

BEIJING'S POLICY TOWARD TIBETAN EXILES

NAMLO YAK

While Beijing hinges the Tibetan question on the future of the Dalai Lama, Tibetans overseas believe the agenda is much broader.

This is a rather specialized topic, and one towards which many people have all sorts of views and opinions. In the opinion of this writer, exploring the topic from the two angles outlined below clearly reveals the essence of Beijing's policy toward Tibetan exiles.

Categorizing Tibetan exiles

When we speak of the internal division of labor within the United Front Work Department, two bureaus have responsibility for "undertaking investigation and research and for making policy recommendations in ethnic and religious work; maintaining contact with representatives of minority groups and religious circles: assisting relevant departments in the selection and training of minority cadres; coordinating with relevant departments in the struggle against separatist activities of the Dalai Lama clique and other hostile separatist movements at home and abroad; and working vis à vis Tibetan compatriots abroad." The weighting of these tasks is evident.

The two crucial phrases here are "the Dalai Lama clique and other hostile separatist forces at home and abroad" and "Tibetan compatriots abroad." That is to say that "hostile forces" are targets for attack, while "Tibetan compatriots abroad" are to be won over. Beijing's intention is to attack the minority and win over the majority. Observation of Tibetan exile communities shows, however, that upwards of 85 percent of Tibetan exiles scattered across every nation on the globe pay taxes to the Tibetan Government in Exile (what Beijing refers to as "the Dalai Lama clique"). This indicates that Beijing's policy in fact attacks the majority and woos only a tiny minority, with upwards of 85 percent of Tibetan exiles becoming targets of Beijing by qualifying as "hostile forces." It is also the main reason why the CCP Central Committee United Front Work Department has been unable to achieve substantive results in its 40 years of united front work, and an even more decisive factor in why there is no way for it to make progress in its contacts with Tibetans.

Contracting and expanding the issue

Intermittent contact between Dharamsala and Beijing has unfolded in accordance with this major premise. The significance of this contact lies in Beijing's semi-public acknowledgment of the existence of the "Tibet issue," and in the crucial guarantee that the "Tibet issue" will not go away. However, there has appeared in the contacts between Dharamsala and Beijing a continuing test of wills through the "contraction and expansion" of the issue at stake. This is exemplified in Beijing's threats about "resolving the question of the Dalai's future," and Dharamsala's retort that "no question about the Dalai Lama's future exists, but Tibet seeks to achieve a genuinely high degree of autonomy." In particular, the two sides recently engaged in a heated and public debate on "the successor to the Dalai Lama."

From Beijing's point of view, "resolving the question of the Dalai Lama's future" includes "resolving the question of Tibetan returnees to China." For example, Beijing has applied diplomatic pressure over attempts by some Tibetan exiles living in Nepal to emigrate to the United States. The hard line taken by some in Dharamsala to block new emigration by exiles and Beijing's desire to block all such emigration differ only in degree. In fact, both sides have miscalculated. The more they are blocked, the more people want to emigrate; it's a catalyst to human impetuosity and the strategies that lie hidden in the subconscious. In a certain sense, this works to the advantage of Tibetan exiles, but perhaps not to those who yearn for perfection.

Meanwhile, Beijing has proposed a disproportionate number of preconditions: "Tibet has been an inalienable part of China since ancient times"; "Taiwan is a province of China"; "The PRC is the sole legitimate government of China"; and so on. Insiders can identify the crux of the disagreement at a glance. If the point were really only "resolving the question of the Dalai's future," it would be unnecessary to spell out such preconditions. On the contrary, these preconditions show what the "Tibet question" actually is. Thus, while the essence of Beijing's policy toward Tibetan exiles has not changed, the CCP Central Committee United Front Department has begun to receive "overseas Tibetan compatriots" who are not part of the "Dalai Lama clique"—people who publicly or semi-publicly acknowledged these preconditions.

In this writer's opinion, these moves are not necessarily bad, because they inadvertently raise the profile of "the Tibetan

question.” For example, no overseas Chinese returning to the mainland would feel a need to publicly acknowledge these premises—at most, they would make clear their position on the “Taiwan question” and “one China.” What distinguishes “Tibetan compatriots” from “overseas Chinese” is this issue of the “Tibet question.” If Beijing does not halt the “contraction” process, sooner or later its tactical errors will have disastrous consequences.

What now?

The above analysis reveals some interesting facts. Intentionally or not, Beijing’s definition of Tibetan exiles and its implementation of measures toward them have given rise to a lethal loss of control and direction, and a “death before surrender” attitude coupled with “make it up as you go along” measures, otherwise known as “hit hard and advance.” But are we deadlocked? I leave you with a story.

One day an argument arose in a library between two men,

one of whom wished to open the window, and the other of whom insisted on keeping it shut. They argued for hours without reaching a conclusion. At that point the librarian came into the room and asked the one man why he wanted the window open. He responded, “I want some fresh air.” Then she asked the other man why he wanted the window closed, and he said, “I don’t want to be in a draft!” After thinking a while, the librarian went into the next room and opened a window there. The result was that fresh air, but no breeze, entered the room in which the two men were sitting, and both of them got what they wanted.

Who is the librarian? Let’s wait and see.

Translated by a friend of HRIC

The original Chinese article was posted on the Web site of the China Information Center, <http://www.observechina.net/info/artshow.asp?ID=40619&ad=9/14/2006>.

TWO POEMS ABOUT SEPTEMBER

The People's Republic of China established the Tibet Autonomous Region on September 1, 1965.

September

BY NAMLO YAK

In September the rules of the game became clear,
In September one felt the sharp point of it all;
A yearning was heard then, deep in the heart . . .
But none ventured past the status quo.

I cry to the prairies where grass waves year-round,
In a sleepless tent between mountains and strand.
Phantoms march onward through wind and rain . . .
Who spurs me to cry, unceasing, so loud?

I long for the youths I played with back home,
Where lads and lasses spoke true and dealt fair,
Beside a pure spring, wreathed in dawn's mist, Ah!
Please give me back the years that creased my brow!

Was September a glance from the death-god?
Or an angel, perhaps, striving to wake me?

Rendered into English by A. E. Clark

Temporary September

BY WOESER

It's the season to enjoy good fruit
I meant to change into work clothes
Planning, at the instant the moon reached fulness
In some garden encircled by deep-hued vegetation
Right in the middle, you don't see many such, so calm
The one that's meant for me,
Hanging so high, on which branch?
An embarrassment of riches; which should I want most?

I'm a moody gal
No longer young, no longer fresh
But still get high on emotion
No shortage of illusions
This time the delusion's so real
I want it bad, I'll supply whatever's missing
Recklessly singing along that road
That microbe in the air
The brilliant writer I adore is sick, he's dying

The woven basket in my hand, even if filled with pure water
Still could not cradle this last seed of love
Better to pick up my little hoe
But the healing herb, now extinct,
How can it shoot up again?
The fruit, still waiting, rejects the base scoundrels
Here all's wrapped in miasma
Ah! But it's only the imaginary garden
Once September's past, will all be well?