

Tibet As A Part Of China

TO many Chinese, Tibet is merely a name on the map, suggesting to their minds yaks, lamas, and perpetual snows on the mountain-tops of the Himalayas. Few realize its importance to China's national defence; and fewer still appreciate the fact that historically China and Tibet have always been on very friendly terms, and that because of this, many Tibetans today still look upon the Chinese not as an alien race, but as a people whom they would always depend upon for help and friendship.

Of the strategic position of Tibet, much has already been written. Suffice it to say here that Tibet not only is a connecting link between China's northwest and her southwest, but also serves as a buffer between India and China.

Of the relationship between Tibet and China, a brief summary may perhaps be given. China's intercourse with Tibet dates as far back as the Han dynasty, when the latter was called Ch'iang (羌) by its inhabitants. During the Three Kingdoms Period, Tibet attempted a revolt against China, which was subdued by the army under Chuo Liang. In the Tang dynasty, Tibet, then known as Sufan (吐蕃), was reconquered, and a princess of the blood was given in marriage to its ruler by the Chinese emperor. When Tang Ming Huang came to the throne, a treaty with Tibet was signed, and a stone stele commemorating the event can still be seen today at Lhasa. Under the Yuan, Ming and Ching dynasties, too, Tibet was made part of the Chinese empire.

Modern Tibetan history may be said to date from the revolt of Tsoong Kaba against "red" lamaism at the beginning of the 15th century. Ever since then, "yellow" lamaism has been in power, and under its system of monastic hierarchy, Tibet to the present day has been dominated. At the top of the hierarchy are the two supreme heads: the Dalai Lama who is considered to be the incarnation of Bodhisatva Avalokiteswara, and the Panchen Lama who is considered to be the incarnation of Bodhisatva Manchusi; and these two are respectively the temporal and spiritual rulers of all Tibet.

The majority of Tibetans are farmers and lamas and the Chinese in Tibet are merchants. China's political and economic supremacy in Tibet was therefore unchallenged for several centuries; but since the end of last century, when the British appeared on the scene, it has begun to wane, until today China is experiencing considerable difficulty in effecting a direct control of the people in Tibet.

As may be recalled, the British secured in 1876 by the Neefoo Convention the right to explore Tibet. The latter's aggression in the Sikkim border in 1887 furnished an excuse for the British government in India to intervene, and as a result, not only was Sikkim made a British protectorate, but also a trade agreement was signed three years later to open Yatung to British trade. The Tibetans, however, strongly objected to the terms of the agreement; consequently, a punitive expedition under the command of

Sir Francis Younghusband was sent to Tibet in 1904. The expedition reached Lhasa, only to find that the Dalai Lama had escaped to Inner Mongolia to seek the aid of Russia. Nothing, however, came out of Dalai's negotiations, and he was left with no alternative except to come to terms with Sir Francis. An agreement was reached, whereby the Tibetan dignitary became an ally to the British, and Tibet, besides paying a large indemnity and opening two more trade marts to them, came within the sphere of British influence. Soon after, in 1906, China was made to recognize the provisions of the 1890 and 1904 conventions by a treaty signed at Peking, which also sanctioned the establishment of telegraphic lines in Tibet. Then, under the influence of the British, the Tibetans began to ignore China's suzerainty, and the Imperial Manchu Government had to send Governor Chao Erh-feng to bring them to their senses. When Governor Chao reached Lhasa, he found that the Dalai Lama had fled to India. But soon after the Revolution of 1911 broke out, the Chinese garrisons in Tibet revolted, and the return of the Tibetan temporal ruler was thus made possible. In 1912, the Chinese again tried to send another expeditionary force to Tibet, but the British intervened. In the following year Tibet declared its independence, and soon after, a conference was called at Simla, in which China, Tibet and England participated, but by which, no solution satisfactory to China was reached.

In 1924, the Panchen Lama was expelled by the order of Dalai, and from that time onward, the former has resided in China. Since the death of Dalai last year, however, the Tibetans have been petitioning Panchen to return to Tibet. At the moment of writing, we hear that in the very near future, the Spiritual Head of Tibet will start from Kokcnor for Tibet.

From the above, two conclusions may be drawn. Firstly, Tibet has always been closely connected with China, more than with any other power, and we have reason to suppose that, in their heart of hearts, the Tibetans today are still inclined to be friendly toward the Chinese. In the past, it is true, the Chinese sometimes used to adopt a rather arrogant attitude toward the Tibetans, and this tended to make them look askance at China. If China wishes to re-establish her prestige in Tibet and improve her relations with the latter, she must no longer think of Tibetans as barbarians, but must treat them as equals. A good deal of propaganda has to be carried out among the Chinese as well as among the Tibetans, in order to make them realize that they are dependant upon each other, and that in time of crisis like this, they must stand together, or else they will have to suffer the consequences of their mutual lack of trust.

