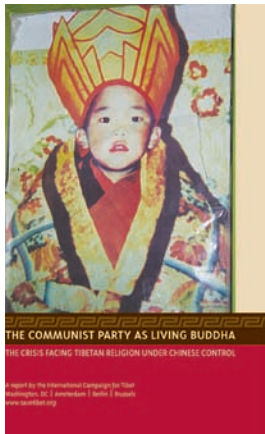


“...the Panchen Lama has come to symbolize for many Tibetans the crisis facing the survival of their religious culture.”

NEW RELIGION REGULATIONS INCREASE PRESSURE ON TIBETAN BUDDHISM

A major new ICT report documents **renewed efforts by Beijing to undermine the influence of the Dalai Lama and strengthen its position as the ‘official’ arbitrator of Tibetan Buddhist culture.** Through official documents obtained from Tibet, analysis of regulatory measures on religion, and first person testimony, the report documents a trend of tightening control over religious practice and scholarship in Tibet.



Released on 25 April to mark the birthday of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, recognized by the Dalai Lama as the

11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, the report asserts that after more than a decade in Chinese custody the case of the Panchen Lama has come to symbolize for many Tibetans the crisis facing the survival of their religious culture.

As the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism gain in popularity and influence worldwide – including among many Chinese – Beijing has entrenched its position on religion, introducing stringent new regulatory measures in an attempt to curb the Dalai Lama’s authority and control religious practice. The report, titled ‘The Party as Living Buddha’, documents the following key trends:

- Disturbing precedents on restrictions to religious practice in the Tibet Autonomous Region, including bans on religious activity during periods of important religious significance;
- As part of the tightening control and regulation of religious practice, ‘patriotic education’ campaigns in Tibetan monasteries, nunneries and the wider society have been stepped up, and the powers of the Democratic Management Committees, responsible to the Party for control of religious institutions, have been strengthened;

- A renewed determination by Chinese authorities to crack down on loyalty to the Dalai Lama in Tibet;
- The severe undermining of traditional systems of monastic education. Monasteries that once housed thousands of monks are now reduced to a few hundred monks whose main responsibility is no longer religious study but tending to the buildings and tourists;
- New restrictions on identification and control of reincarnate lamas to counter the Party’s failure to win the allegiance of key religious leaders, such as the 17th Karmapa, who escaped into exile in 2000 following Beijing’s attempts to groom him as a ‘patriotic’ figure

Tibetan Buddhism continues to be an integral element of Tibetan identity and Tibetan nationalism, and is therefore perceived as a potential threat to the authority of the state and ‘unity’ of the People’s Republic of China. The Chinese Communist Party, which promotes atheism, requires its citizens to ‘love the country’ in other words, to respect the authority of the Party, above all would-be competing loyalties.

The oppressive atmosphere has been underlined by the leadership of Tibet Autonomous Region Party chief Zhang Qingli, who has announced his intention to intensify strict political control over the practice of Buddhism. Using harsh rhetoric against the Dalai Lama reminiscent of Cultural Revolution jargon, Zhang has referred to a “life or death struggle” against the Dalai Lama and his “clique”, and described the Tibetan religious

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NEW RELIGION REGULATIONS...

leader as the “biggest obstacle hindering Tibetan Buddhism from establishing normal order”.

The Special Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lodi Gyaltzen Gyari, said: “At a time when His Holiness the Dalai Lama is striving to address core issues in the dialogue process with Beijing, it is unfortunate that a section of the Chinese leadership is trying to put in place a system in Tibet that could potentially make any possible solution between us meaningless.”

The report can be downloaded as a pdf at:
<http://savetibet.org/documents/document.php?id=226>

3-YEAR SENTENCE APPEARS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED

Radio Free Asia reported on 9 March that authorities in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) **jailed a prominent local businessman for three years after finding banned CDs of the Dalai Lama’s teachings** at his home.

The arrested man, known as Penpa, was a businessman in Tsakor village in Dingri county, where he was detained before being taken to Shigatse, in December 2006. He was given a three-year sentence in February 2007, which he is expected to serve in Nyari prison, Shigatse. According to numerous sources, none of his relatives have been permitted to see him since he was taken into custody.

