

# FAR EAST

SPOTLIGHT

## WHAT ABOUT

## TIBET?

1. Who has lawful sovereignty over Tibet .
2. Brief historical survey on sovereignty over Tibet.
3. Source of accusation of "aggression against Tibet" by People's Republic of China

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Issued by The Committee For A Democratic Far Eastern Policy  
Room 331 -- 80 East 11th Street -- New York, 3, New York

The advance of Chinese troops into Tibet has stirred up a hornet's nest of charges in the American press of Chinese aggression against Tibet. Since little is popularly known of Tibet's relationship to China, the impression has gained ground that the People's Republic of China has wantonly attacked a peaceful neighbor. The fact is that for more than three hundred years Tibet has been part of China just as much as Manchuria and Sinkiang are integral parts of China. Tibet, throughout, acknowledged the sovereignty of the Chinese ruler in Peking. Even as early as the thirteenth century, Kubla Khan as emperor of China, selected the sovereign of the Tibetans.

There has not been a single country, including the United States and Great Britain, which until 1949 raised any question as to Tibet being a part of China, nor had there been, up to that time, a Tibetan or a Chinese leader who questioned this relationship. Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the First Chinese Republic, repeatedly affirmed China's sovereignty over Tibet. Chiang Kai-shek in his book "China's Destiny" declares: "Following the conversion of the Tufans in Tibet to Buddhism the orientation of Tibet's development was toward China.....Thus, Tibet's period of assimilation has lasted over thirteen hundred years." (1) He referred to Tibetans as one of the "five peoples designated in China." (2)

The question of Tibet's 'independence' of China is thus of recent vintage and very much associated with the defeat and flight of Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan (Formosa) and the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

During the course of over one hundred years Great Britain, based on its possession of India and Burma, came to exercise a dominant influence over Tibet. In 1861 the strategic border region of Sikkim (a province of Tibet adjoining India)

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(1) CHIANG KAI-SHEK - China's Destiny & Chinese Economic Theory - Roy Publ., N.Y.  
1947 - page 38

(2) Ibid - page 40

was compelled to sign a treaty with Great Britain under which Great Britain took over the conduct of its foreign affairs and Sikkim pledged to place its military forces at the disposal of the British. In March, 1890, China was compelled by England to sign a treaty which recognized the British "protectorate" over Sikkim. The treaty, however, reaffirmed China's sovereignty over Tibet. On January 8, 1903 Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, proposed to the British government to launch an attack on Tibet since "the military power of the Tibetans is very low and would not involve serious resistance." Accordingly, in August, 1904 a British expedition of three thousand troops invaded Tibet and compelled the government to exempt British imports into Tibet of any duty, and required Tibet to pay over five hundred thousand pounds sterling "as indemnities for the expenses entailed by the dispatch of British troops." By an agreement made on August 31, 1907, England again pledged herself, together with Russia, to recognize China's sovereignty over Tibet. In the fall of 1913, England again, in the Simla Agreement, though ostensibly recognizing China's sovereignty over Tibet, sought to sever part of Tibet by providing for an "Inner" Tibet to remain under China's control and an "Outer" Tibet to become "autonomous." So highly have the British valued their position in Tibet that, even now, after the formation of the Indian government, the Indian Government's representative in Tibet remains an Englishman.

More recently American interest in Tibet has been shown in the visit of Lowell Thomas, whose consultations with the ruler of Tibet, the Dalai Lama, on American military assistance, has been followed by the arrival of American officers and military equipment via Darjeeling, India to Lhasa in Tibet. The agreement to transport through Indian territory was made directly by United States Ambassador Henderson with Nehru. The New York Times' correspondent on December 6, 1950, reported that Lloyd V. Steer, Minister-Counsellor of the United States Embassy in New Delhi had flown together with British diplomatic representatives to Tibet's border

region of Sikkim in connection with the signing of a treaty granting India the right to station troops in Sikkim.

The historical record thus shows that hand in hand with formal recognition of China's sovereignty over Tibet has been the actual control exercised by Great Britain and the increasing influence of the United States. It becomes clear that charges of aggression by China against Tibet are based not on the question of lawful sovereignty over Tibet, but on the fact that China is now in a position to effectively exercise this sovereignty thus excluding British and American domination of an integral part of China.

It is interesting to note a developing technique on the part of the Western powers towards those areas of China which they consider necessary to their strategic interests. In relation to Formosa and now Tibet this technique consists of trying to detach whole areas long acknowledged to be Chinese and opening up long settled questions of sovereignty.

The historical and profound association of Tibet with China is, however, not a bagatelle to be retained or severed as the interests of foreign powers dictate. The Tibetan people, after a long period of foreign domination now have the prospect of establishing a truly independent Tibet together with the rest of the people of China.

The disparity of views expressed on Tibet in the American and Chinese press give point to the adage of Lincoln that "The wolf and the lamb are not agreed on the definition of liberty."