Sun is rising about the snowy mountains” and seeing movies like “Serfs”. In those days we really believed that under the leadership of the Communist Party “the serfs have been liberated” and were living happy lives. Later, after reading a lot of historical materials, I learned that there were many untruths in the propaganda.

The dictatorship system of the Communist Party, the arrogance and ignorance of leaders, and the extreme leftist policies pursued by them in the Tibetan areas brought terrible disasters to both the religious and lay people of Tibet. In 1962, the Panchen Lama, who was ranked as a “national leader,” wrote a letter to Premier Zhou Enlai expressing his deep sorrow at what he had seen and heard of the suffering of the Tibetan people. Since the Panchen Lama was certainly not opposed to the leadership of the Communist Party, and was loyally and faithfully reporting to the Party the actual situation in the Tibetan areas, this letter known as the “70,000 Character Document” can be seen as a document that accurately reflects the difficult situation of the Tibetan people during those years. I might as well quote from it here:

— On “class struggle” in the Tibetan areas: “In most or in many areas, the cadres didn’t care if the campaign was planned or carried out well. They were intent on making a spectacular display that would strike terror in people. They didn’t care if they attacked the right people. The objective was to do the campaign on a big scale and achieve numerical targets.” They attacked many people whom they shouldn’t have attacked. Often “those who were the objects of struggle meetings had not done anything particularly bad or committed serious errors. So they had to make up many false and serious accusations. They exaggerated at will, turning truth and falsehood upside down.” Many innocent people were forced to flee abroad against their will. Those who stayed behind lived in terror.

– On the lives of the people in the Tibetan areas: “Because of the rise in the agricultural areas of the five unhealthy tendencies [Tr. Note: post Great Leap Forward Party critique of GLF excesses — wu feng 五风 – 共产风、浮夸风、瞎指挥风、强迫命令风、特殊化 over-egalitarianism, the common practice of exaggeration, confused orders, too many compulsory orders, and special privileges] and excessively tight controls on grain, and the standards for the amount of grain the people could retain was set too low, a severe grain shortage resulted, ...and many households had no grain. In some areas some people even starved to death. Formerly Tibet was a dark and barbarous feudal society but there had never been a shortage

of grain like that, especially since Buddhism permeated the society, everyone rich and poor, had the custom of helping the poor and giving alms. People could easily support themselves as a beggar, so we never knew of anyone ever having starved to death.”

– Implementation of “dictatorship” resulted in the improper deaths of many prisoners: After the “suppression of the rebellion”, the proportion of prisoners in the Tibetan population reached several percent, something completely unprecedented. In 1959, Chairman Mao set forth a policy that since the population of Tibet was small, people shouldn’t be killed or at most only a few people should be killed. But in fact, just the opposite happened. Except for the somewhat better treatment of imprisoned members of the upper classes, most people who were locked up in prison endured very bad conditions. The prison wardens didn’t care about the lives or health of the prisoners. They often verbally abused and savagely beat prisoners. Moreover, wardens deliberately moved prisoners back and forth between very warm and cold places so that the prisoners could not adapt and their clothes were always unsuitable. Their clothes could not keep them warm, their mattresses were not waterproof, and the wind and rain entered their cells. They never got enough to eat, living in miserable conditions, yet they still had to get up early to do work. The hardest work was always given to these people. They became worn out physically, often came down with diseases. As a result of no rest and inadequate medical care, many prisoners died who should not have. [Tr. Note. Chinese text: 非正常之死.]

–On religion and nationalities issues: “Under the so-called ‘elimination of superstition’, the first priority was opposing religion. The second priority was destroying images of the Buddha, Buddhist scriptures, and stupas.” When they demanded that monks and nuns return to secular lives, “first in all the temples and monasteries, under the pretext of ‘study’ and ‘mobilization’, they brought all the monks and nuns together into a large hall or room, and made them study nervously day and night, forcing them to criticize each other in order to create a big wave of sharp struggles and attacks. People who openly express their belief in religion were given labels such as a superstitious element or someone who doesn’t like the revolution. They were constantly attacked without rhyme or reason. Even worse, in some places they made the lamas stand on one side and nuns and lay religious women stand on the other. They were then forced to choose each other in marriage. In Tibet, there were originally over 2500 temples. After ‘democratic reform’ there were only 70 left. Originally there were 110,000 monks and nuns. Ten thousand fled abroad, leaving 100,000 behind. After ‘democratic reform’ there were only 7000 monks and nuns left. What especially cannot be condoned is that in some areas there was deliberate desecration and insults to religion such as the Buddhist Canon used for compost. Many paintings of the Buddha and scriptures were used to make shoes or other objects. There is absolutely no reason for this. Because there were many insane things done that even a lunatic wouldn’t do, people in all classes of Tibetan society were deeply shaken. Their emotions were in chaos and they became exceedingly sad and shed tears. They said ‘Our land has been made into a dark place,’ quoting a Tibetan proverb that means ‘a place without religion’”.

