

December 2, 2008

Letter

Britain's Position on Tibet, Autonomy and Rights

To the Editor:

Robert Barnett accuses the British government of rewriting Tibet's history ("Did Britain Just Sell Tibet?," Op-Ed, Nov. 25). We believe the accusation to be unfair.

Many in the United States, in Britain and elsewhere agree with us that the human rights situation in Tibet is unacceptable. Prime Minister Gordon Brown will continue to make this plain to China's leaders.

Finding a sustainable solution for Tibet is about the future, not the past. The Dalai Lama says he wants autonomy for Tibet within China, not independence. We updated our position because we consider this the right way forward. That means we consider Tibet to be part of China. It does not mean we suspend our support for autonomy and human rights: quite plainly we do not.

Our statement was clear on the need for progress at the recent Tibet talks in Beijing, which is why we issued it just before they began. Talks must now recommence urgently, based around the proposals already made by the Dalai Lama's envoys. China should look at these proposals with an open mind.

Bill Rammell

Minister of State

British Foreign Office

London, Nov. 28, 2008

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