

The Silence of the Lamb

Book Review by Dhundup Gyalpo

Born In Sin: The Panchsheel Agreement, The Sacrifice of Tibet

By Claude Arpi
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In each passing century there are a few defining moments of which it can truly be said: here history was made or here mankind's passage through the ages took a new direction or turned towards a new horizon. Such a moment occurred on the 29th day of April 1954 when an "Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between China and India" was signed in Beijing. The agreement today is popularly dubbed as the "Panchsheel Agreement" because of the famous five principles-the elixir for foreign relations-incorporated in the preamble of the agreement.

The Panchsheel Agreement epitomises the fiasco of Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai clamour. In this agreement India recognized Tibet as part of China-in fact, as a mark of goodwill India also gave up all her extra-territorial rights in Tibet-but failed to settle the Indo-Tibetan border. And by forfeiting Tibet, India thus forfeited 2,000 years of a buffer state that kept Chinese imperial aspirations on leash.

During a speech on the occasion of signing, the Indian Ambassador N. Raghavan declared: *We have gone fully through the questions that existed between our two countries in the Tibet region.* Zhou Enlai responded reiterating that the questions which were "ripe for settlement, have been resolved". But alas, neither Raghavan nor the Government of India could then decipher the portents lurking beneath the "ripe for settlement".

The high and lofty ideals of Panchsheel began to crumble just 10 days shy of two months after the agreement was signed as the first of a series of Chinese incursions, numbering in hundreds, occurred in Bharhote area of Uttar Pradesh. These incursions culminated in the Chinese invasion of India with an overwhelming force on two separate flanks in October 1962.

The Chinese aggression, and the defeat and humiliation it wreaked on India, caught offguard, remains deeply embedded in the Indian psyche to this day.

India has been living in the fool's paradise of its own making, a beaten, crestfallen, humiliated Nehru admitted in 1962. So betrayed was Nehru by the Chinese aggression that he had this to say on the day the Chinese invaded: *Perhaps there are not many instances in history where one country has gone out of her way to be friendly and cooperative with the government and people of another country and to plead their cause in the council of the world, and then that country returns evil for good.*

Claude Arpi's new book, ***Born in Sin: The Panchsheel Agreement, The sacrifice of Tibet***, is an incisive post-mortem of the Agreement and the legacy it bequeathed the future generations of India. It unravels with great clarity the *gushy expectations, self-deluding hype, and oozing zealotry* that has become the hallmark of Nehru's China policy.

Born in Sin captures in minute detail a continuum of concessions Nehru conceded in his overzealous rush to befriend China. A measure of the height of euphoria over the Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai festivity, obliterating strategic and other implications for India's security, was illustrated in a strange episode after the agreement was signed. Claude Arpi writes: *India was supplying rice to Chinese troops, engaged in building a road on Indian territory! And not just an ordinary road, it was the Aksai-Chin road cutting through the Indian territory in Ladakh. It is indeed a first in military annals that the government of a country supplies food to enemy troops! But at that time, who saw China as an enemy?*

Claude Arpi's previous book, ***The Fate of Tibet: When Big Insects Eat Small Insects***, was groundbreaking in terms of its revelation of the Pannikar factor in effecting a dramatic transformation in the India's China policy, and by corollary its Tibet policy.

As in ***The Fate of Tibet***, the facts presented in ***Born in Sin***, derive authority from its extensive use of a myriad of official Indian documents and personal memoirs of the then leading political figures.

The book concludes by exploring some ambitious but not unrealistic ways to break this impasse of Indo-Tibetan border dispute.



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