Chapter III


Communist reforms have been a major policy thrust towards minority areas in Communist states with different ethnic groups. The main objective of these reforms is to assimilate and integrate the minority nationalities into a 'majority whole'. Besides they want the world to believe that these nationalities and their respective home lands are in a better position in terms of material progress than others. This chapter analyses the nature and content of reforms launched since communist takeover of Tibet and Kazakhstan. Focus will be on the reforms in the last decade — Deng’s modernization policies and Gorbachev’s perestroika and glasnost. Towards the end, the impact of these reforms on ethnic relations in both the cases will be discussed.


At the time of incorporation of Tibet into Communist China, it was a primitive land with a feudal social structure and a pre-industrial economy. For the newly emerged Communist China, Soviet path to socialism was thought to be the most modern to follow Soviet economy emphasized the development of heavy industry and the rapid collectivisation of agriculture. In Chinese terms, this meant extending party as well as People’s Liberation Army (PLA) control over all regions and provinces and re-organising a unified bureaucracy starting afresh to build up heavy industry and carrying
out basic land reforms throughout the country. The Han referred to Tibet as a land of 'three great lakhs', (fuel, communication, people) and of 'three abundances' (poverty, oppression, terror of the supernatural). The initial tasks the Chinese set to themselves were to survey the land, restructure the local governing organs and establish a network of transportation and communication facilities. Hence within a decade of communist rule in Tibet, roads were constructed, communications network was introduced and books and pamphlets were published in Han and Tibetan languages. All these developments took place within a decade of Communist rule in Tibet.

Initially, there was no pressure for reform and although many cadres were sent to Tibet, they made Tibetans believe that they had come to Tibet to help the Tibetans and they would leave when Tibet is 'improved'. Their actions proved they had different motives. The interference of Peking in the domestic affairs of Tibet became more pronounced year after year. Economic exploitation was accompanied by the attempt to destroy the country's religious traditions, to impose a social order founded on collectivisation. Resistance to Chinese reforms began in Amdo and Khan in 1956 when democratic reforms were first announced. Later, a major rebellion took place in


1959. The PLA brought the whole of Tibet under its control. The socialist frenzy of the 'Great Leap Forward' led the Chinese to pursue reforms despite increasing revolt in various parts of Tibet. As revolt in Tibet escalated, the Chinese gradually abandoned the strategy of the nationalities policy in favour of coercion. The situation in Tibet was a result, in part, of the policies of the Great Leap, but the revolt and the measures taken to suppress it also contributed to the militarisation and xenophobia of Chinese politics at the time. The Tibetan Revolt was a major international embarrassment for the Chinese and for Mao; it must be considered one of the factors in Mao's eclipse and in the retrenchment policies of the early 60s.\(^5\)

The Tibetan Autonomous Region was established in 1965, but Han Officials have continued to dominate the most senior echelon of the Party. Ill conceived agricultural innovations — such as the introduction of wheat in areas unsuitable for it — resulted in serious famine between 1961 and 1964 and again in the late 1960s,\(^6\) which was unknown in Tibet’s history. Food was taken from Tibetans for the Chinese in Tibet and for the provinces adjacent to Tibet. Thousands of Tibetans who had been imprisoned after the revolt were confined in agricultural labor camps where they produced food for the Chinese while they themselves were starved.\(^7\)

From 1966 onwards, to a much greater degree than any Chinese province or region, Tibet suffered agony from the horrors of the cultural revolution. Monasteries

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7. Waren Smith, op.cit, n.3, p.68.
were destroyed across the country. According to the Chinese government's most faithful Tibetan ally, Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, the cultural revolution dragged all of China into an abyss of suffering and pain. Tibet was caught up in a groundswell that suddenly placed all its promising achievements in jeopardy. "Taking Tibet's actual conditions into consideration", a principle advocated by China's moderates, was denounced for betraying a defeatist attitude, while the "gradual development of Tibet" was held to signify preparing the ground for the restoration of capitalism. The 'United Front' approach based on respect for Tibet's national identity and religious beliefs, designed to win over the population to socialism, was stupidly forsaken. Religious leaders, and patriotic members of the well-to-do classes were branded monsters and demons. The monasteries seen as the vestiges of obsolete superstitions were often razed. Particularly after 1969, Communes were set up all over Tibet with no thought for productivity. These measures seriously dampened the enthusiasm of the Tibetan peasants and nomads, and production dropped, leading to a marked deterioration in the population's standard of living.8

Thus, during this phase of Chinese rule, all traditional social and economic institutions were destroyed - or at least banned - and a full-scale effort was launched to transform the values and belief system of the nomads and of course everyone in Tibet and China. If there is a period where the term ethnocide could be applied, it would

clearly be the decade from 1966 to 1976. It is to be noted that these years also brought increased tension between the Hans and the Tibetans.

After, the cultural Revolution, the CCP changed its emphasis from ideological struggle to economic work, initiating a restructuring of the economic and social relations especially the countryside. This change of course of reform was also the result of the death of Mao in 1976. Factional strife in Tibet during the Cultural Revolution resulted in control by the hard-line faction, associated with the former PLA cadres of the Xinjian Command, until the early 1980s. Collectivisation was continued under the guidance of Ren Rong, who emerged as the TAR party secretary. Communes which had been experimentally established in 1964, were set up in 34 per cent of the townships of the TAR by 1970 and in 90 per cent by 1974. Tibet was said to have leapfrogged the stage of co-operatives. In parts of the country where resistance to communal ownership was strongest, the army was called in to help. By December 1975, the Collectivization of Tibet's countryside was virtually complete, and there were almost 2,000 communes scattered throughout almost every district of central Tibet.