Alas, when I read these characters, my own heart bleeds and my face burns.

Most of these problems also existed in the Chinese interior as well. But they were more serious in Tibet. They were more extreme and more widespread there. No matter how well-meaning or noble was the initial motivation of those in power was to use their social ideals to transform Tibetan society was, its shocking results are all crimes. These are crimes that resulted from ignorance, arrogance, rage and violence.

Under these circumstances, the over 100,000 Tibetans who fled to India and other foreign countries called upon the entire world to support the human rights of Tibetans. Therefore the Tibet issue became a symbolic issue for the entire world. What can be surprising about that?

Moreover, this was going on during the Cold War and so in the minds of western people, Tibet became a focal point in the game of competing national interests in which China, the Soviet Union, India, the United States and other countries were engaged.

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency did in fact provide funding, technical and other support to Tibetans in exile. That was part of the effort of the United States to contain the “spread of communism”. Chinese can of course curse the damn Americans for plotting to “split China” without revealing their real intentions. But on the other hand, if the Communist Party had not done so many stupid things in Tibet and forced Tibetans to flee into exile, what would other people have been able to say? What pretext could they have to butt in? I haven’t even mentioned the Cultural Revolution. That “historically unprecedented” “revolution,” because it was even redder and even further left, was even more extreme and more cruel. Of course it created even greater disasters for the Tibetan people. I won’t discuss them here.

Enlightened Communist Party Leaders Once Reflected on the “Leftist” Misfortunes that Brought Disaster to Tibet

Objectively speaking, there has been no shortage of enlightened people within the Chinese Communist Party leadership. At different times and in different positions they have opposed leftist work methods in Tibet. However, under these historical circumstances, they could achieve only limited results.

Xi Zhongxun, from northwestern China, was a Vice Premier and Secretary General of the State Council in the 1960s. He was responsible for contact with the Panchen Lama. He made a very complete report to the State Council about the how the “Seventy Thousand Character Document” came to be written by the Panchen and so was charged with “accommodating and not interfering with the Panchen. The Tenth session of the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party dismissed Xi Zhongxun and, in addition to the major crime of “using a novel to attack the Communist Party,” also charged him with “accommodating and not interfering with the Panchen.”

Another dismissed, high-level Communist Party official was Li Weihuan, who was an old communist who had been head of the United Front Department since 1947. During April and May 1962, at a Nationalities Work Conference held in Beijing, some of the nationalities religious figures offered some sharp criticisms. Li Weihuan remained calm and honestly said that he welcomed criticism from everyone. He praised the talk of the Tibetan Buddhist Lama Xijiashenzhi [romanization of Chinese name], saying that he was “open and above board, with “a heart as clear as a mirror” and stands as a symbol of “patriotism in the area of national minorities religious affairs”. Li Weihuan’s action was later severely criticized by Mao Zedong who said that “The United Front Department is neglecting the class struggle and is being capitulationist.” 2

After the end of the Cultural Revolution, many issues in Tibetan affairs were neglected. Nationalities policy and the relationship between the Han nationality and the Tibetan nationality needed to be adjusted and the lives of Tibetans needed to be improved. In May 1980, just after Hu Yaobang had become General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu and Wan Li flew to Tibet for an inspection visit. On the plane, Hu said to the accompanying Xinhua News Agency journalists: “In our policies in the national minority areas, we must always seek truth from facts, and adjust measures to suit local conditions so as to fully respect the autonomy the Tibetans have to govern their minority area themselves. That is the crux of all the Tibet issues.” On May 29, in the work report that Hu Yaobang presented at the meeting with the cadres of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, he stressed that the development of Tibetan must resolve “six big issues”.

