

The Potala Palace is no longer the first sight pilgrims see when approaching Lhasa.

Even for China, Tibetans are poor. Per capita income is estimated at just \$80, half the average for China as a whole. Officially illiteracy is 52 percent, although exiles claim the figure is closer to 80 percent. Life expectancy is 20 years lower than in China proper.

While valley dwellers grow barley and other crops, many Tibetans remain nomadic sheep and yak herders who roam the barren hills and valleys. Thousands of them descend from the higher altitudes to Lhasa as winter approaches, erecting yak-skin tents almost in the shadow of the mighty Potala. Clad in furry wraps, families cook over open fires as barefoot children scamper about, their faces smeared with yak oil for protection from the

strong sun.

The visitor readily detects a Chinese disdain for these "barbarians," who they give as wide a berth as possible. Despite the incentives, it is evident the settlers still consider life in Tibet to involve considerable sacrifice. The two peoples are ethnically distant, and Tibetan resistance to adopting Chinese customs also contributes to Chinese frustrations at being unable to wipe out what they still consider the old "feudal ways."

Most land in pre-1950 Tibet was owned by the state and the monasteries, which over time accumulated great power and wealth. Although tenant farmers were bound to their estates, Tibetans reject characterizing them

as "slaves" or "serfs."

Moreover, throughout history Tibetans have been renowned as traders, owing largely to the difficulties of eking a living from such barren terrain. Merchants, craftspeople, nomads and semi-nomadic farmers comprised much of the population and also defy such a classification.

Nonetheless, few dispute the rigidity or closed nature of the "old Tibet" as a theocratic state, with political and spiritual power firmly embodied in one person. Even the Dalai Lama agrees the pre-1950 system was in need of reform, but says the invasion and subsequent events stole the opportunity.

"Change had to come, but few can believe the destruction has benefitted the Tibetan

people," he once told an interviewer.

Although the liberalization of the '70s eased the destruction wrought by the Cultural Revolution, Tibetans remain highly suspicious of Chinese intentions. Since 1979 Beijing has made overtures for the exiled leader to return, citing the new leniency and openness. But he would have to live in Beijing and represent Tibet in national affairs.

The exiled leader has stated he will return "only if the Tibetan people are satisfied with the situation." He has often expressed skepticism at China's offers, pointing out the unpredictable nature of the Chinese leadership.

Due to its prior isolation, Tibet received little diplomatic support as the process of annexation by China began in 1950. Even today no government recognizes the Dalai Lama's "government-in-exile," although he receives sympathy on his frequent trips abroad. The U.S. has recognized Tibet to be an integral part of China since 1978.

The Tibetan leader had just completed a trip to Washington, D.C., when the recent trouble began. Testifying before a congressional panel, he reportedly proposed a plan calling for the withdrawal of Chinese troops from Tibet, an end to the policy of Chinese settlement and negotiations over Tibet's future.

Senate conflicts with U.S. State Department:

On October 6 the Senate voted 98-0 to protest the Chinese crackdown in Tibet. The measure urges President Reagan to meet with the Dalai Lama and requires the administration to certify that progress is being made regarding human rights violations before making further arms sales to China.

The same day, however, the State Department criticized the Senate action as potentially harmful to relations with Beijing. Just prior to the outbreak of unrest, a State Department report noted steady progress had been made in Tibet since 1980, including Beijing's "commitment to preserve Tibet's unique cultural, linguistic and religious trad-

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with China go back many centuries

previously both Tibet and China rivalled each other for power—Tibetan troops even occupied the Chinese capital of X-ian in 763 A.D.—for the first time both were incorporated into a single political entity.

A crucial difference, however, was the growing strength of four separate Buddhist sects in Tibet, which ultimately wielded great political as well as spiritual power. These sects allowed Tibet to evolve a kind of pope/emperor relationship with the Mongol rulers, avoiding the outright conquest China suffered.

In the 16th century Tibetan abbot Sonam Gyatso succeeded in uniting numerous warring factions and had close relations with Emperor Altan Khan. The latter conferred on Gyatso the title "Dalai Lama" (Ocean of Wisdom) in 1578.

With the granting of the distinction posthumously on two previous lamas, or high monks, Gyatso became third in this line of 14 leaders who ruled Tibet until 1959. Tibetans esteem the Dalai Lamas as reincarnations of Chenrezi, a famed Bodhisattva (a person who has almost

achieved enlightenment, as did the Buddha).

Ancient Tibet reached its apogee under the "Great Fifth" Dalai Lama, who made a famous voyage to Beijing in the 17th century. That trip illustrates the differing-historical claims of China and Tibet. Tibetans say the Ming dynasty emperor received him as a sovereign of equal rank; the Chinese say he merely represented Tibet as a vassal state.

