

CounterPunch

APRIL 16-30, 2008

ALEXANDER COCKBURN AND JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

VOL. 15, NO. 8

Bitter Struggle over Identity of 17th Reincarnation

Who Will be the Dalai Lama's Successor?

By Peter Lee

The Tibetan community's inherent suspicion about the sincerity of Chinese engagement was certainly deepened by the passage of a law on September 1, 2007, that would regularize selection of reincarnations by the Chinese government and forbid recognition of reincarnations outside China's boundaries.

Clearly, if the Dalai Lama dies in exile outside Tibet, the selection of his successor will be subject to Chinese interference and manipulation of the kind that has attended the selection of the Panchen Lama.

The Panchen Lama is, after the Dalai Lama, the most eminent figure in Tibetan Buddhism and a key figure in identifying the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. Thanks to Chinese meddling, there are two Panchen Lamas now. One, a little boy of six at the time of his selection by the Dalai Lama in 1995, was immediately detained by the Chinese and has spent most of his life languishing in Chinese custody. The second Panchen Lama, subsequently designated by the Chinese government, has been unable to take up his seat at Tashilhunpo Monastery because of Tibetan opposition and currently resides in Beijing.

But a charismatic successor to the Dalai Lama apparently already exists in the exile community at Dharmasala, in the foothills of the Himalayas, in northern India.

He is Ogyen Trinley Dorje, head of the Kagyu (Black Hat) sect of Tibetan Buddhism. He is the Karmapa – a manifestation of Chenrezi, the Buddha of compassion in Tibetan Buddhism, as is the Dalai Lama – and is 17th reincarna-

PETER LEE CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Fixers Indicated HRC was Key in Pardon Deal

Bill Clinton and the Rich Women

By Jeffrey St. Clair

Despite her campaign's ongoing slurs against Bill Richardson, the nation's only Hispanic governor, Hillary Clinton probably feels like she has Puerto Rico, the final primary, in the bank. Those delegates were sown up nine years ago on August 16, 1999, when Bill Clinton issued commutations for 16 members of the FALN Puerto Rican nationalist group serving long sentences for robbery, bombings and sedition. That rare act of humanitarian intervention endeared the Clintons to many Puerto Ricans, obviating the sins committed by the administration at Vieques Island, which had been turned into a toxic bombing ground.

But if Hillary wants to claim credit for the FALN pardons (a strategic decision at the time, geared to helping her win a U.S. senate seat in New York), she should also own up to her role in a much more problematic case, the midnight pardon of billionaire fugitive Marc Rich.

Hillary has never addressed her role in the Rich pardon. In fact, she's rarely been asked her opinion on the free pass given to one of the world's most wanted fugitives, a man who violated embargoes against Iran and South Africa and fled the country rather than face trial in what was billed as "the biggest tax evasion case in history." The senator has variously said that she was "unaware" of the decision and "surprised" by it. When pressed, she merely cackles.

Even though 300 pages of core documents relating to the pardon decision remain under seal at the Clinton Library, a review of the available record tells a much different story. In fact, the Rich legal team viewed Hillary as a secret weapon, and as one door after another closed on their search for a pardon they focused more and more on invoking what Rich

lawyer Robert Fink called the "HRC option."

Who is Marc Rich? And why did he need a presidential pardon?

Born in Belgium to Jewish parents, Marc Rich moved with his family to the United States to escape Hitler. Young Marc soon went to work for a commodity firm in New York called Phillip Bros., later acquired by Salomon Brothers. He soon made his mark as an oil trader and, along with his friend Pincus "Pinky" Green, he is credited with inventing spot market trading in oil, ferrous metals and sugar. Billions flowed into the firm.

But Rich and "Pinky" Green felt underappreciated and underpaid. They bolted the firm, and Rich angrily vowed to "grind Phillip Bros. into oblivion." In 1974, the pair started their own holding company, eventually known as the Marc Rich Group, and began making oil deals with Iran, Iraq and wildcatters in Texas. He and Pinky were soon billionaires and big shots in the global petrochemical trade.

Around this time, Rich courted a buxom young Jewish singer/songwriter from Worcester, Massachusetts, named Denise. He whisked her off to his seaside villa in Marbella, Spain, where the couple were married and rapidly assumed the life of international jet-setters and art collectors.

Then in 1983 crisis hit the Rich family. The U.S. Attorney's office for the Southern District of New York notified Rich and Pinky that they were under investigation for fraud, illegal oil deals with Iran and the apartheid regime in South Africa, and tax evasion. Documents were subpoenaed. Indictments were in the works. Rich hired D.C. heavy-hitter Edward Bennett Williams to fend off assaults of a vicious young prosecutor – none other than Rudy Giuliani.

ST. CLAIR CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

PETER LEE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tion of the sect's founder, the third most revered figure in Tibetan Buddhism after the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. A 2007 profile in the *Independent* quoted the remarks of Tibet expert, Jane Perkins: "He turns 22 next month, he now speaks six languages, and he's becoming more and more of a magnet here... There's absolutely no doubt that he is the new star: dynamic, powerful, full of young energy but with tremendous discipline and dignity, enormously sage for his age... In which case he could take some of the load off His Holiness's shoulders."