The first is, under the unified leadership of the center, to fully implement the autonomy rights in the nationalities areas. “Any document, order or regulation which is not suitable for the conditions of Tibet should not be implemented.” “You should according to your own characteristics, draft specific decrees, laws and regulations, and rules to protect the special interests of your own nationality.” The second: “Under the present difficult conditions in Tibet, you should carry out a policy of recuperation and rebuilding and considerably reduce the burden on the people.” “We have decided that within several years required purchases by Tibetans will be abolished.” Third: “Tibet should implement special flexible policies to promote the development of production.” Fourth: “Devote the resources that the state is providing to Tibet to the development of agriculture and herding and the daily necessities most needed by Tibetan people.” Fifth: “With the condition that the socialist road be followed, develop science, technology and education in Tibet.”

Hu Yaobang especially stressed: “Looking down on Tibetan history, language and art is totally wrong... Loving the minority people is not a matter of empty words. Their social customs and habits must be respected. Respect their language, respect their history, respect their culture. If you don’t do that you are only speaking empty words.” Finally, Tibetan cadres should manage Tibet. Within two years, Tibetans should make up two-thirds or more of the cadres in Tibet. “We have been here for thirty years. We have completed our historical mission.” “Today there are 300,000 ethnic Han, including military, in Tibet. How can that ever do?” The above can be summarized in six characters “cut taxes, open up, and withdraw personnel”. These were the “emergency measures” energetically promoted by Hu Yaobang to resolve the Tibet issue. 3

These views, strong criticisms of social evils, were enthusiastically welcomed in the Tibetan areas. Of course because of historical conditions, the enlightened leaders of the Chinese Communist Party were unable to discuss and consider institutional perspectives on the problems that occurred in Tibet. Hu Yaobang in his May 29th speech said that we should not look back on the past but rather “unify ourselves and look to the future”.⁴ This reflects Hu Yaobang’s experience and resourcefulness and the frustrations of a generation of reformers in the Chinese Communist Party. After all, the many of the tragedies in contemporary Tibetan history are directly linked to the Communist Party system and the social policies that that Party carried out. This is all a result of these policies. If we do not reflect upon the origins of the Tibet issue, then we will not be able to resolve it.

New Symptoms Arose in the Tibet Issue During the Years of Reform

With opening and reform, especially since the early 1990s and the turn of the new century, the Chinese economy has grown very quickly. The central government has also certainly invested a lot of capital in Tibet and devised a series of special preferential policies and measures to accelerate the development of Tibet. There have been direct state investment construction projects, Chinese central government financial subsidies, and support for projects from partners around the country for the modernization and construction of Tibet. The overall economic level of Tibet has improved considerably as a result. However the political structure has remained the same as before with the Party exercising control over political, economic, cultural, and religious affairs just as before. An autonomous region in name, but in actual fact, autonomy was in the same lamentable state as before. The core of the Tibet issue has not been truly solved, and under the new social conditions a variety of new problems have arisen.

The market economy has become an economy controlled by influential people. It is that way in the Chinese interior, and it is that way in Tibet. The blending of the system of Party dictatorship and the policy of opening up created a new privileged stratum that includes Han and as well as Tibetans who have positions in Party and government institutions and cultural

institutions. Faced with swarms of merchants coming from the Chinese interior, many ordinary Tibetans in Lhasa and other areas fell discriminated against and marginalized.

Even worse is the all encompassing control of religious affairs. On the surface, religious life in Tibet has already been restored. The state spent great sums repairing damage and protecting symbolic Buddhist structures, the temples are filled with burning incense. The Buddhist Canon will never again be used for compost. But this is just the surface of things. There is a deeper reality that is hidden behind these things as if beneath a mask.

The independent scholar Wang Lixiong has done much research on, and taken many trips to, Tibet. His conclusion: In Tibet there is no true religious freedom. On one hand, the government strictly controls the registration of religious activities in the temples, limits religious personnel to a certain “authorized personnel complement”, and forbids ties between temples. Religious activities outside the temples are forbidden. On the other hand, spontaneous religious activities outside government control are rigorously suppressed so that they will not have any influence.