Another element which needs mention and which is very revealing of China's intentions in Tibet: the arrival of tens of thousands of Chinese settlers sent by the order


53
of the central government in Peking. Their massive transfer started in earnest in 1975. A China-wide census carried out in 1982 put the number of Chinese in Tibet at 96,000, which reflects only the number of Chinese officially registered on the government's lists, and fails to take into account their wives, children and other relatives who joined them on the roof of the world. In Lhasa, for a population of 50,000 Tibetans, there were soon over 100,000 Chinese. New Quarters were specially built for them, and the gray box-like buildings soon surrounded and dwarfed the old Tibetan city. According to the Tibetan government-in-exile, no less than 600,000 Chinese were sent to Central Tibet between 1975 and 1980. This means that where as in 1912 not a single Chinese was left in Tibet after the government had expelled the last Ambans, by 1980 there was atleast one Chinese for every three Tibetan in the heartland of Tibet. 13

In the name of liberalisation, Tibet was to become witness to another new wave of reform since 1980s on the basis of reports by fact-finding delegations, Chinese as well as Tibetan.

Modernisation and Liberalisation (1980-1990)

At its December 1978 Third plenary session in Peking, the II Party Central Committee celebrated the victory of the party's reform-minded win led by Deng Xiaoping. During 1979-80 a much heralded programme of Liberalisation began in Tibet, following the announcement of the four modernisations' programme, which focussed on agriculture, industry, science and technology and military defence in

13. Ibid. p.86.
decreasing order of importance. For the rank and file of well-disciplined party cadres, the new political credo was contained in two slogans: 'economic reform' and 'open-door policy'. The wave of reassessment of almost all former policies, as it was expressed by Hu Yaobang, General secretary of the party, during his inspection trip to Tibet in 1980 should, to a certain extent, be regarded as a sincere effort to take a fresh look at the real political conditions.

Between 22 May and 1 June 1980, Hu Yaobang with Wan Li, the then Vice-Premier toured Tibet. On May 29, Hu Yaobang made a very sincere and passionate political speech at a gathering of 5,000 cadres in Lhasa. The slogan put forward in the speech was strive to build united, prosperous and civilised new Tibet, ('Wei Jianshe Tuanjie, fuyu, wenmingde, Xin, Xizand Xiang nuli douzheng'). He issued a six policy directive. First, autonomy is defined as "having the right to decide for oneself", but this definition is not extended to the political plane: it refers mainly to economic decentralization. Second, the Tibetans should be exempt from taxes and work without pay. They are also free from meeting compulsory state purchase quotas, their products may be purchased at negotiated prices. These economic concessions would last three to five years. Third, a flexible economic policy suited to the specific and actual conditions in Tibet should be carried out with a view to diversifying the whole Tibetan economy. Fourth, Beijing will further increase funds to Tibet Autonomous Region in order to develop the local economy and improve living standards. Fifth, within the socialist framework, it is necessary to make 'vigorous efforts to revive and develop Tibetan

culture, education, and science. All ideas that ignore and weaken Tibetan culture are wrong. Lastly, the Tibetan participation in the local administration should be enlarged: full-time Tibetan cadres should account for more than two-thirds of all government functionaries in Tibet within the next two to three years.15

Hu's directives recognised the Uniqueness of Tibet, its special characteristics and special needs. In principle, they sounded a positive note, for the first time since 1959 acknowledging that Tibet was in fact different from China. They laid the foundation for economic and cultural development during the 1980's.16 A series of measures for revitalization of Tibet were on.

The exemption of Tibetan farmers and herder's from taxes and quota sales was obviously popular. It had been partly offset by the imposition of quotas according to which farmers and nomads must sell a proportion of their produce at fixed prices to government officials.17 As in China, the rural economy was decollectivised, and land and animals were distributed among commune members. The replacement of collectives with a house hold (or 'tent hold') responsibility system has opened up opportunities for private initiative, and the nomads in particular appear to have prospered.18 They used


17. John Bray, op cit, n.6, p.222.

their profits to rebuild and restaff local monasteries. Owing to the liberalization and de-collectivization of the rural sector since 1979, grain production rose to 467,000 tons in 1987, a per capita average of 233 pounds. In 1990, grain production was said to have reached 560,000 tons, 0.13 per cent of China's total production figure. Providing only 253 kilos of grain per capita, it remains well below the all-China average of 335 kilos for the same year.

Industrialization also gained momentum since liberalization started. New towns and factories have been built in traditionally rural areas. Scientific farming and breeding of cattle has become highly valued and welcomed. But compared to other parts of China whatever development has been achieved in Tibet is negligible. Besides the policy of urban and industrial development led to rapid growth of Chinese population. Most of them became permanent settlers in these areas. Chronic poverty and over-population in neighbouring Chinese provinces push Chinese migrants into these border areas, where they find work in mining lumbering and new industrial enterprises. The Tibetan farmers in Qinghai also complain that Chinese are being settled on agricultural land used by Tibetans. Though industrial development on the same scale has not taken place in the TAR, there is no reason to doubt that it would bring the same results. According to Chinese government statistics, industrial production in Tibet for the month of August 1988 was just 11 million yuan or 1/10000th of China's total industrial production. This was 130 times lower than the

figure for Gansu province, one of the poorest in China.\textsuperscript{22} In 1991, the total industrial output value came to 403 million Yuan, a rise of 5.3 times that of 1959.\textsuperscript{23} Despite these impressive figures, the standard of living of Tibetans has not improved remarkably.

