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Authorities admit that Chinese migration may have been factor in triggering unrest in Tibet

### **Officials inspect construction of new police stations in monasteries as crackdown continues**

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The authorities have made a rare admission that large-scale migration from China, particularly linked to the opening of the new railway from Qinghai to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 2006, may have been a factor in triggering the unrest in Lhasa in March.

As the crackdown continues across the Tibetan plateau following the spring uprising, a high-level team of senior leaders of Sichuan province visited a rural Tibetan area to inspect security work, notably the construction of police stations in monasteries, to be operational before the end of the year.

In Lhasa this week, the official press has published examples of 'moral exemplars' chosen by the TAR Civilization Committee, and including a Tibetan who discouraged Tibetan nuns from carrying out a peaceful demonstration and another who "engaged in resolute struggle with the Dalai-led splittists" after the protests were suppressed on March 14.

### **Authorities acknowledge 'problems' with Chinese migration to Tibet**

At a government conference in Lhasa on September 2, the TAR Deputy Party Secretary Zhang Yijiong acknowledged that there had been many 'problems' with management of the 'floating population' of Chinese migrant workers to Tibet, particularly since the opening of the Qinghai-Tibet railway. Zhang specifically linked this problems to the security situation when he said that: "All areas and all departments in Tibet should from the strategic high ground of protecting state security and protecting Tibet's stability deeply understand the important significance of carrying out well service and management work for the floating population in Tibet." The comments suggests that the Chinese authorities are aware that large-scale migration from China was a destabilizing factor in the recent protests in Tibet, particularly on March 14 in Lhasa, when Tibetans burnt shops and houses belonging to Chinese.

The authorities rarely acknowledge the issue of Chinese migration to Tibetan areas, and sometimes officials have denied the scale of it. Relevant statistical information on in-migration to Tibet is generally not published, and it is not known with certainty whether it is even compiled. Migration into Tibet is generally actively encouraged under China's ambitious 'Western Development Strategy' (xibu da kaifa) and is enshrined in legislation as a part of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law (REAL). This is in contrast to the situation in China, where the migration of people to cities and other areas is actively discouraged by means of a system of residency registration. (See ICT report, 'Tracking the Steel Dragon: How China's economic policies and the railway are transforming Tibet', <http://www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=1204.>)

Tibetan fears that the opening of the new railroad from Golmud in Qinghai to Lhasa would result in a 'second invasion' of Chinese people to Tibet were well-founded. In its first year of operation, the railroad transported 1.5 million passengers into Tibet, according to official statistics, and the majority of these people were migrant workers or business people rather than tourists. Tibetans in Lhasa have been increasingly marginalized, and appeared to reach a breaking point on March 14, when a confrontation between monks at the Ramoche temple, local people and security personnel broke out into a riot. This was suppressed with extreme brutality and a crackdown imposed that is still in force today. (See ICT report: 'Tibet at a Turning Point: The Spring Uprising and China's New Crackdown', <http://www.savetibet.org/>)

TAR Deputy Party Secretary Zhang Yijiong made his comments about Chinese migration to the inaugural meeting of the TAR Floating Population Services and Management Work Leading Small Group held in Lhasa on September 2 ([http://www.chinatibetnews.com/zhengfuzaixian/2008-09/03/content\\_147732.htm](http://www.chinatibetnews.com/zhengfuzaixian/2008-09/03/content_147732.htm)). The meeting was presented as part of a broader nationwide agenda to better manage China's vast 'floating population' of migrant workers, which by some estimates amounts to 250 million people - that is, almost 20% of the entire population of China on the move and in search of steady employment and income.

Despite the limited acknowledgement of the problems in Tibet with regard to this population flow, Zhang Yijiong's other comments suggested that rather than considering the imposition of curbs on migration or attempting to otherwise ameliorate its effect on the Tibetan population, the Chinese authorities are instead intent on providing improved services and support to the migrant workforce in Tibet. Zhang also said: "The floating population is an important force for constructing a Tibet which is well-off in an all-round way, a peaceful Tibet and a harmonious Tibet. The Party must therefore persist in serving them well and... enable them to enjoy in equality the results of social and economic development and thoroughly feel the generosity of the Party and government." It was not clear in the reports from the conference as to exactly what measures the Chinese authorities in Lhasa and elsewhere in Tibet will take to address their concerns about 'state security' in relation to the migration issue.

Analysts have observed that there is no doubt that the Chinese state has a far greater role to play in coordinating health, education and other social provisions for Chinese migrants. When migrant workers leave their registered place of residence, they then have no access to state-provided services. Migrant workers from China's rural hinterlands are generally poorly educated compared to their urban counterparts, and therefore tend to be offered only menial or dangerous employment in China's cities, leaving them and their children socially and economically vulnerable.

In the Tibetan context, however, when these same migrant workers travel to Tibet in search of work they are generally educated to a higher level than the local Tibetan population, and are therefore more employable - the average female migrant worker from rural Sichuan province looking for work in Lhasa is better educated than the average local Tibetan male in the same labor market. (1) In addition, migrant workers in Tibet are often favored over local Tibetans because of language - the Sichuan dialect has become the language of business in Lhasa - and because of a familiarity with Chinese work practice.

The TAR is one of the only jurisdictions in the People's Republic of China where migrant workers have a natural advantage over the local workforce, and can expect better employment prospects and better salaries than their local counterparts.