Secondly, it may be seen that England chiefly has been instrumental in stirring up ill-feelings on the part of the Tibetans against China. We all understand of course England's motive for doing so, for it has always been her greatest wish to forge a link connecting Burma to the

Yangtze Valley, and to create a sort of buffer state between Russia and India.

It may be noted, however, that England has recently more or less changed her policy: she has been less positive with regard to Tibet. The reason for this is not far to seek; as pointed out in one of the articles which follow, England now sees that China is quite powerless to deal with the situation in Tibet, and for this reason, she can at

least temporarily afford to mark time.

In such a situation, the question arises as to what China is going to do. Will she also adopt a *laissez-faire* policy, and eventually lose her grip on Tibet altogether? Or will she make the best of the present situation and try to regain the influence that has been lost? These, indeed, are weighty questions; and one may hope that the government leaders have already found the right answer to them.

Three Months In Tibet*

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TIBET is a vast plateau in the southern part of China. Kokonor lies on its north-east; Yunnan, Sikong and Szechwan on its south-east. North of it is Sinkiang, and south of it is India. Because of its strategic position, its importance to the national defence of China cannot be overemphasized. Since the establishment of the Republic, the Chinese Government has not been able to attend much to its frontier affairs, but in recent years, the National Government has tried to make up for the negligence of its predecessors, and has upon several occasions sent envoys to Tibet with the idea of pacifying the people and investigating into the conditions there.

I was fortunate to have been sent to Tibet with General Huang Mo-sung to represent the government at the funeral ceremony of the Dalai Lama. I was in the interior of Tibet for a period of three months, and the following embodies therefore the information I have been able to obtain there at first hand.

Social Conditions.

Tibet is enclosed in by mountains, and as a result, the people are still in what we might describe as a primitive stage of life. They are by inclination superstitious and all their customs are quite different from those in China. This, of course, is due largely to the Buddhist influence, as well as to the geographical situation of the country.

(a) *Population and Customs*:—The population of Tibet has been variously estimated to be either 5,000,000, 3,000,000, or 6,000,000. Some people would give the figure as low as 1,000,000 only. It is safe to say, however, that the number of people in Tibet could not exceed 800,000. For example, Lhasa is one of the biggest cities in Tibet, but it boasts of a population of only 50,000, out of which 15,000 are Lamas. Chandu (昌都) is another important city and it has only a population of 2,000, while Kiang-tzu (江孜) has only approximately 5,000 people. The western and northern parts of Tibet are sparsely populated, though in the eastern and the southern parts there are comparatively more people. The reasons that Tibet is not so densely populated as many people think are: First, accordingly to the Tibetan custom, every family must send at least one male to join a lama monastery. As the result the number of lamas is about one-fifth of

the total population in Tibet. The lamas do not marry, hence the decrease in population. Secondly, for economic reasons, polyandry is extensively practiced in Tibet. This, again, has doubtless contributed to the decrease of population in Tibet. Thirdly, the prevalence of venereal diseases in Tibet is another factor which cannot be lightly dismissed.

The social system in Tibet is still one of feudalism. The difference between different classes is very marked. On the top of the social hierarchy is the class of nobles; next comes the lamas; then the common people which consist of merchants, farmers, cow-herds and others. The nobles are comparatively few in number. The lamas, as we have said before, are nearly one-fifth of the total population and the prestige they enjoy is sometimes even greater than that of the nobles. As to the common people, the life they lead is even harder than that of the people in the inland provinces of China. They have no liberty to speak of. For instance, if they want to move from one place to another, they have to get the permission of the officials first. The relation between the sexes is also quite dissimilar to that among the Chinese. Due to the practise of polyandry, the women in Tibet occupy a far more important position than the men. Sometimes the work done by the males are also done by the females.

(b) *The Life of the People*:—The life led by the nobles in Tibet is easy almost to the point of lassitude and extravagance. They live in well-built houses usually with two storeys. On the ground floor are the servant's quarters and stables, while the guest halls and bed-rooms are situated on the first floor. On the second floor usually are found shrines dedicated to Buddhist divinities, and there the more important family functions are held. The nobles have many servants; they are also landowners. The lamas, on the other hand, do not own land and their life is more simple than that of the nobles. The common people live only from hand to mouth, but most of them seem to be quite satisfied with their condition.

The staple food of the Tibetans are wheat cakes, beef mutton and a species of cheese. They also drink tea mixed with salt and butter. The nobles also eat rice imported from India, but due to the expense, the poorer class of people can hardly afford it. Clothes worn by the Tibetans are commonly red in colour, the men's gowns being shorter than those of women. Both sexes wear boots. Those nobles above the fourth official

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