

Tibet: Chronology from 1900

From the start of the 20th Century to the present, Tibet has endured arguably the period of greatest change and hardship in its long history. This chronology outlines some of the major events to occur in this time.

1904

British military expedition led by Colonel Francis Younghusband enters Lhasa and UK trade mission established under the Lhasa Treaty agreed with the Tibetan government

1911

UK government recognises Tibet as de facto independent and official communications are conducted directly with the Tibetan government.

1921

Following delays in agreeing the Chinese, Tibetan, British Convention of 1914, British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, informs the Chinese Foreign Minister that the British Government recognizes Tibet as an autonomous state under the suzerainty of China and will conduct future business on this basis.

6 July 1935

Lhamo Thondup is born to a farming family in the village of Taktser, Amdo region of Tibet.

1937

The two-year-old Lhamo Thondup is recognised as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama and is renamed Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso.

22 February 1940

As the 14th Dalai Lama, four-year-old Tenzin Gyatso is formally enthroned in Lhasa and begins his education as a Buddhist monk.

1948

The United Nations' Universal Declaration for Human Rights was set out and proclaims "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world"

1949

The People's Liberation Army of the People's Republic of China cross the Tibetan border and begin the process of the 'liberation' of Tibet

1950

In October, over 40,000 Chinese troops attack the capital of the Tibetan region of Chamdo. The 8,000 strong Tibetan Army was quickly crushed with 4,000 Tibetans killed. On 17 November, an emergency session of the Tibetan National Assembly is convened, the Dalai Lama, at only 15, assumes full authority as Head of State.

1951

Under extreme pressure, a Tibetan delegation in Beijing signs the Seventeen-Point Agreement. In return for pledging to safeguard Tibet's political system, guarantee Tibetan autonomy and respect the Buddhist religion, this gives China control over Tibet's external affairs and allows Chinese military occupation. The agreement is not recognised by the Tibetan government; Over 20,000 Chinese troops enter Lhasa.

1954

With Great Britain and America refusing to intervene in the rapidly worsening situation, the Dalai Lama travels to Beijing to engage in peace talks and meets Mao Tse-tung, Chou En-lai, Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders. His efforts are thwarted by Beijing's unflinching and ruthless stance.

1956

Whilst visiting India for 2,500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations, the Dalai Lama holds discussions with Indian Prime Minister Nehru and Chou En-lai. Despite the Chinese government agreeing to postpone the 'social and democratic reforms' in Tibet, conditions continue to deteriorate.

10 March 1959

With fears for the Dalai Lama's life, Lhasa erupts into protest calling on China to leave Tibet. The uprising is brutally crushed by the occupying Chinese army and over the next six months around 87,000 Tibetans are killed as a result of the unrest.

17 March 1959

The Dalai Lama, disguised as a soldier, leaves Lhasa to escape to India. En-route to India, he declared the new administration installed in Lhasa was totally controlled by the Chinese and would never be recognised by the people of Tibet. Upon arrival in India, the Dalai Lama re-established the Tibetan Government in exile. In the ensuing months, over 80,000 Tibetans cross the Himalayas to India.

1959

Tibet Society, the world's first Tibet support group, was formed by Hugh Richardson, who had been the British representative in Lhasa in the 30s and 40s along with other ex-diplomats and foreign office officials.

1959, 1961, 1965

Resolutions in support of Tibet are passed at the United Nations calling for: respect for the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people and for their distinctive cultural and religious life.

1963

Tibet sealed off and foreign visitors banned. This shutdown lasts eight years until 1971. The Dalai Lama approved a democratic constitution for the Tibetan people and began the development of one of the world's newest democracies.

1965

The Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) is established by the Chinese government.

1966

The Cultural Revolution reaches Tibet resulting in the widespread destruction and dissolution of monasteries, with monks

and nuns cast out onto the land. Many ancient and valuable religious and cultural artefacts destroyed.

1970s

On-going programme of large-scale relocation of Han Chinese into Tibet. In the late 70s as the Cultural Revolution comes to an end there is some easing of repression.

January 1979

Gyalo Tondup, elder brother to the Dalai Lama visited Beijing. Following this, the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Government in Exile sent three fact-finding delegations to Tibet in 1979 and 1980.

1987

At the Congressional Human Rights Caucus in Washington, the Dalai Lama proposes a Five-Point Peace Plan as a first stage towards resolving the conflict in Tibet.

1988

In an address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, the Dalai Lama elaborates on the Five-Point Peace Plan and puts forward his 'Middle Way' approach. This suggests a meaningful autonomy within the People's Republic of China, whereby Tibet would be a self-governing democratic political entity founded on law by agreement of the people for the common good.

March 1989

The Chinese authorities impose martial law in Tibet after a series of protests and riots broke out calling for human rights to be respected, for an end to Chinese oppression and for Tibetan independence.

10 December 1989

The Dalai Lama is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

1993

Behind the scenes contact between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government are broken off.

1995

Six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is recognised by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, the second most important figure in Tibetan Buddhism. Chinese authorities place the boy under house arrest and enthrone another six-year Tibetan boy, Gyancaïn Norbu, as their official Panchen Lama.

2002

Communication between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government resumes after a break of nine years with a round of informal discussions in Beijing. Since then there have been five further rounds with no tangible results.

2006

The Golmud-Lhasa railway link opens bringing mass tourism from mainland China and an added huge influx of Han Chinese migrants further marginalising Tibetans inside Tibet. Mandarin is now the commonly used language in Lhasa.

2007

President George Bush presents the Dalai Lama with top civilian medal in the US, the Congressional Gold Medal. The Chinese regime in Tibet steps up its 're-education' policy where Tibetan monks and nuns are forced to denounce their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

2008

In desperation of the increasingly hard-line policies of the Chinese authorities, monks demonstrate in Lhasa on 10 March. Following a severe crackdown by the local Chinese regime, protests and demonstrations by Tibetan people spread throughout the Tibet Autonomous Region and other traditionally Tibetan areas. Hundreds of Tibetans are killed or injured by the Chinese People's Police and troops. Thousands more are detained.

Tibet Society, the world's first Tibet support group, was founded in 1959. Funded by its members, it has been working for over 50 years to seek justice for Tibet through parliamentary lobbying, campaigns and actions. Help keep Tibet alive by joining Tibet Society today. (Annual membership £24; Family £36; Life £500).

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