

“We are not asking for independence... The core of our demands is the protection of our identity.”

—Lodi Gyari, Special Envoy

SIXTH ROUND OF SINO-TIBETAN DIALOGUE HELD IN SHANGHAI AND NANJING

The Special Envoy of the Dalai Lama, Lodi Gyari, and the Envoy for European Affairs, Kelsang Gyaltsen, visited China from June 29 to July 5, 2007 for the sixth round of discussions on Tibet with the Chinese leadership, the first such meeting since February 2006.

During the trip, three sessions of discussion were held over a day and a half in Shanghai and Nanjing between the Tibetan delegation and the Chinese side, which was led by Executive Vice Minister of the Central United Front Work Department, Zhu Weiqun, and Vice Minister Sithar.

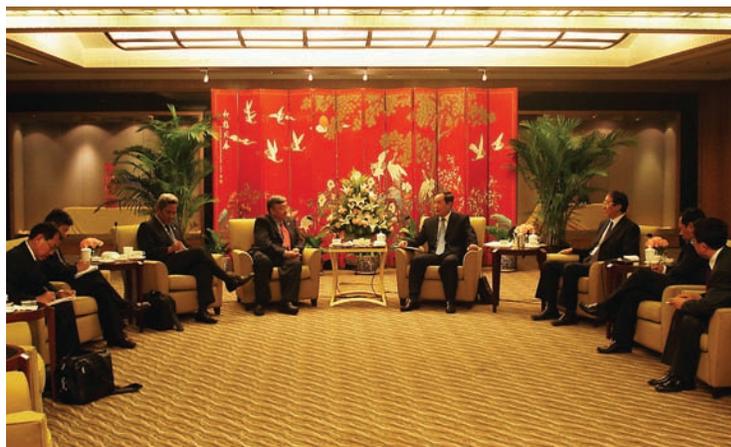
In an official statement released on 7 July, Lodi Gyari said:

“The discussions were candid and frank. Both sides expressed in strong terms their divergent positions and views on a number of issues.

Our dialogue process has reached a critical stage. We conveyed our serious concerns in the strongest possible manner on the overall Tibetan issue and made some concrete proposals for implementation if our dialogue process is to go forward.”

In an interview for the Polish newspaper, ‘Gazeta Wyborcza’, prior to his departure, the Special Envoy outlined key Tibetan positions:

“We are not asking for independence, but for genuine autonomy. Actually, it is something that the Chinese Government has already accepted. China’s Constitution already guaranties this. The only point is the question of its implementation... we also must have the opportunity that all the Tibetan people should be under one single administration. This is not because of any desire to split China, or to declare independence. The reason is we want to have common policy to protect our cultural, linguistic and religious identity. The core of our demands is the protection of our identity.”



The sixth round of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue, held in Shanghai and Nanjing

In a 29 June statement, the US State Department said that it hoped the meeting would lead to “substantive progress on resolving longstanding differences,” and that President Bush had urged Chinese leaders to invite the Dalai Lama to China. To date, there have been no statements on the sixth round of dialogue from any European governments or the European Union.

Since their return to Dharamsala from China, the Tibetan delegation has reported to the Dalai Lama and Kalon Tripa [Prime Minister] Samdhong Rinpoche, as well as the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile. ■



ICT Europe
Vijzelstraat 77
1017HG Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
eupolicy@savetibet.org

ICT Brussels
11, rue de la linière
1060 Brussels
Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
ict-eu@savetibet.org

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SENIOR PARTY OFFICIALS DEBATE DALAI LAMA RETURN

On July 17, Reuters ran a report claiming to have seen extracts of a letter from Phuntso Wangye, a veteran Communist Party member and one of the most senior Tibetans in the PRC, to Chinese President Hu Jintao accusing some government officials of closing the door on dialogue with the Dalai Lama and misleading the leadership about the extent of the Dalai Lama's influence in Tibet.



Phuntso Wangye signing copies of "A Tibetan Revolutionary", a biography of his life written by leading Tibet scholar Melvyn Goldstein

Phuntso Wangye, who merged his Tibetan Communist Party with Mao's Chinese Communist Party in 1949 and later acted as interpreter at a 1954 meeting between the Dalai Lama and Chairman Mao in Beijing, accused the current Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Jampa Phuntsok, of trying to close the door for dialogue with the Dalai Lama.

Claiming that the Beijing leadership was being misled as to the Dalai Lama's unfading influence in Tibet, Reuters claims Phuntso Wangye wrote that thousands of Tibetans risked death and crossed the Himalayas to India each year to see their spiritual leader and that troops, tanks and police were mobilised each year but failed to stop Tibetans marking the Dalai Lama's birthday in defiance of a ban.

Reuters claims to have obtained letters sent by Phuntso Wangye to President Hu Jintao from 2004 to 2006 in which the 84-year-old former Member of Parliament condemned hawks for thriving on their opposition to the Dalai Lama.