Ogyen Trinley Dorje even comes with his own heroic myth – a dramatic escape from Chinese minders over the Himalayas to Dharmasala in 2000, when he was just 14.

The Karmapa comes to the United States May 15 through June 2 for the first time, to conduct public teachings in New York, Boulder and Seattle.

It's an important first step for the Karmapa on the world stage at a crucial time for Tibet. The visit may serve as a coming-out party for the next leader of the Tibetan émigré community, one who will inherit the Dalai Lama's mantle and serve as the public face of the Tibetan

struggle for decades to come, no matter what skullduggery the Chinese try to commit when the current Dalai Lama passes on.

Accusations Levelled at the Karmapa

To descend from high expectations to coarse political reality, the Karmapa is locked in a bitter struggle with a dissident faction within his own sect. He's been accused of being a Chinese mole. He's unable to enter the seat of his order, the Rumtek monastery in Sikkim. And he might not even be the true Karmapa.

The 16th Karmapa fled his traditional seat at the Tsurphu Monastery in 1959 (subsequently leveled by the Chinese army in 1966) with the relics of his sect, built a new seat, Rumtek, in Sikkim, and amassed great wealth and influence while in exile. He died in 1985. Four regents were charged with finding his reincarnation. They apparently didn't get along.

At a crucial juncture, after the search had languished for a decade, one of the regents decided to look inside a keepsake the 16th Karmapa had given him and found... a poem giving detailed instructions as to the location of his successor!

The reincarnation, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the son of seminomadic herders inside Tibet, was identified in 1992. The Chinese accepted his designation, and Ogyen Trinley Dorje was installed in the restored Tsurphu Monastery for instruction under the eyes of his Chinese minders.

Then, in 2000, Ogyen Trinley Dorje made his dramatic escape from China. In Dharmasala, he won the endorsement of the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama owes his position as the head of Tibetan Buddhism to the pre-eminence of his sect, the Gelugpa. However, Gelugpa pre-eminence relates to a political struggle inside Tibet as recent as the 17th century and is only grudgingly acknowledged by the Kagyu, who always point out that their sect is older and their reincarnations of the Karmapa began a century before the reincarnations of the Dalai Lama commenced.

In fact, as a scurrilous anti-Dalai Lama message circulating through the Internet these days makes clear, there are indications that the Gelugpa sect, directed by the Dalai Lama's hard-case brother (and CIA asset in the conduct of the clandestine

guerilla war against China inside Tibet), Gyalo Thondup, even resorted to assassination in order to quash the Kagyu sect's attempts to create an alternate political power center in the Tibetan émigré community in 1977.

At all events, Ogyen Trinley Dorje's heroic escape, his charisma, and the Dalai Lama's endorsement put the wind at the young Karmapa's back, and he apparently won the loyalty of most of the Kagyu monks and monasteries worldwide, with one important exception.

That exception was the most powerful of the regents, Shamarpa Rinpoche.

Battle over the Black Hat: Shamarpa Rinpoche Enters the Story

Shamarpa Rinpoche had from the beginning refused to accept the miraculous letter in the amulet or the recognition of Ogyen Trinley Dorje by the Dalai Lama – which he regarded as a gross intrusion into the affairs of the Kagyu sect as well as an infringement upon his prerogatives as its leading Rinpoche, a title is generally reserved for tulkus (incarnate lamas) and those recognized by the proper authorities within a lineage as "choje lamas" ("superior dharma masters").

In 1992, just as the Karmapa was about to be installed at the restored Tsurphu Monastery inside China, Shamarpa Rinpoche showed up at the Rumtek monastery in Sikkim with an Indian army escort to denounce the selection, triggering a violent *mélée* with the outraged monks, and an open split in the Kagyu sect.

Shamarpa Rinpoche averred he had made a secret visit to Lhasa in 1988 to scout for a Karmapa reincarnation and had found one: Trinley Thaye Dorje, son of an aristocratic family who, to the great confusion of casual observers, shares two of his three names with the other contestant, Ogyen Trinley Dorje.

In 1994, two years after the installation of Ogyen Trinley Dorje at Tsurphu, Trinley Thaye Dorje made an unheralded escape from Tibet to India with his family and was recognized by the Shamarpa Rinpoche (although, it seems, not many others) as the Karmapa.

Nevertheless, Shamarpa has indefatigably advanced the claim of his protégé, while dismissing Ogyen Trinley Dorje as a Chinese mole intent upon stealing the sect's treasures.

CounterPunch

EDITORS

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

ASSISTANT EDITOR

ALEVINA REA

BUSINESS

BECKY GRANT

DEVA WHEELER

DESIGN

TIFFANY WARDLE

COUNSELOR

BEN SONNENBERG

CounterPunch

PO Box 228

Petrolia, CA 95558

1-800-840-3683

counterpunch@counterpunch.org

www.counterpunch.org

All rights reserved.