In the Kang region of [Tr. note: ethnographic] Tibet, not far from the county seat of Sela County, is the mountain valley of Larong with its Wuming Buddhist Institute [Tr. note: also known as the Sertar Tibetan Buddhist Institute, Sertar, Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, China 四川 甘孜州 色达县 喇荣五明佛学院]. When founded in 1980, there were only 30 or so people at the Institute. At the end of the 1990s, there were nearly 10,000 Tibetan and Han monks there. This worried the Chinese government. The authorities ordered that they reduce the number of personnel from the authorized number of 4000 nuns to just 400 and 4000 monks to just 1000. All the 1000 Han who had come to study Buddhism were forced to leave. This requirement was rejected by the Living Buddha who ran the Institute because to make a monk return to secular life involves a serious violation of vows. The government took action, sending people to destroy the housing of the monks. On July 10, 2001 during the height of the destruction of monastic housing, 1700 monastic cells were destroyed in a single day. “I have heard people describe that scene, the sounds of houses being destroyed, the dust rising up everywhere, on one side one thousand nuns crying, as if the world itself were shaking. In the area around the Wuming Buddhist Academy were many nuns in groups in the countryside hiding out to avoid pursuit by the government. “5

An even more deadly consequence of the strict control of religion has been breaks in the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism. Traditional Tibetan religion has an internal control mechanism. For example, although there is a reincarnation system for the Dalai and the Panchen, but in the Geluga School, eminent monks and heads of monasteries have a set term of office. They are chosen from among the most learned lamas. The winners in the competition can become the head of the Ganden Monastery — that is a natural teacher for the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. This system has continued for several hundred years without a break, thereby ensuring the authenticity in the transmission of the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism from generation to generation and ensuring as well the excellent character of eminent monks. But since 1959 this continuous process has been interrupted. From the 1980s to the present, although on the surface religious activities have been renewed, it has become hard to find a trace of the very core of the religion — the pious beliefs of eminent monks, deep research into Buddhism and teaching aimed at enlightening all sentient beings.

The governing authorities operate a “reverse elimination” selection system among the leaders of the monks. “Any monk leader who insists on religious principles, refuses to be a tool of the authorities, will be subject to pressure and purging or even sentenced to prison as a warning to other clergy. Any monk with a relatively high traditional rank who keeps silent and doesn’t cause trouble is a candidate for recruitment by the United Front Department. He will be given rewards but a club will be always be ready to intimidate him. Any monk willing to put

personal advancement first, who is opportunistic, gives up religious principles, and willing to be a tool of the government will be given all sorts of advantages, membership in the National People's Congress, the National People's Consultative Congress or even higher government positions. The green light will be given for their activities, resources will be provided so that they will be a model who can draw in other leaders among the monks." In sum, therefore, although the Chinese Communists boast of religious freedom but their religious policy is aimed at the destruction of Buddhism, no less than it was in the days of Mao Zedong. Mao Zedong wanted to completely extirpate Buddhism. In Tibetan history there were eras when Buddhism was extirpated yet Buddhism still continued because the religion lived in the hearts of believers and so could not be destroyed by an external force. Today the Communist Party religious policy aims at the degeneration of the monk stratum of Tibetan society. This is a mortal danger to Buddhism." 6

As a consequence of all this, although Tibet has made considerable economic progress over the past thirty years and the lives of ordinary Tibetans have improved, Tibetans are still dissatisfied and "events" occur over and over again in the Tibetan regions. The Tibetan issue is still "an issue" that is the focus of constant international attention. The events that have occurred since March are just new developments in the course of this ongoing transformation.

Demonizing the Dalai Lama is Extremely Stupid

After the "hitting, smashing, stealing and burning" event of March 14, the Chinese government immediately announced that this was instigated by the "Dalai Clique". When in April there was interference with the transmission of the torch, the authorities again asserted that the "Dalai Clique" had instigated "Tibet independence elements", with the aim of destroying the Olympic Games, in order to further the cause of "Tibet independence".

The "human rights issue" was substituted for the "independence issue" to serve the needs of people in authority. This is easy to see. But in their effort to dump this pile of shit on the head of the Dalai Lama, we can see how preposterous the traditional political logic of the Chinese communists is. This also reveals that the rulers lack a long term strategic vision and political wisdom.

The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism. He is also one of the most famous political figures in the world. The year the Dalai Lama fled Tibet he was 24 years old. In half a century of exile, this ethnic Tibetan sage has blended the essence of Buddhism, magnanimity, liberal democracy and other universal values of contemporary civilization. Already in 1987, the Dalai Lama proposed the "Five Point Peace Proposal" which includes the suggestion that Tibet become a "peace zone", that "China end its policy of moving settlers into Tibet", that there be "respect for the human rights and democratic rights of the Tibetan people", that the government "restore and protect Tibet's natural environment", and that the two sides "hold sincere talks about the future status of Tibet and the relationship between the Tibetan people and the Chinese people".