There were relaxations in religious and cultural policies. On the level of daily life many of the distinctive markers of Tibetan cultural identity gradually re-appeared. Tibetans frequently wore traditional clothes, men grew their hair long and wore it in braids - fashions which were banned and severely punished during the Cultural Revolution. Tibetans were no longer made to feel ashamed of their culture. Religious observances also appeared in daily life. Tibetans could set up altars in their homes and they could be seen once again praying and making offerings to deities, turning prayer wheels, and visiting holy places on pilgrimage. The customary personal rituals of Tibetan Buddhism, for which Tibetans had received harsh punishments during the Cultural Revolution, could be practiced without interference from the authorities.\textsuperscript{24}

Many temples and monasteries were rebuilt from funds collected by local people and the government. Pilgrims are again allowed to visit Jokhang `Cathedral' in Lhasa and other centres. According to a 1987 official estimate 740 monasteries and other religious sites had been renovated since 1983, and a further 230 were still being repaired. There were then 15,000 monks in the TAR compared with an estimated

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Donnet op.cit, p.148 and Xinhua 8th September 1988.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Schwartz op.cit, n.16, p.16.
\end{itemize}
114,000 before 1959. Though officially sanctioned, the Chinese administration has sought in a variety of ways to control this process of monastic revitalization. The monasteries represent the reappearance of a Tibetan civil society, outside state control, that had lain submerged for two decades.

On educational front the establishment of the Academy of Social Sciences of Tibet was remarkable. It was set up in July 1985. For China, the schools are a powerful weapon in the campaign to sinocize Tibet, reaching far into the most remote inhabited areas. In 1987 the Chinese government adopted legislation to establish Tibetan as the main official language in the TAR. Chinese officials were instructed to study the language. However, this was not put into practice. On the other hand, Tibetans were always forced to learn Chinese, but the Chinese never made a sincere effort to learn Tibetan.

Hu's demand that Chinese cadres be withdrawn from Tibet and that the government of Tibet be placed in the hands of Tibetan cadres, met with only limited success. It not only failed to yield positive results, but it produced the exact opposite of what he sought to achieve. His decision to withdraw 85 per cent of the Chinese cadres met with violent opposition. In the first place, many of the older generation of Tibetan cadres that Hu found on his visit were as opposed to Deng's reforms as their Chinese colleagues - big Han chauvinists. Trained by the military or in cadre schools, this entrenched group made its way up through the party hierarchy during the period of

26. Donnet op.cit, n.12, p.150.
Collectivization in Tibet. They feared any policy which will erode their power. This group of old Tibetan cadres find themselves comfortable with the Chinese and no longer identify themselves with Tibetans. They may be compared with English-educated 'Babus' in India under British rule. The overseers of two decades of repression, they command no respect from ordinary Tibetans; paradoxically they have been the principal beneficiaries of the call to Tibetanize the administration of Tibet.27

During the liberalisation era, the number of Chinese immigrants increased even more rapidly in Tibet, primarily in response to wage increments or bonuses given to Chinese willing to go there. The salary of a cadre in Tibet is often three times higher than a comparable salary 'inside' China. To be precise, in a 1987 statement to the Tibet standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the Panchen Lama complained that 'the expense of keeping one Chinese in Tibet is equal to that of four in China. Why should Tibet spend its money to feed them?' Frankly speaking, except for the lure of easy money no Chinese would like to live in Tibet's inhospitable highlands. In the towns, a whole series of occupations has changed hands; numerous work-shops and stores owned by Tibetans have been forced to close by the unexpected competition.28

According to the most recent report published by the Department of Information of the Dalai Lama's government in exile the transfer of Chinese to Tibet has attained alarming proportions. The real fear is that if the present Chinese policy is successful - and


indications are that it will be - Tibetans will be reduced to a small and insignificant minority in their own country in the same way as Manchus (35 Chinese to one Manchu), the Turkic people (3 to 1) and the Mongolians (5 to 1) have been. The object of this policy is to forcibly "resolve" China's territorial claims over Tibet by means of a massive and irreversible population transfer.²⁹ The Chinese authorities justify the presence of Han people proclaiming they are there to help Tibetans develop their economy and culture.

One more important reform was at the party level. The head of the regional Party in Tibet has always been Chinese, but this trend was changed. Ren Rong, whose career as a political commissar with the Tibet military region goes back to 1965, was head of the regional party from 1971 to 1980, until he was replaced on Hu's orders. His replacement was, another longtime PLA political commissar in Tibet, Yin Fatang, whose career was interrupted by the cultural revolution. Yin claimed to protect the interests of the entrenched old guard in Tibet both Tibetan and Chinese.³⁰ He made an important speech at the second enlarged plenary session of third Regional Chinese Communist Party Committee on 25th April 1984. He said "in order to continue to push the work in Tibet vigorously forward and thus enable our people to become rich as soon as possible, we should first pay great attention to the following four words: change, flexibility, enliven and reform."³¹ He also announced tax exemption policies

³⁰. Schwartz, op. cit, n.16, p.18.
(started since 1980) would be extended through 1990, besides other concessions to
peasants and herders to carry out commercial and other undertakings inside and
outside Tibet. In 1985 Beijing replaced him with an outsider and a reformer, Wu
Jinghua. Wu was committed to implementing the policy of 'openness and reform in
Tibet' and supported programmes to restore' Tibetan culture, religion and language.