Only "fools" and "extreme leftists", or ultra-conservatives, would run counter to Chairman Mao Zedong's directive that ethnicity and religion were key to handling the Tibet issue well, Wangye is quoted as writing, and that he hoped the central government would clear obstacles to the Dalai Lama's return and that delays should be prevented.

The letters, by such a senior member of the CCP, indicate the extent of the debate within the top echelons of the Beijing leadership on how to address the continued influence of the Dalai Lama and the implications of his possible return.

ICT has urged European governments to support in its contact with the Chinese government the wish of the Dalai Lama to go to China on a pilgrimage before the Olympic Games in 2008. Such a pilgrimage would be a significant confidence-building measure and of benefit to Chinese Buddhist practitioners as well as Tibetans ■

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS VISIT TIBET

The European Parliament's (EP) Inter-parliamentary Delegation to China has made a week-long trip to China between 23-30 June. ICT and Human Rights in China held a joint briefing for the parliamentarians prior to their visit and delivered a set of key recommendations to be raised during the visit.

The trip included a visit to Lhasa and Shigatse, the two main cities within the TAR. As is common with visits by political delegations to Tibet, the visit was highly managed with little time for independent activities.

Although human rights issues were raised informally and formally by MEPs in meetings with TAR officials, the officials focused on economic and infrastructure developments and were only willing to refer to alleged improvements in social and economic rights, rather than political and



ICT Europe

Vijzelstraat 77
1017HG Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
eupolicy@savetibet.org

ICT Brussels

11, rue de la linière
1060 Brussels
Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
ict-eu@savetibet.org

civil rights. ICT has also learned that MEPs raised the Sino-Tibetan dialogue in discussions with the TAR authorities, although TAR officials dismissed the Dalai Lama as a 'splittist'.

A Chinese delegation is expected to visit the EP in Strasbourg in mid-September to continue talks held in Beijing. ■

NEW ACCOUNTS OF CHUSHUR PRISON EMERGE FROM FORMER POLITICAL PRISONER

A Tibetan who served 11 years in prison following a rare rural protest by lay Tibetans during an official meeting has given new details on harsh conditions in Tibet's newest prison, Chushur (Ch. Qushui), a high-security institution in the Lhasa area. ICT first reported on the new prison in January 2006, after Dr. Manfred Nowak, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, visited the prison during a visit to Tibet in December 2005.

Sonam Dorjee, 38, who is now in exile, was one of a group of five Tibetan farmers who were imprisoned and tortured in 1992 for non-violent protest against Chinese policies in the period following the imposition of martial law in the Tibet Autonomous Region (March 1989 – May 1990).

In February 2005, Sonam Dorjee was transferred from the Tibet Autonomous Region Prison (Drapchi) to Chushur. He described the prison as being far worse than the notorious Drapchi, saying that surveillance is more stringent and conditions more oppressive. Visitors to Chushur are said to be given a list of questions they are not allowed to ask prisoners. New prisoners are generally tortured during interrogation and prisoners who are held in solitary confinement are shackled with heavy chains, according to various reports received by ICT.

Sonam Dorjee told ICT: "Our cell was equipped with video cameras and a voice-recorder, and the toilet was inside the cell. It is the worst prison I have ever seen". In an earlier account to ICT, another former political prisoner said: "On the outside the prison looks very modern and many of the facilities are new. But inside it is very tough

and hard for prisoners, even compared to Drapchi prison...the cells are more oppressive."

Prisoners at Chushur are divided into different categories; political prisoners who are regarded as particularly intransigent and resistant to reform are generally not allowed to see visitors (or allowed to see them for very short periods) and are kept in solitary confinement, known as 'dark



Jigme Gyatso, who suffered severe physical abuse at Chushur after Nowak visit

cells', which are small with little or no natural light. Often they are shackled in these cells. Members of the group considered to have 'reformed' are allowed to study and to have longer breaks outside the cells. Most prisoners are apparently not given medical care except for in emergencies. Reports from former prisoners indicate that they are

sometimes required to denounce the Dalai Lama, and if they do not, they are beaten.

In 2006, ICT submitted a report to the Finnish Presidency of the European Union and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention detailing the case of Jigme Gyatso, a Tibetan political prisoner held in Chushur, who suffered severe physical abuse after being interviewed by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture during his 2005 visit to Chushur. ■

GERMANS INSPIRED BY DALAI LAMA

A poll carried out for the German news magazine Der Spiegel showed that 44 per cent of those questioned regarded the Tibetan spiritual and secular leader as a role model, highlighting the Nobel Prize winner's popularity in Europe and the public interest in the Tibet issue.

The polling figures of the Dalai Lama even outshone the Bavarian-born Pope, who received a 42% approval. The Dalai Lama enjoyed a particularly high popularity rating among the young and better educated, according to the survey by the TNS research organization. ■

INTERNATIONAL
CAMPAIGN
FOR TIBET

ICT Europe
Vijzelstraat 77
1017HG Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
eupolicy@savetibet.org

ICT Brussels
11, rue de la linière
1060 Brussels
Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
ict-eu@savetibet.org