In 1988, the Dalai Lama also made the "Strasbourg Proposal", which proposed that "Tibet should become a self-ruled democratic political entity in union with the People's Republic of China, in which "the Chinese government would be responsible for Tibet's external affairs, but Tibet could establish offices overseas for the religious and cultural aspects of foreign relations" etc.⁷

During the last seven years, the Dalai Lama has at many times and in many places stated clearly that he does not seek Tibet independence, only real autonomy for Tibet. On the methods and ways of achieving this he strongly calls for a peaceful "middle way", which would involve honest dialog with the central government and negotiations to resolve issues.

Ever since 2002, the Dalai Lama's special envoy has met with representatives of the United Front Department in Beijing six times in order to explain to the ruling Communist Party rulers the "middle way position" but has not gotten any response to the proposal.

The rigid stance of the Chinese Communist Party is very easy to understand from their political tradition. The institutional arrangements for Tibet have already been decided. So what is there to talk about? Accepting the so-called "autonomy" of the Dalai Lama would shake the foundations of the party-state, so there can be no yielding on this point. Therefore, "talks" are for the Communist side just a perfunctory exercise and only done for show, and so of course there can be no concrete results from them. Yet these delays cause more and more difficulties for the Dalai Lama since he has to explain things to both the Tibetan exiles and to believers within Tibet.

There are many different organizations and groups among the Tibetans in exile with different political positions. There are radical ones like the "Tibet Youth Congress" which has attracted a lot of attention lately. It's political position is very different from the Dalai Lama's "Middle Way". The Tibet Youth Congress was founded in 1970 mostly by second and third generation Tibet exiles. Membership is now several tens of thousands with organizations in 40 countries. At the outset the Tibet Youth Congress stood for non-violence, but it has changed its position over the past several years. At its 2007 annual meeting, the leader of the Congress said that the non-violence propounded by the Dalai Lama is good, but he has been saying this for many years without result. "Very many people don't believe in it. They say it doesn't work." If it doesn't work, then what? The Tibet Youth Congress is inclined to use violence to solve the problem, including preparing a "popular uprising movement" in the Tibetan areas. It is said that over 700 Tibetans have volunteered and that they are willing to give up their lives to protect what they "stand for".

The Dalai Lama has stated clearly that he opposes any scheme or action involving the use of violence. He said that if such an act should occur, he may have to "resign" to show his true position. Several days ago, the Dalai during an interview with Asia Week [Yazhou Zhoukan] said that he believes that giving up the Middle Way of setting aside efforts to achieve Tibet independence in favor of seeking a high degree of autonomy is still the mainstream view of Tibetans in exile as well as the mainstream view of people in the Tibetan areas. As for the Tibet Youth Congress, the Dalai Lama said that he can only admonish the Tibet Youth Congress not to take the radical road. However, he has no way to order the Tibet Youth Congress to shut up. 9

Beijing may not completely trust the statements of the Dalai Lama because overcoming political enmity built up over a long time will take time and face-to-face communication. However, indiscriminately demonizing the other side, charging that the Dalai Lama is the commander in the "Tibet independence camp" and should certainly be punished by the entire nation, and reviled by everyone, can only put the Dalai Lama in a difficult situation (while he is trying to put pressure on radical forces among Tibetans) and lead the Chinese communists into a political dead end (frozen into the rigid face of the dictator), giving up the freedom of maneuver needed in political negotiations. Isn't this an extremely stupid way to behave?!

Yet, in the final analysis, this is the obstinate and stubborn traditional political logic that haunts the Communist Party. According to this logic, there can be no equal negotiating partners. There can only be enemies locked in a life and death struggle. Even worse is how the rulers are haunted by their own logic of interests — for according to this logic, Tibet "autonomy" is intolerable. It would be a fundamental threat to the party-state, and a threat to a large group that benefits from this system. Considered in terms of these two logics, the demonization of the Dalai Lama becomes easy to understand. But where is justice? What are the prospects for the great family of the peoples of China? Considering the puerile and

shallow “patriotism” and “nationalism” shown in the recent turbulent tide of meticulously planned and instigated demonstrations in both China and abroad by the new “Boxers”, as well as the very deep problems facing the country, one is left with a bitter and confused taste in one’s mouth and troubled deep into sleepless nights.

The Solution to the Tibet issue Should be Sought Within a Constitutional Framework

The Tibet issue is first of all a human rights issue. But it is not only a human rights issue. Abuses of human rights are an “effect”, not a “cause”. An irrational system of political dictatorship is what caused the “Tibet issue.”