Since 1950, with only extremely rare exception, none besides a handful of
Soviet advisers and harmless 'friends of China' had been allowed to travel to China's
Tibet. In 1981, Lhasa was declared an open area accessible to tourists. Since then,
Tibet opened to foreign tourism (and built about half-a-dozen new luxury hotels,
including a Holiday Inn in Lhasa), solicited foreign aid and development funds, and
actively courted the economic participation of the exile community. The number of
tourists grew rapidly - 15,000 in 1985 and 30,000 in 1986. In 1987 China earned 130
million Yaun from the 43,000 tourists. In order to feed the exotic fantasies of the
'foreign friends', greater efforts were made to promote the restoration of some
monasteries and temples. As a part of this policy 200 monasteries and 700 sutra
reciting halls were rebuilt and Monlam a traditional Tibetan religious festival was
allowed to be celebrated with the Panchen Lama in attendance. In opening up,
Tibet's tourism industry has gradually flourished. At present, Tibet has 11 travel

32. Profile of Tibet (I), 'Tibet opens to the outside world' Beijing Review, vol.30, no.42, 19 October 1987, p.16.

33. Schwartz, op. cit, n.16, p.103.

agencies and 19 tourist hotels and guest houses with 3,600 beds for foreign guests. The autonomous region has opened over 60 scenic spots to the public. Between 1980 and 1991, Tibet received 150,900 overseas tourists. However, a major anti-Chinese explosion in September 1987 led the authorities to impose strict controls on foreign visitors. This rebellion was thought to be the most remarkable after the 1959 incident. (These issues will be discussed later in Chapter V)

A new development plan for TAR was announced in 1990. It called for four new economic zones, each with special role to play: a central comprehensive zone based on Lhasa, and Xigaze; an eastern zone for minerals, light industry and forestry, based on Nyingchi and Qamdo, a western border-trade centered on Ngari, and a northern animal husbandry zone centered on Naggu. Ma Lishen, the 52-year old standing deputy chairman of the autonomous region was made incharge of the plan.

More recently China announced the creation of a "special economic and technological zone", with incentives and preferential tax policies to attract domestic and foreign investment. The whole idea is to regularize private domestic Chinese business enterprises in Tibet and to give "Compensatory transfer of land use right" to non-Tibetans. For the first time Tibetan agricultural land was purchased by Chinese farmers in the Lhasa Valley. The significance of this development for the strategy of


economic reform in Tibet was made clear in a speech by Chen Kuiyuan (deputy Secretary of the Party) on 25 July 1992. He declared: "ideological obstacles to reform and opening up come mainly from the left and the old" ....and economic revolution in Tibet must be "accompanied by a social revolution". Here social revolution referred to persistence of traditional attitudes and modes of production as well as resistance of Tibetans to incorporation into a market economy. This new phase of reform once again provoked a sense of crisis in the thinking of Tibetan Cadres. Tibetan struggle for real autonomy continues till date.

Reforms in Kazakhstan since Communist Takeover (1917-1985) : A Review

Kazakhstan too underwent similar process of reforms, like Tibet. Here, the reform policy was designed to deal with central Asian Muslim population as a whole of which Kazakhs were a part.

After the 1917 revolution a series of declarations were addressed to the oppressed nation. A special appeal was issued specifically to the Muslims signed by Lenin in order to bring them under the "Red Umbrella". The central problem in the reform policy had been to maintain a delicate balance between two conflicting interests: to assure the continued dominance of Russian majority and of its values, language, and cultural heritage and at the same time to reduce the alienation of non-Russian nationalities, and to guarantee that they will be equal, valued, and respected members


of a Soviet multi-national community.  

Lenin formulated his policy on the basis of Marxist options, besides developing his own idiosyncratic theory of national self-determination. Statehood was given to some national groups for the first time. But artificial boundaries created confusion when Kazakh areas fell under Uzbek republic. Kazakhs were the first to experience Russian colonization. During the civil War (1918-20) Kazakhstan suffered material as well as human losses. By 1920 tens of thousands of Kazakhs had been killed and some 800,000 Kazakh-kyrgyz nomads had fled to China. The poorer Russian settlers had also suffered horrendously in the civil war. The newly formed communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPKZ) was to remain dominated by Russians, for several decades. Alash Orda was the one and only nationalist party exist:1d at that time.

