

doctrine so that it might be diffused to all lands. Who would wish to enjoy it alone and forget those who are not yet enlightened?”<sup>22</sup>

The spread of Buddhism to China made a major contribution to correcting Chinese self-centredness and opening Chinese mind to a higher and wider appreciation of cultures and wisdom emanating from other realms. This means that Buddhist Tibet’s destruction at the hands of communist China does not lie in either the Chinese people or their culture. It lies in the intolerance China imported in the form of communism from the West. More specifically, it lies in the Leninist state structure in China that considers Tibetan culture and identity as a fundamental challenge to the party’s rule in Tibet.

### **Chinese Communist Leaders’ View of Tibetan Culture: “Religion is Poison”**

During his final meeting with the Dalai Lama in 1954, Mao Zedong edged closer to the Tibetan leader and whispered: “... but of course religion is poison. It has two great defects: it undermines the race, and secondly it retards the progress of the country. Tibet and Mongolia have been both poisoned by it.”<sup>21</sup>

Four decades later, in his speech at the 1993 Working Meeting of the United Work Front Department, Jiang Zemin, the then President of China said, “[We are] asking them [monastic community] to love the motherland, to support the socialist system and the leadership of the Communist Party. We don’t allow religion to be used to confront the leadership of the Party and the socialist system.”<sup>22</sup>

Later, Mao’s animosity to Buddhism and Jiang’s demands re-surfaced as China’s official policy. Beijing held the Third Work Forum on Tibet in 1994, which recommended putting an end “to the unbridled construction of monasteries and nunneries as well as to the unbridled recruitment of monks/nuns.”<sup>23</sup> The forum further advocated that “the struggle between ourselves and the Dalai Clique is neither a matter of religious belief, nor a matter of question of autonomy, it is a matter of securing unity of our country and opposing splittism... This is a life-and-death struggle.”<sup>24</sup>