There has been a surge of media attention lately focusing upon economic, cultural, and political reform in Tibet. For instance, an April 29 Xinhua article announced the decision to extend current tax exemptions for Tibetans -- in effect since 1980 -- through 1990. A May 5 Xinhua article published the following day in the "People's Daily" reported an important plenary session of the regional party committee from April 16-27, at which party...
BROADCASTS THAT DESCRIBED IN DETAIL NEW REFORM POLICIES
IN ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL WORK.
THE EMPHASIS IN ALL THE ANNOUNCED REFORMS IS ON IMPROVING
THE ECONOMIC WELL BEING AND LIVING STANDARDS IN GENERAL
OF THE TIBETAN AND OTHER MINORITY NATIONALITIES OF
THE REGION.

2. (LOU) THIS FLURRY OF REFORM ANNOUNCEMENTS-- NOT
DISSIMILAR TO ANNOUNCEMENTS IN OTHER PROVINCES BUT
MORE STRIKING BECAUSE OF TIBET'S ECONOMIC BACKWARDNESS
-- FOLLOWED A FEBRUARY 27 - MARCH 6 BEIJING SYMPOSIUM ON
TIBET CHAIRED BY PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY HU YAOBANG
(REF D). THE SYMPOSIUM WAS ATTENDED BY A NUMBER OF
HIGH-RANKING TIBETAN GOVERNMENT AND PARTY OFFICIALS,
WHO LATER TOURED OTHER PROVINCES WHERE REFORMS ARE IN
PROGRESS PRIOR TO A FINAL SESSION IN BEIJING AND RETURN
TO TIBET. HU, SINCE HIS VISIT TO TIBET IN 1980, HAS
PAID SPECIAL ATTENTION TO TIBET.

3. (C) AS RECENTLY AS LAST OCTOBER AN EMBASSY OFFICER
VISITING LHASA WAS TOLD BY A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL THAT
THE TAX EXEMPTION POLICY--ESSENTIALLY, TIBETAN FARMERS
AND HERDSMEN PAY NO TAXES--WOULD BE EXTENDED THROUGH
1984 AND POSSIBLY ALSO INTO 1985. THE ANNOUNCEMENT
EXTENDING THE POLICY UNTIL 1990 APPARENTLY REFLECTS
NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONCERN OVER ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN
THIS REGION. IN EFFECT, TIBET'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
IS BEING FINANCED BY THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND HAS
BEEN SINCE HU'S VISIT IN 1980. (TIBET IS NOT ALONE IN
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THIS REGARD. QINGHAI, ANOTHER PROVINCE WITH A LARGE
MINORITY POPULATION, IS ALSO HEAVILY SUBSIDIZED FROM
CENTRAL COFFERS).

4. (C) ANOTHER CONCERN OF THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP
IS FOREIGN CRITICISM OF HAN NATIONALITY DOMINATION
OF THIS REGION, MOST OF WhOSE INHABITANTS ARE TIBETAN
AND STILL REGARD THE DALAI LAMA, IN EXILE IN INDIA,
AS THEIR SPIRITUAL LEADER. THE 1959 REBELLION AND ITS
SUPPRESSION BY THE CHINESE MILITARY HAS NOT BEEN
FORGOTTEN IN TIBET, NOR IN HONG KONG OR TAIWAN.
SINCE 1980 THE LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN ANXIOUS FOR THE
RETURN OF THE DALAI LAMA AND FOR IMPROVED CONDITIONS
IN TIBET. BEIJING WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY LIKE TO POINT
TO TIBET AS AN AUTONOMOUS REGION THAT, UNDER THE
REFORM LEADERSHIP INITIATED IN 1978 BY DENG XIAOPING, HAS SEEN GENUINE PROGRESS BOTH IN ECONOMIC AND OTHER AREAS.

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