In 1921 Lenin introduced New economic policy which was aimed at placating the peasantry and consolidating Soviet rule. He tried to woo the Muslim populations besides other non-Russian masses through the medium of their native languages and cultures. More than developing the economy this policy granted symbols of nationhood. Native cadres were given political responsibilities. Lenin believed that this process could speed the rise of the new socialist man who would be capable of ridding

43. Ibid.
himself of national prejudices with its persisting thrust on radical and internationalist ideology.

During 1920's the programme of Korenzatsiia led to creation of schools of Marxist Literature in native languages. Very significant advances in culture were illustrated with the steep rise of publishing in non-Russian languages. In 1928 six book titles per 100,000 persons were published in Kazakh language, which was less than the titles published in Uzbek and Turkomen languages ten each.45

By the end of 1920s Stalin began to abandon New Economic Policy and launched collectivization, the rural terror which was completed by 1937. He also replaced the old party elites by new ones. Alash members who were putting up stiff political resistance were severely attacked. In 1925 Ahmed Baytursun was the first to be purged from CPKZ, and in April 1928 several other leaders were accused of being ultra-nationalists and executed. Kazakhs were charged with having links with China along with Kyrgyz. The purges also included intelligentsia — writers, poets, doctors, scientists, engineers and others. People who had just struggled up the communist ladder by educating themselves were brought down, humiliated and executed. Of 700 writers, many of them from Central Asia, who met at the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934, only 50 survived to see the second congress in 1954.46


Large parts of Kazakhstan, like Siberia, were turned into gulags. In 1937 in the vast Karlag complex of labour camps around Karaganda there was a revolt by inmates which was forcibly put down after 440 prisoners were shot dead. Thousands of communists and nationalists disappeared without trace in the 1930s from these gulags.47

Under collectivization campaign local economic autonomy granted under New Economic Policy was curtailed. Kazakhstan was one of the worst-affected regions during this campaign in the early 1930s to collectivize agriculture and settle nomadic peoples. According to B. Nahalya and V. Swo boda (1990), in the 1930s, Kazakhstan lost through migrations, death, murder, prison, starvation and other causes 1.5 million people or one-third of the entire indigenous population. Thousands of Kazakh nomads fled to China, while many Kazakh clans took up arms, only to be crushed by Red Army cavalry units. Livestock losses were enormous as people killed their animals rather than see them appropriated by the state. The number of cattle shrank from 7.4 million head in 1929, to 1.6 million in 1933, and of sheep from 21.9 million head to 1.7 million.48

The new-collectives that were set up after 1929 were desperately poor. The nomads who were turned into farmers overnight had neither the tools, seed, housing, nor the machinery to carry out even the basic tasks of farming. It was not surprising that out of the 400 agronomists listed on the collectivization process only four were Kazakhs. In 1929 there were only 17,500 communists in the whole of Kazakhstan, the

47. Ibid.

majority of them Russians. Collectivization was followed by the beginnings of
industrialization in Central Asia. Industrial establishments were set up in major cities.
They became industrial islands in a predominantly peasant culture. Not only that they
were autonomous but also had no connection with the agricultural and nomadic base
around them. They were governed by Russians which widened the rural-urban divide in
Kazakhstan. By the spring of 1932 famine was raging across Kazakhstan, and because
it helped destroy local resistance to the communists, little help was forthcoming from
Moscow.\textsuperscript{49} There was also severe repression from the 1930s onwards and Russian
immigration was greatly increased. People deported from parts of the USSR (including
German, Crimean Tatars and Caucasian Peoples) were often sent to Kazakhstan,
causing some resentment among the local inhabitants.\textsuperscript{50} There was some relaxation in
Communist Propaganda after the war as Russian leaders mobilized the population on
the basis of patriotism against the Germans. However, more strict communist control
was to follow under Khrushchev.

Stalin’s immediate successor, N.S. Khrushchev, started the process of de-
stalinisation in 1953. He envisioned his political future on a highly ambitious scheme
that was to have grave consequences for the Kazakh nation. The Kazakh steppes were,
declared virgin territory. "The treatment of the Kazakhs was to demonstrate that the
post-Stalin leadership was quite prepared to ride roughshod over a non-Russian nation
in the name of economic exigencies". The Kazakhs, who were already decimated by

\textsuperscript{49} Robert Conquest, \textit{Harvest of Sorrow}, (London, Arrow

\textsuperscript{50} "Kazakhstan' Introductory Survey, \textit{The Europa World Year
Stalin's brutal Collectivization drive, underwent a second major trial within a quarter of a century in the form of innocuously sounding "Virgin Lands Scheme". Ignoring fears expressed by some experts that "Kazakhstan would re turned into a dust bowl, the authorities allocated land to hundreds of thousands of 'volunteers' from Russia and the Ukraine and ordered them to farm it. For the Russians, it was a new empty frontier country like the wild west to be civilized and developed to meet grain production targets set by Moscow." It was another sign of Russian colonization for the Kazakhs.

This scheme was unsuccessful due to widespread storms and wind erosion and between 1960 and 1964 4 million hectares of farm land were ruined and 12 million hectares were damaged. This was nearly half of the land brought under cultivation in the scheme. Tselinograd, 960 kilometers northwest of Alma-Ata, was the centre of the scheme and called the Virgin Lands city. Now it has reverted back to its old Kazakh name Aqmola, or white Tombs, and the wheat fields have once again become infertile grass lands. This and other schemes, which included the nuclear testing sites in eastern Kazakhstan, the Baikonur space center at Leninsk and the huge industrial sites in the north and east of Kazakhstan, all attracted large numbers of ethnic Russians to the republic: the ethnic Russians proportion of the population rose from 19.7% in 192 to 42.7% in 1959. This explains the large numbers of Russians' presence even today.