Successive Dalai Lamas proved weak rulers, and as the Manchus came to power in China, Chinese control over Tibet steadily increased. China wielded nominal control over Tibet as it vied with imperial Britain (in neighboring India) and czarist Russia for influence in Asia in the late 19th century.

British concerns over Tibetan relations with Russia led to a 1904 British military "expedition" that forced its way into Tibet, bringing a large group of Westerners to Lhasa for the first time and resulting in a treaty between the two.

Ironically, the 13th Dalai Lama sought help in China at the time; he later fled to India during tumultuous events preceding the 1911 overthrow of the Manchu dynasty, which afforded the opportunity for the Tibetans to finally expel the Chinese.

But the Chinese were back in force in 1950, as the recently victorious Communists under Mao arrived to reincorporate Tibet "back into the motherland."

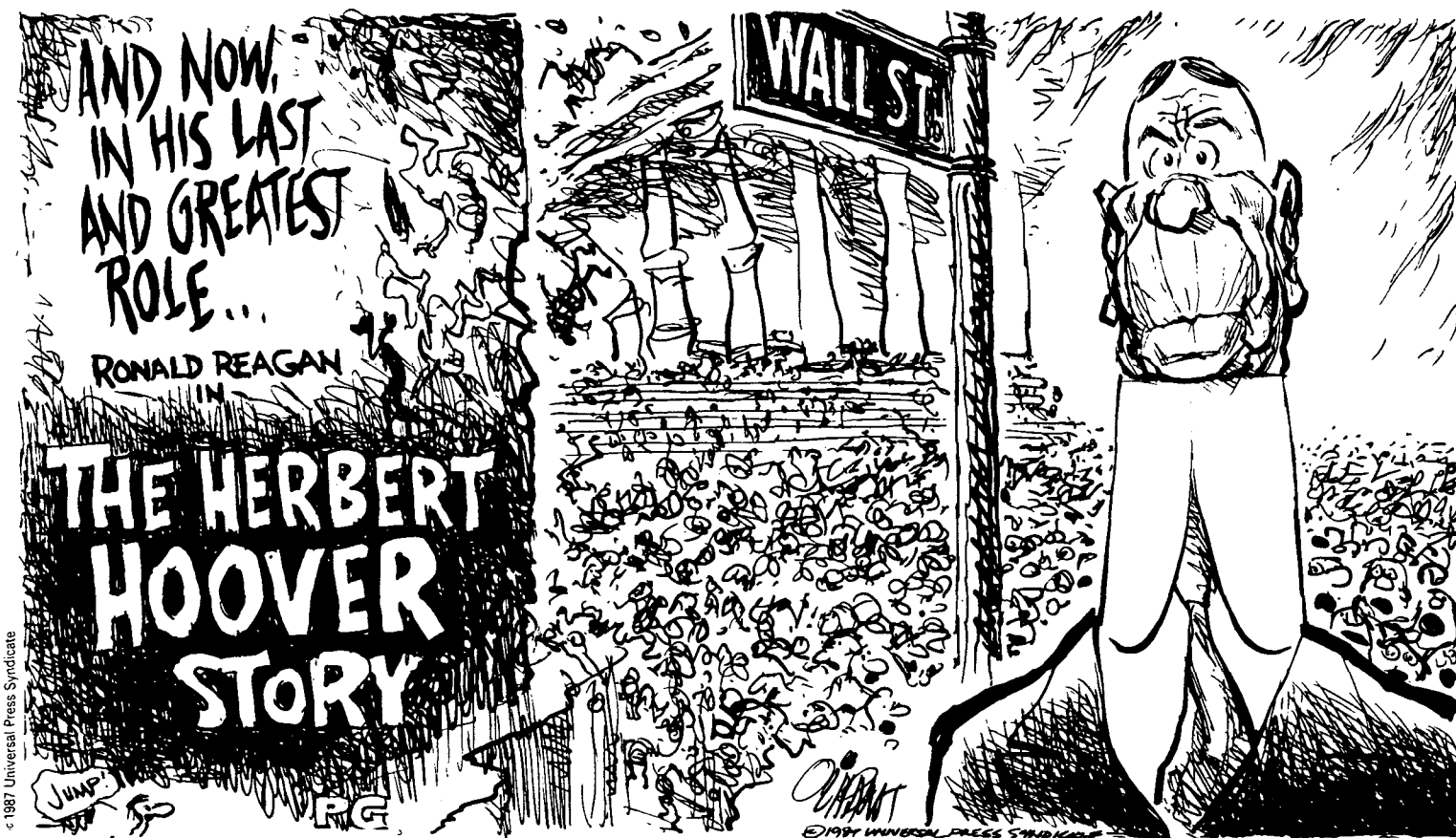
Under the hastily-installed 14th Dalai Lama, then just 16 years old, Tibet was forced to sign an agreement in 1951 acknowledging Chinese control over defense and foreign affairs, but which supposedly allowed for autonomy in internal matters.