Didn’t the Communist Party initially seek to help the Tibetan people and the million “liberated serfs”? I believe that this is true. Yet the history of the world is full of examples of evil deeds done with good intentions. During the late Qing, the court made great reforms in Tibetan affairs and promoted reforms in order to prevent the great powers from continuing to encroach upon Tibet. In 1907, Zhang Yintang gave to the Qing Court “Twenty-four proposals for the governance of Tibet”. During 1905 - 1911, in the the provinces of Sichuan and Kang, a reform to “change from indirect control through local chiefs to direct control by the central government”. The purpose in addition to consolidating Qing rule was to transform social traditions for the “good of” ordinary Tibetans. However, these “reforms” were strongly resisted by Tibetan people. Half a century later the Communist Party did the same thing in the Tibetan areas, albeit more systematically and with more determination. The result was larger scale harm to the people, religion and culture of the Tibetan areas.

In fact, history has already shown that China’s 20th century communist revolution was a mistake. It was a big wrong turn during a century of social transformation. It not only brought misfortune to the Han nationality, it also brought misfortune to the minority peoples. Today, people are thinking deeply about that history. Things that are past cannot be called back. But we should remember the lessons of history, and look at the issues of today and tomorrow with a scientific attitude. This is the responsibility of the present generation.

Respect for the fundamental rights of citizens, and respect for the distinctive cultures and traditions must be implemented in a constitutional political system. This is the basic path for solving the Tibet issue.

Recently Taiwan successfully changed the ruling party for the second time. This shows the superiority of the democratic system of government. It also demonstrates the necessity and urgency of changing the political system on the Chinese mainland. Clearly, the party dictatorship system of the Chinese Communist Party cannot accommodate unification between Taiwan and the mainland, just as it cannot accommodate true autonomy for Tibet. Only by dissolving the present system and creating a constitutional democratic system in accordance with the universal values and principles of modern civilization can the day come when Taiwan finally returns to the motherland, Tibet achieves true autonomy, and Han and Tibetans get along with each other in harmony.

From the beginning of the 1960s, the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamasala, India started to experiment at building a system of democratic government. In his Strasbourg Proposal, the Dalai Lama said that “the Tibetan government should be composed of an independent administration and legislature chosen by the vote of all citizens and a court system.” The Dalai Lama even proposed changing the Tibetan form of government that combines politics and religion. He didn’t worry if he might become the “last Dalai” in Tibetan history.¹⁰ Tibetans have already made preparations for a democratic political system. Shouldn’t the central government in Beijing make similar preparations?

Certainly for the Chinese Communist decision-makers who now hold power, changing the present system and creating a new institutional framework would take a great deal of courage and wisdom. This would not be just for Tibet or for Taiwan; it would be for all the 1.3 billion citizens of the People's Republic of China. To be honest, even after China has established a constitutional form of government, finding the reasonable sharing of jurisdiction between the central government and the nationalities areas will not be easy.

I once wrote an article entitled "Two Track Republican System: A Proposal for the Reform of the Chinese System of Constitutional Government". In this article I pointed out that it is an uncontested fact that the "division of powers" and "autonomy" strengthen the rights consciousness of citizens and increases their participation in public affairs (in the nationalities areas, autonomy also helps preserve the cultural traditions of nationalities and protects their special interests). Yet there is another aspect to this problem, that is the tendency of interests to expand and the "logic of collective interests". The latter will certainly create some "problems of the commons" which will have to be solved by the intervention of a public power at a higher level that is above local interests, especially intervention by the central government.

Returning to the present, there is still a chance for the central government to solve the Tibet issue. That can be done by conducting genuine negotiations with the Dalai Lama. Recently Beijing has already said that it is willing to resume contact. That is good. Even if it is just a pose, it is positive. Everyone hopes that the talks can produce genuine results so as to create a harmonious bridge between the Han and Tibetan peoples while the Dalai Lama is still alive. If this issue is not handled well, then "splitting" might become a real and present danger.

As a Chinese citizen, I naturally don't want to see Tibet split off from the household of our motherland. We should believe that the trend of human civilization is towards unifying rather than towards splitting. Unity is helpful for solving many of the problems that humanity is faced with. As a Chinese proverb goes, the melon that is grabbed roughly cannot be sweet — unity needs to be a voluntary unity based upon a community of interests. Forced compliance cannot produce good results. This simple truth can also be applied to politics.