51. B. Nahalya and V. Swobode op.cit. no.45, p.115.
54. Europa Year Book, op.cit, n.50, p.1675.
Religious practice were also under attack. Anti-Islam propaganda intensified. Islamic funerals, weddings and veils were banned. The existing few Islamic schools and mosques were shut down. But after the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev's policy took a new course. He condemned some of Stalin's crimes and admitted that under Stalin there had been 'monstrous' and 'gross' violation of the basic Leninistic principles of the nationalities policy of the Soviet state, namely, the entire nation had been deported on spurious ground.55

Within the frame work of central plan, the republics were asked to take initiative with regard to particular branches of economy. Concessions were made to enhance the status of native languages. To some extent this period may be compared to Gorbachev's glasnost of mid 1980s. By 1958 once again liberal course began to backtrack to reduce national distinctions and to create 'Soviet man'. The policy tilted from flourishing of cultures of peoples of the USSR to the acceleration of their eventual 'fusion' or 'merger' (Sliiane). Many purges went on Secretary General of the CPKZ Zhumabai Shaiakhmetov, a Kazakh, and his deputy were replaced with two Russians, one of whom was Leonid Brezhnev. There were many revolts in gulags which were brutally suppressed. The Twenty Second Party Congress crystallized Khrushchev leadership's assimilationist policy. Anti-religious, and anti-national measures were on the rise during the last three years of Khrushchev.

Brezhnev came to power in 1964. This coincided with similar changes in Kazakhstan. Dinmukhamed Kunayev, a Kazakh and a Brezhnev loyalist, was promoted

to the position of First Secretary of the CPKZ he became a member of politburo in 1971 and ruled Kazakhstan for twenty years, until December 1986. The results of 1970 census came as a shock and forced the Soviet leaders to deal with nationality problem more carefully than before. Brezhnev gave non-Russian elites enough freedom to run their republics so long as nationalism was kept under control and the economic performance was not too disastrous. As a result lethargy, corruption, nepotism prevailed and there was slow progress in the economic sphere. In Kazakhstan, Kunayev managed to build his own power base in spite of Russian dominance in important party positions. He put members of his Dzuze clan of the Great Orda into powerful bureaucratic positions. A new Kazakh political mafia developed, owing complete allegiance to Moscow but at times pretended to take a nationalist position in order to ensure that Kazakh nationalism was not channeled into anti-Soviet feeling. Brezhnev was accused of creating a period of 'stagnation'. His successors Andropov and Chernenko followed more cautious policies.

Kazakhstan also witnessed an era of stagnation under Kunayev's regime. The rampant corruption and protests by local Russians and the mafia style politics of his entourage encouraged newly elected first secretary of CPSU Michael Gorbachev to sack Kunayev in December 1986 and replace him by an ethnic Russian, Gennedy Kolbin. Kazakhs were very unhappy and felt insulted at this gesture, which reflected in their anti-Russian and nationalist feelings in the years ahead.

Reforms in Gorbachev Era

Gorbachev's arrival in March 1985 into Soviet Politics led to beginnings of democratization in April 1985 and placed the Soviet state in a complex and historical situation. He launched Perestroika (Restructuring) and Glasnost (openness) with a view to solve the Soviet crisis at various levels. Among the Central Asian Republics, Kazakhstan dominated the scene throughout Gorbachev's period with significant developments. The first and foremost event which shocked the Soviet leaders was Alma-Ata riots. Few days after Kolbin was brought to power, anti-Russian riots broke out on 17 December 1986, against his appointment. The causes consequences and nature of the riots will be discussed in detail in the next chapter (Chapter V). Martial law was imposed to control the agitating Kazakhs. In some towns it continued until the end of 1987. Gorbachev's initial occupation with economic and political reform and focus on efficiency undermined the importance of ethnic relations. His reforms unleashed an unprecedented tide of protests and demonstrations in which national grievances occupied a central place alongside economic unrest. His liberalizing policies in political and economic spheres had ethnic consequences. After Kazakh riots the issue of ethnic relations was forced to the centre of attention by Soviet authorities. Gorbachev realised that the nationalities question was not a peripheral one but stood at the heart of the issue of reform itself. Speaking at the plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee on January 27, 1987, Gorbachev stressed the need to present "a real picture of relations between nationalities and the prospects for their development and efforts be made to save the rising generation from the demoralising effect of (narrow)
nationalism."  

A study group to examine public opinion in the republic was established under the auspices of Kazakhstan's Communist Party's propaganda and agitation department. Its main aim was to prevent the recurrence of such riots. Many were sentenced to death for provoking young people to participate in Alma-Ata riots. Resolutions were passed to improve the instruction of Kazakh as well as Russian language in schools. Besides German, Korean, Dungan languages were also to be studied as first language in several parts of the republic depending upon the pattern of local population. Vigorous social policies were pursued to improve the standard of living of the people in the republic.

Meanwhile Kolbin lost the support of the CPKZ and was defeated in the election of March 1989. Nazarbayev became the first secretary of the CPKZ. He was to emerge as the most important leader in Central Asia because of his adroit handling of the crisis that were to follow in the Soviet Union and in Kazakhstan itself. Nazarbayev wanted a careful balance between the center's respect for the sovereignty of individual republics and the republics recognition of the strategic interdependence built into the Soviet state structure. He stressed the need for a 'single economic space' and a 'single strategic space', which required a centre with credible monetary and political authority.

