

China moves to quell resistance in Tibet

by Mary McCourt Burdman

The Chinese government appointed the military commander of Tibet as its top political officer to militarize the area, when senior Politburo member Qiao Shi, secretary of the Chinese Communist Party's discipline inspection committee, visited Tibet earlier in July. Beijing has approved the appointment of Jiang Hongquan, commander of the Tibet Military Area and a member of the Communist Party Central Committee, as the next party secretary of the region, according to a source quoted by Bangkok's *Nation* July 20.

According to a Chinese official in Beijing, Qiao Shi told officials in Lhasa that China has called for "a policy of merciless repression toward all rebels" and anti-Chinese protests in Tibet. Qiao said Beijing had decided to change its policy from "lenient" to "severe."

Financial Times reporter Robert Thomson visited Tibet the week of July 18 with Australian Prime Minister Bill Hayden, the first senior Western official allowed to enter since March, says that Qiao approved the replacement of Tibetan Party Secretary Wu Jinghua with Jiang and praised the People's Liberation Army (PLA) for its past success in maintaining "stability" in Tibet since protests against Chinese rule began last September.

Tibetan government chairman Doje Cering told Prime Minister Hayden, who was on a "human rights" tour, that Qiao said to regional party officials, "Tibet can never be separated from the leadership of the Communist Party or from the People's Liberation Army. Tibet can only prosper, develop, and enjoy great prospects in the great family of the People's Republic." Qiao toured Buddhist monasteries in and around Lhasa, paying close attention to the role of the PLA. Senior PLA officials in Beijing, Thomson wrote, "are known to have been angered" by the leniency shown during protests, by the People's Armed Militia, which, instead of the PLA, was used to suppress protests over the recent months. A new anti-protest squad has been formed to handle future unrest, Thomson reported.

China is using the Tibetan resistance as an opportunity to build up its military forces against India. In November 1987, the Chinese launched a large-scale airlift of troops into Tibet; in December, they deployed a squadron of J-7 fighter-aircraft there. A conservative estimate of Chinese troop strength in

Tibet, according to British press accounts, is 300,000. The Chinese also have nuclear installations in Tibet.

The Chinese are doing their utmost to crack the resistance movement, using methods that go back to the Cultural Revolution within Tibet. One Tibetan recently released told the *Financial Times* that the monks were regularly tortured, and he was given "three sessions of intense political reeducation."

The Dalai Lama's proposals

The Dalai Lama, the Buddhist spiritual leader and head of the Tibetan government-in-exile, proposed, in an unofficial speech to members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, on June 15, that Tibet become a "self-governing political entity . . . in association with the People's Republic of China," with Beijing retaining control of both defense and foreign policy. He also offered to exclude himself from the Tibetan government.

But such hopes for Chinese *glasnost* are unrealistic, especially considering what the Dalai Lama actually called for in Strasbourg. He proposed to "transform Tibet into our planet's largest natural preserve," with strict measures passed to protect animals and plants. He also demanded an end to all nuclear testing and storing in Tibet. He called for a regional peace conference to oversee the demilitarization and neutralization of Tibet, adding, "Until such a peace conference can be convened and demilitarization and neutralization achieved, China could have the right to maintain a restricted number of military installations in Tibet. These must be solely for defense purposes."

But the Dalai Lama is also demanding that not only the present Tibetan Autonomous Region, but the entire ancient Kingdom of Tibet, become the "self-governing entity." Greater Tibet extends into the western Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, and parts of Yunnan and Gansu, comprising over one-quarter of China's current territory.

The threats of the leader of the more radical wing of Tibetan resistance, Lhasang Tsering, president of the Tibetan Youth Congress, which claims 10,000 members internationally, may have encouraged the Chinese authorities to crack down. Tsering, who responded to the Dalai Lama's proposal by calling for resumption of armed struggle against China, said on July 7 that his followers in Tibet are not armed yet, but would accept weapons from any source, including the Soviet Union, the *Daily Telegraph* reported.

Tsering denounced the Strasbourg speech June 17, saying, "Time is on China's side. Beijing knows the Dalai Lama will not live forever. The Chinese have already waited 30 years. They can wait some more. Meanwhile, they are swamping us with massive immigration. We'll be totally overwhelmed soon. We must act now." Those—like former U.S. President Jimmy Carter—who say that China will never give up Tibet are wrong, Tsering said. "Violent resistance could make the Chinese withdraw."