RFA quotes a number of unidentified sources who suggest that Penpa, who is in his 50s, attracted the attention of officials by taking in ever-increasing numbers of livestock. Saving sheep and goat destined for slaughter is common among Buddhists, who believe saving the lives of other beings generates positive karma.

One source told RFA: “Penpa used to save 10 sheep every year [but] this [past] year he saved 100 sheep and also a female yak. This was noticed by the local Chinese informers, and they informed Dingri county officials that Penpa had saved 100 sheep for

the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When they raided his house, they found the two CDs.”

However, one RFA source hinted at local factors possibly motivating the arrest: “He was a successful businessman. He bought shops and also owned cars. The local Tibetans of Tsakor village respected and listened to what he said...He was also effective and influential. In fact he was doing better than the official head of Tsakor village.”

In late 2005, an official at the Shigatse Intermediate People’s Court told RFA’s Tibetan service, “The court has the authority to sentence any individual who commits reactionary actions,” and added that the maximum penalty for carrying materials relating to the Dalai Lama, including pictures, was five years’ imprisonment. ■

DALAI LAMA SPECIFIES CHINA PILGRIMAGE

The Dalai Lama has indicated a possible destination for a future pilgrimage to China. In an article in Newsweek on 21 April, 2007, the Dalai Lama discussed his desire to **conduct a pilgrimage to the Five Peaked Mountain (Ch. Wu T’ai Shan) in Shanxi Province, China.**



The Stupa of Taynan Si, at the heart of Wu T’ai Shan

The Dalai Lama has previously discussed his wish to make a religious trip to China, most notably in his 10 March Statements in 2006 and 2007. The issue was also raised in the EP resolution on the Sino-Tibetan dialogue adopted on 15 February 2007: “*whereas the Dalai Lama has expressed the wish to make a pilgrimage to China and whereas* continued on page 3

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CHINA PILGRIMAGE...

the Tibetan Parliament in Exile has requested a meeting between the President of China and the Dalai Lama which would build confidence between the peoples of Tibet and China as well as in the international community”.

In the Newsweek article, the Dalai Lama states: *“There is one place that I have long wished to visit, but my wish has yet to be fulfilled. The Five Peaked Mountain or Wu Tai Shan in China is renowned for its association with Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. My predecessor, the 13th Dalai Lama, was able to pay his respects there and, since my first trip to China in 1954, I have cherished the hope that I might follow in his footsteps. At that time, the Chinese authorities deflected my request, saying that the roads were impassable. I am sure the route is clear today”.*

ICT has strongly encouraged policymakers to support such a visit by the Dalai Lama in their contact with Chinese Authorities, given its potential to act as a significant confidence-building measure and benefit Chinese Buddhist practitioners as well as Tibetans. ■

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE FOR DIALOGUE PROGRESS

Since February 2007, **legislators in seven European parliaments, as well as in the United States and Canada, have called for progress on the Sino-Tibetan dialogue** via their various parliamentary mechanisms:

- European Parliament resolution on the dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Dalai Lama, 15 February 2007, Document B2007/0066
- Motion on the dialogue adopted by the House of Commons in Canada (15 February 2007);
- Motion on the dialogue tabled in the Scottish Parliament (26 February 2007);
- Six parliamentary questions addressed to the Swiss Foreign Minister by MPs of the Swiss Parliament (12 March 2007);

- Request for clarification addressed by Austrian Deputies to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the government’s position on the dialogue process (13 March 2007);
- Hearing at the House Foreign Affairs Committee of the US Congress (13 March 2007);
- MPs of the Polish Parliament submitted an appeal on the dialogue to the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Polish Sejm (15 March 2007);
- French Declaration on the dialogue adopted by more than 200 Deputies and Senators (March-April 2007)
- Resolution supporting the dialogue passed in the Liechtenstein Parliament (25 April 2007)



US Undersecretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky (L), Lodi Gyari (C), special envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and ICT chairman, Richard Gere (R) testify before the US House Foreign Affairs Committee 13 March, 2007 [RFA]

The concerted international action by policymakers signals a strong desire for visible progress between Beijing and the representatives of the Dalai Lama after five rounds of talks, as well as concerns about China’s engagement in the talks after over a year without a meeting between the two parties. ■

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