Even the official Chinese media has reported estimates by observers that 'more than half' of the population of Lhasa is now non-Tibetan, and with the opening of the railway the number of migrants coming to Lhasa is growing rapidly. In the coming years as part of far-ranging plans to attempt to turn Lhasa into a hub of regional trade, the size of the city is to be expanded by 60% and accommodate a population increase of 110,000 people, according to official reports. Some Chinese scholars and policy makers expressed concern about this trend even before the riot erupted in Lhasa in March. Chinese academic Ma Rong from Beijing University pointed out as early as 2003 that the trend of using migrant labor within centrally managed development strategies in the western regions of the PRC including Tibet, coupled with neglecting to provide adequate education and training opportunities for local people created the risk of serious ethnic tensions. (2)

## **Provincial leaders visit Kardze to inspect security work; new police stations to be opened in monasteries**

A group of senior officials visited a rural Tibetan area of Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) prefecture in Sichuan (the Tibetan area of Kham) last week in order to 'inspect grass roots police work', according to a report on the Ganzi Prefecture government website (<http://www.gzz.gov.cn/DocInfo.aspx?docid=21844>, published on September 9). Sichuan Party Secretary Liu Qibao led a delegation of leaders including head of the provincial United Front Chen Guangzhi, head of the provincial Public Security Bureau Zeng Shengquan, and head of the provincial religious affairs bureau Wang Zengjian, on an inspection of Nyarong (Chinese: Dagai) township police station. During the visit, Liu Qibao specified that the construction of police stations and headquarters for police in monasteries in the area should be extended to ensure that they are opened and in operation before the end of the year. While it is common for major monasteries to have police stations *in situ*, until now there have not been bases for police officials in some of the smaller monasteries in rural regions.

The visit indicates the continued focus on the security crackdown in the wake of peaceful protests by monks and nuns in Kardze from March onwards, continuing into August. Sweeping new measures introduced in Kardze to purge monasteries of monks and restrict religious practice in the wake of these protests reveal a systematic new attack on Tibetan Buddhism that is reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution. The new measures, which apply to hundreds of monasteries in the region, strike at the heart of Tibetan religious identity at a time of unprecedented tension in Tibet. (See ICT report, including translation of the new measures, at <http://savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=1341>).

During the visit, Liu Qibao said that: "Police stations must deeply understand the situation under their jurisdictions, and on the basis of clearly knowing the truth and the overall situation, take strong and practical management measures to strengthen the scope of management according to law" and that they "must practically and properly serve the people".

At least 12 unarmed Tibetan protestors in Kardze were shot dead by security personnel in recent months during the peaceful demonstrations in the area, and hundreds of Tibetan monks, nuns and laypeople remain in prison after being subjected to severe brutality in detention.

## **Tibetans recognized by 'Civilization Committee' after March protests**

The official newspaper Tibet Daily has named a number of Tibetans and Chinese residents in Tibet as 'moral exemplars' for their ideological and other work following the March protests, inviting readers to vote for the most virtuous in a poll run by the 'TAR Civilization Committee' last week ([http://epaper.chinatibetnews.com/xzrb/html/2008-09/08/node\\_4.htm](http://epaper.chinatibetnews.com/xzrb/html/2008-09/08/node_4.htm)). One of the Tibetans, named as Lagui, a male, was apparently serving on the work team of Shungseb (Chinese: Xiongse) nunnery in Lhasa when nuns decided to carry out a protest. The report, which gives previously unknown detail on this incident, states: "On March 14, there was an incident where 19 of the monastery's nuns left the monastery in the direction of Lhasa, and as soon as heard he immediately reported the relevant information to the county Party committee and government. The 19 nuns who had left were persuaded on the road to return, and there were no serious consequences as a result; that afternoon, there was another incident where as many as 100 nuns attempted to leave for Lhasa, but along with comrades from the monastery's Democratic Management Committee, he explained the situation to them, thereby making great efforts towards the monastery's stability and social stability."

Another Tibetan named as a moral exemplar is Zongluo Xiangba Kezhu, chairman of the Qiangbalin Monastery Democratic Management Committee in Chamdo (Chinese: Qamdo), and described as "a fiercely patriotic and law abiding religious personage". According to Tibet Daily, Zongluo Xiangba Kezhu "answered the Party's call and in accordance with the regional Party committee's deployments engaged in resolute struggle with the Dalai-led splittists. He solemnly and righteously pointed out that 'The Dalai clique's activities are profoundly counter to the to the basic teachings and discipline of

Buddhism, and have damaged to normal progress of Tibetan Buddhism and cast aspersions on its good name. Monks should be benevolent, have the well-being of others at heart, and uphold the state above and the people below."

The praise for Zongluo Xiangba Kezhu (a Chinese transliteration of a Tibetan name) reflects the Party's priorities in the imposition of 'patriotic education', which has been dramatically stepped up in Tibet since the protests in March. Political allegiance is an official prerequisite for registration at monasteries and nunneries and to be considered by the state as a 'religious person'. This is an inversion of the priorities of a Buddhist practitioner, whose focus would naturally be to their spiritual path or religion first.

#### Footnotes

**1**'Educating for exclusion in western China: the case of multi-ethnic urban centers in Qinghai', forthcoming paper by economist Andrew Fischer.

**2**Ma Rong, 'Economic development, labor transference, and minority education in the west of China', Development and Society, Vol 32, No 2, December 2003, pp 125-145.

This report can be found online at <http://savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=1362>

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