

Tibet

1 A presentation on Tibet

The situation in Tibet is one of the major unresolved issues in world politics. Relations between China and other countries have often been very difficult because of some very different viewpoints on the subject. Tibet has received so much attention over the past years that it has become common to mention 'human rights' and 'Tibet' in the same breath.

Your task here will be to prepare a presentation (in a group), using the facts below as your main source.

Step 1:

First, read the jumbled texts carefully. Then put them in an order that makes sense.



The majestic Potala Palace in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital

A The situation, however, would soon become much worse during the terror of China's 'Cultural Revolution' from 1966 until 1976. The Cultural Revolution was the Communist Party's attempt to get rid of threats to communist authority, e.g. 'bourgeois' elements from western societies, but also religion. *Especially* religion. Religion was seen by Chairman Mao as possibly the biggest threat of all, and so many thousands of Tibetan monks were murdered and thousands of centuries-old monasteries destroyed. Communism was the new 'religion'. Even after the Cultural Revolution, the religion, culture and language of Tibet continued to be repressed by the government in Beijing. Tibetans had become second-class citizens in their own country – the situation which remains today.

B Tibet is situated between two old and important countries, China and India. Humans have inhabited the high Tibetan Plateau for at least twenty thousand years, and archaeological data shows that humans may have passed through Tibet half a million years ago, at the time India was first inhabited.

C But the policy of leaving Tibet alone eventually came to an end. In 1959, China's military attacked rebels in Kham and Amdo, Tibetan provinces, which then led to the Lhasa Uprising. The Tibetans started fighting the Chinese occupation. Fearing that their leader, the Dalai Lama, would surely be captured by the Chinese, the Tibetans forced him to seek asylum in India. Since then, the Dalai Lama has been living in Dharamsala in the north of India, which became the seat of the Tibetan exile government.

D From the beginning, it was obvious that incorporating Tibet into Communist China was China's goal. But from 1951 to 1959, despite the fact that Tibet was now being occupied by 20,000 Chinese troops, China left Tibet more or less alone. Tibet was allowed to carry on with its feudal society of lords, manorial estates, serfs and monasteries – a society which, it is important to point out, never functioned as a democracy, with or without the Chinese.

E During its long history, Tibet has always been influenced – and even attacked – by other countries, e.g. Nepal, Mongolia, China, and Great Britain. It was regarded only from 1912 until 1949 as *de facto* independent. In 1950, the People's Liberation Army of China marched into Tibet, facing little resistance from the Tibetan army. In 1951, the Dalai Lama, the head of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan society, sent representatives to Beijing to negotiate with the Communist leaders of China. The so-called Seventeen Point Agreement confirmed China's sovereignty over Tibet and was ratified in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, a few months later.

Step 2:

a) Read the texts again. Look up any words you find difficult. Make a vocabulary list.

b) In groups, turn the facts above into a presentation. Here are some tips to get started:

- Mark **the most important pieces of information** and **arrange them logically**.
- Establish what you feel are **the most important messages** about Tibet, its history and its situation today. What do you feel your listeners **really** need to understand about Tibet?
- Make sure you include the subject of **human rights** in your presentation.
- The facts you read above are a good historical basis for your presentation, but make sure you include **up-to-date facts** on the **current situation** in both Tibet and China.
- Look for a photos or video clips which help to **illustrate the points you want to make** (e.g. like the photo you see below). This will help to bring your presentation to life. (**But don't overdo it**; too many visuals can be too much of a distraction.)



The next generation of Buddhist monks: Young Tibetan boys at a monastery. There are not nearly as many monasteries as there used to be, but Tibetan culture has managed to stay alive, despite extreme forms of repression by the Chinese government.

Suggestion for order of texts: B, E, D, C, A

Lösungen