57. John Sallnow "Reform in Soviet-Union, Glasnost and Future, p.54.
59. SWB, Part I USSR, 8 Jan, 1989.
60. Ahmed Rashid, op.cit, n.42,p.117.
Nazarbayev was immensely popular at home amongst both his fellow Kazakhs and Russian settlers. They trusted him because Nazar bayer knew that if the Soviet state broke up, Kazakhstan's Russian population would be irrevocably antagonized and peace in the region could be jeopardized. 61

One remarkable development in Kazakhstan, due to the policies of perestroika and glasnost was the growth of informal groups — anti-nuclear and Green movements. The influence of these movements was so powerful that the CPKZ was forced to close Semipalatinsk for nuclear tests. One of the best known movement - Nevada - subsequently developed into People's Congress Party, the most important opposition party in Kazakhstan.

On the economic front, the reforms led to the growth of new enterprises. Contacts with foreign partners in the neighbouring East Europe and in the capitalist West grew. However, agricultural output slightly contracted due to drought situation and problems in the distribution of fertilizers. The disruption in output coupled with lax in financial policies in the USSR as a whole, helped fuel inflation. Following a long period of stable and centrally fixed prices, average retail prices rose by 84% in 1991. 62

By 1989 with perestroika in full swing in Russia a litany of complaints arose from Central Asian leaders. Kazakhstan witnessed a series of problems - ecological imbalance, water shortage, unemployment, housing, land distribution, low productivity,

61. Ibid., p.118.
When the Central Asian people compared themselves to the rest of the USSR they considered themselves worse off.

Gorbachev's Restroika and the loosening of communist control opened the floodgates of Islamic revival. The Communist Party elites in the five Muslim republics "became patrons of their national arts benefactors who helped transform state owned buildings, mosques and religious institutions and champions of the shift from Russian to their own national languages in public life". Complaints about the lack of school instructions in the Kazakh language led to a decree issued in March 1987 that advocated improvements in the teaching of both Kazakh and Russian. In September 1989 the Kazakh supreme Soviet (Parliament) adopted legislation establishing Kazakh as the official language of the republic, While Russian remained a language of interethnic communication. However, all officials communicating with the general public would be required to know both languages.

Kazakh was less Islamized republic than others in Central Asia. However, Islam gave them a distinct cultural identity. It was an irony that Gorbachev's policies of openness, instead of leading to political liberalization in Central Asia, greatly helped in reviving Islam and Islamic traditions. Underground groups and private prayer circles emerged into the open and began to build mosques and criticize the establishment's Muslim hierarchy. Koran was translated into native languages. In early 1990 the Qazi

63. Marth Brill Olcott 'Central Asia's Catapult to Independence' Foreign Affairs (New York) Vol.71 No.3, Summer 1992, p.112

64. Europe a World Year Book op.cit n.50 p.1675.

of Alma-Ata, Radbek Nisanbai, had himself elected Grand Mufti of Kazakhistan thus creating a separate Kazak Muslim board without consulting Moscow. The immediate sign of this independent spirit in the religious revival was construction of new mosques. By October 1990, there were 90 mosques in Kazakhstan compared to 37 before. A year later by October 1991, there were over 1000 new mosques in every republic of Central Asia and a new mosque was being opened every day. A year after, in 1992 thousands of mosques came into existence in each republic.

In 1991 independence was thrust upon Soviet republics due to interplay of political, economic and social forces. At the time of the August coup and after Nazarbayev acted with caution. The whole of Soviet Union was under the grip of severe economic crisis. The situation was worse in the Central Asian region. But it was short-lived in Kazakhstan. There was significant improvement within a year. In October 1991 Nazarbayev signed a treaty to establish an economic community. Kazakhstan had begun the process of enacting legislation that would allow a capitalist economy, private property and foreign investment with repatriation of profits. Kazakhstan was the last to declare its independence from the USSR. This tardiness was attributed to Nazarbayev’s concern to preserve the delicate interethnic balance between Russians and Kazakhs in the republic and also to prevent further discussion of the cession of


68. Ahmed Rashid, op.cit, n.42 p.45.

69. Ibid, p.69.
Kazakhstan’s northern territories to the Russian Federation. Above all, it was seen as evidence of his view that the need for, and consequences of economic reform would be considerably more important than those of political change. Nazarbayev has learnt this lesson from Gorbachev, who allowed political liberalization to take place before he brought about any fundamental economic changes. He gained popularity and emerged victorious in the presidential elections in December 1991.

In recent years Kazakhstan tried to lure foreign investors to develop the oil industry. Kazakhstan’s relative stability and determination to privatize the economy faster than others helped her in negotiating many deals with the Western Nations. The wide-ranging market reforms contained the food crisis.

Despite these appreciable developments after independence, the rural life needs more attention. Nearly three-fourths of the population still live in poor rural areas leading semi-nomadic life. In the urban areas Russians are leaving the republic fearing a Kazakh backlash. Kazakhstan also has been actively seeking the return of ethnic Kazakhs living abroad. In 1992-93 for example, 43,000 Kazakh arrived from Mongolia, 20,000 from Russia and 25,000 from Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states. Many of these newly arrived Kazakh resettlers moved into southern Kazakhstan, where they began displacing Russians, who, in turn began moving to the north of the republic or into Russia.