Increasing Chinese control in the '50s sparked a rebellion aided by the CIA in one of its lesser-known operations. Clashes between a Tibetan guerrilla army and the Chinese culminated in a bloody uprising in March 1959 that forced the Dalai Lama to flee into exile in India. An estimated 87,000 Tibetans died as the Chinese crushed the insurrection.

The CIA-supported resistance continued throughout the '60s and included training of guerrilla fighters in Colorado. Fighting a hit-and-run war in the almost treeless Tibetan terrain proved extremely difficult, however, and the war effort eventually ended with the "opening" to China in the early '70s.

The takeover has widely been interpreted as strategic, with Beijing interested in holding "the high ground" in Central Asia. Today the Chinese maintain a heavy military presence in Tibet, where a border dispute with India has remained unresolved since the two Asian giants fought a brief war in 1962. China is also thought to have nuclear sites in Tibet, which now comprises one-fourth of China's total area.

-W.G.



A utopian dream turns to common sense

So far, President Reagan and the majority of Republicans and Democrats in Congress seem, in different ways, to be following in Herbert Hoover's footsteps. Reagan, like Hoover after the crash of 1929, seems unaware of the dangers facing the nation. The president's utterances that the economy is sound and the stock market crash is a normal adjustment to an overheated market bring to mind Hoover's naive contention that a return to prosperity was just around the corner. Meanwhile Congress, also like Hoover, is calling for increased taxes in order to balance the budget.

But of course this is not 1929. Things are both better and worse. As a result of the New Deal regulatory reforms and social welfare programs, there are many mechanisms in place to moderate the effects of a deeply troubled economy. These can be counted on to offer some protection against a return to the days of the Great Depression. On the other hand, the underlying problems may prove more intractable. Without a drastic change in our social priorities—and the economic policies that they entail—we may be in for a long slide into depression.

The triggers for the stock market panic seem to have been a combination of another near-record trade deficit in August and a rise in West German interest rates. These are related to a federal deficit that has risen more under Reagan than under all previous presidents put together—which is why, as House Ways and Means Chairman Dan Rostenkowski (D-IL) says, the need to reduce the deficit is "present in every analysis." And indeed, most Democrats and Republicans are saying the deficit should be reduced by a combination of social spending cuts and tax increases, even though both tend to constrict the economy.

Fear of such a constriction has spawned unusual agreement between Keynesians and supply-siders. Both groups fear that the proposals for deficit reduction will spawn a new depression. The Keynesians object most strongly to a reduction in social spending that will lead directly to a reduction in income available for consumption. The supply-siders claim that any tax increase will reduce, rather than increase, revenues because of a disincentive to invest that higher taxes supposedly cause.

Reagan, of course, has been a secret Keynesian—he may not even

realize it himself. The American economy has been kept going these past seven years in large part by unprecedented pump-priming in the form of military spending. But Reagan's military Keynesianism, unlike the traditional form, has contributed greatly to the present problems. It has done so because the large deficit did not increase consumer spending. It served instead mainly to enrich military contractors, even while the Reagan tax cuts were putting billions of extra dollars into the pockets of the wealthy. The result was lots of excess capital at a time of declining real income for working people, which meant a relative loss of purchasing power and, therefore of incentive to invest in productive enterprises.

The outcome of that, as we know too well, was a booming speculative stock market, mergers and leveraged buyouts, as well as other forms of unproductive investment. These were accompanied by high interest rates caused by heavy government borrowing, which pulled capital from all over the world into American financial markets. Thus the vast increase in investor income under Reagan went into all the wrong kinds of investments.

But even if it is a good idea to reduce the deficit now in order to bring greater stability to financial markets, it is a terrible idea to cut social spending or to increase taxes on low- and middle-income consumers. To do that is only to flirt with depression. In short, every policy alternative designed to solve one problem exacerbates another—or so it seems to those who accept the social priorities of the Cold War era.

In fact, there is another alternative. It is to increase taxes only on the wealthy—to bring back, or into being for the first time, a genuinely progressive tax system—and to reverse our priorities in government spending by drastically cutting military expenditures and vastly increasing spending on education, health care, housing and the infrastructure. That would make possible a more nearly balanced budget, while increasing popular purchasing power, and, therefore, the need for productive investment. The political problem, however, is that it would require a head-on challenge by the Democratic Party to the central Cold War myth of a Soviet threat. It would require vision and the courage to argue that the true defense of our nation does not lie in preparation for a war that will never occur, but in a commitment to the realization of the promise of American democracy. And it will require abandonment of the idea that all nations must be created in our image. It seems today a utopian aim. But it may not be too long when that will seem the only realistic path.

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