70. *Europa Year Book*, op.cit, n.50, p.1676.

Kazakhstan witnessed a series of reforms under Soviet rule. But the processes set in motion, after Gorbachev's ascent to power, have a major role to play in deciding the country's future.

**IMPACT OF REFORMS ON ETHNIC RELATIONS**

Two Communists giants, China and the former Soviet Union, (the former the largest and the latter the first) formulated reform policies, with regard to minority nationalities, on the basis of Marxist principles. Here, the two ethnic minorities under study - Tibetans and Kazakhs - experienced similar forms of suppression under communist rule. Hence an attempt to compare them. Though they differed slightly in their terminology now and then their main objectives had been similar - to integrate and assimilate the minority nationalities into a single whole by wooing them with notions like 'self-determination' and 'Regional autonomy'.

Historically speaking, Tibet had been an independent nation with veritable characteristics. It was forcibly incorporated into the Chinese state. Kazakhstan, on the other hand, had been a colony under Tsars. After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, inspite of persistent resistance, Kazakh territory was forcibly taken over by the Soviet leaders. Unlike Kazakhstan, Tibet was not a colony before occupation but experienced colonial hegemony since 1950 when the People's Liberation army entered this region. Mao and Lenin made an earnest attempt to bring minority national areas in to socialist path by transforming economic base, social structure and ethnic composition. Tibet and Kazakhstan became victims of forced collectivization. During Collectivization period Chinese and Russians flocked to these minority regions. Industrialization followed
without any concern for preconditions. Tibetans and Kazakhs suffered innumerable losses - human as well as material.

The leaders felt that by negating or suppressing native culture and languages integration would become easier. Accordingly, measures were followed to destroy symbols of national cultures. The more stronger the policies the more conscious were the ethnic minorities to their cultural heritage. Cultural Revolution in China, and Khrushchev's anti-Islamic propaganda tried their best to test the unwavering faith of Tibetans and Kazakhs in Buddhist and Islamic principles respectively. Many temples were destroyed in Tibet. Kazakhs also lost many symbols of cultural and religious heritage.

The process that went on in China since the death of Mao is almost same as the one that took place in the USSR (and East European countries) during the ten years following the death of Stalin. In China these changes took place under far more backward conditions and with a time lag of nearly twenty years. Mao and Stalin were denounced for their conservatism. The successors of Mao and Stalin initiated liberal reforms, especially Deng Xiaoping and Michael Gorbachev.

Chinese leadership proclaimed the four modernization - in agriculture, industry, science and technology and defence - in 1978. The decision on 'Economic Reform' adopted by the Central Committee Plenary meeting on October 20, 1984 was a milestone on the way to far reaching economic and structural reforms. These reforms are

aimed according to the proclamation of the leadership at establishing a new kind of socialism with Chinese characteristics (alternatively, socialism with a Chinese face) in world's largest socialist country. Seven years later, in Soviet Union, Gorbachev came to power. He launched perestroika and glasnost aimed at liberalization and democratization. These polices have had a revolutionary impact on the political socio-economic and cultural life of minority nationalities. Unprecedented events took place in Central Asian region, particularly in the largest republic of Kazakhstan.

Tibet witnessed a major rebellion in 1987 which was considered to be of great significance after 1959 disturbances. Around the same period in December 1986 first and major riot broke out after the launching of Gorbachev's reforms. These two events made the Communist leaders acknowledge the persisting nationalist aspirations which were not given due consideration under Communist rule. The reform policies aimed at assimilation and integration of the minority nationalities into a single whole proved counter-productive. Signification or Sinicization and Russification or Sovietization instead of undermining the demands for autonomy and independence strengthened nationalist feelings. In both the cases under study, religious revival took place. A new form of ethno-religious-nationalism made its presence felt in various demonstrations and disturbances in recent years. Four and a half decades of Chinese rule and seven and a half decades of Soviet rule failed to resist this powerful phenomenon. While Tibet continues its struggle for independence with greater strength than before, Kazakhstan became independent in 1991 and become a member of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).
Once a backward region, Tibet has achieved commendable degree of socio-economic development. Besides, with the opening of Tibet to tourists, awareness about democracy and human rights has increased. The absence of these very notions in their homeland strengthened their genuine nationalist aspirations. Similarly, in Kazakhstan, russified socio-economic progress brought dramatic change in living standards of Kazakhs. Today Kazakhstan is the most urbanized region with the largest number of Russians among Central Asian republics. In Tibet and Kazakhstan religious and cultural revival has been an unintended consequence since the onset of Communist reforms. The usage of religious symbols as forms of protest (Tibet) and as Party symbols (Kazakhstan) shows that the phenomenon is directly linked to nationalism. Tibetans and Kazakhs feel that self-determination and autonomy, promised at the time of their incorporation into communist orbits, are a mere eye-wash. Decades of Communist rule resulted in the loss of human lives and national cultures. They realize that economic reforms are a means to reduce native population to an insignificant minority. With the loosening of communist controls to pave the way for reforms since 1980s, Tibetans and Kazakhs reacted sharply to all forms of repression by the authorities. While benefiting from the communist reforms they did not ignore their ethnic origins. The conflicts, mass demonstrations, ethno-national revival reveal the persistence of ethnic identity assertion among these two ethnic minorities.