

FOUR RIVERS, SIX RANGES

**Reminiscences of the Resistance Movement
in Tibet**

GOMPO TASHI ANDRUGTSANG

*

**A Publication of the
Information and Publicity Office of H.H. The Dalai Lama
DHARAMSALA, INDIA**

1973

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DEDICATION

My beloved leader,
His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso,
The Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet;
my unselfish compatriots who gave their lives,
and
the coming generation of freedom fighters.



H.H. the Dalai Lama

ENGLISH TRANSLATION



THEKGHEN CHOLING
DHARMSALA CANTY
KANGRA DISTRICT
HIMACHAL PRADESH

P R E F A C E

The Andrutsang family for several generations has been acknowledged for its immense reverence and deep devotion to the Dharma. Every Tibetan knows the almost legendary story of how the late Gampo Tashi sacrificed his wealth and life for the Dharma and the national freedom of Tibet.

Despite the insuperable and awesome odds that China posed, Gampo Tashi was undaunted; with inflexible determination and conviction, he struggled for aims that he felt were noble and just until his unfortunate, premature death. The publication of his memoirs is thus an event I welcome very much.

I pray that the forces of his meritorious deeds - his noble act of sincerely and perseveringly struggling for the Dharma, the nation and the people of Tibet - allow him to reach the highest level of attainment.

THE DALAI LAMA

May 25, 1973

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For a long time after the death of my uncle, the late Andrugtsang Gompo Tashi, none of the members of his family could take up the job of publishing his memoirs. The memory of the once dominating personality was too strong and emotionally overwhelming. A decade has passed away and such sensitivities have been dulled, leaving behind a profound awe of the man and his ideals.

2. After the escape of H. H. the Dalai Lama XIV from Tibet to India in 1959, a number of books were published by a selected few authors, who had either been to Tibet or who came in contact with Tibetans at Darjeeling, Kalimpong and later in Nepal. Some of these books gave glimpses of Khampa Resistance Activities in Tibet while others gave an account of this struggle from Mustang in Nepal. Since all these books have been written by persons other than Tibetans, who were not actually involved in Resistance Movement and in various destiny-making decisions, they have not been able to present a factual picture of the struggle which the Tibetans in general and Khampas in particular have been waging since 1952, first from the Tibetan soil and now from the foreign soil for the independence of Tibet.

3. The purpose of publishing this book "Four Rivers, Six Ranges" is not to find fault with the writers who have earlier written books on Tibetan Resistance but to set the record straight and to present, for the first time, an account of actual events, as narrated by one of the greatest Khampa leaders, who not only brought the Dalai Lama from the jaws of death to a place of safety in India, but also kept the flame of freedom burning in the hearts of Tibetans.

4. Some western writers who claim to have an intimate knowledge of Tibetan affairs have been writing that the Tibetans will accept the autonomous status of Tibet and will return to their motherland. This is a misconception which is misleading and mischievous. Those who claim to know Tibetans should also know that Tibetans will prefer to die rather than to live under foreign domination. The Tibetans, true to the traditions of late *Andrugtsang Gompo Tashi*, will fight to the last for the cause of Tibetan freedom and independence.

The original text of my uncle's papers was in Tibetan. Apart from translation and editorial preparation for the Press, no changes have been made. This book gives a faithful reproduction of the original papers.

5. Several persons have assisted me in preparing the manuscript for publication and I am deeply indebted to them. My gratitude goes out to Mr.

Lhamo Tsering, my uncle's friend, his individual feeling, inspiration and encouragement; Mr. V. S. Nanda, former Managing Director of Span Magazine, Mr. Tamdin D Gyalpo, Dy. Secretary in the Information and Publicity Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, for their invaluable help in editing the copy for the Press. I must also thank Ven Tenzing Geyche, Secretary, Office of the Dalai Lama, Mr. Sonam Topgyal, Joint Secretary, Information and Publicity Office of H. H. the Dalai Lama, and Mr. Lodi G. Gyari Additional Secretary to the Tibetan Cabinet, for kindly reading and checking the manuscript for factual errors and inconsistencies. Mr. Gyari, in particular, took great interest and pains throughout the entire work. Finally, I must make special mention of my publisher, the Information and Publicity Office of H. H. the Dalai Lama, for their sympathy, cooperation and support for publishing "Four Rivers, Six Ranges."

Darjeeling
27th September, 1973

T. T. Andrugtsang

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CHAPTER ONE

MY HOME IN THE VALLEY

I was born in the Tibetan year of the Fire Horse, corresponding to 1905 A.D. in the village of Molha Khashar in Lithang district of Kham province, Tibet. My family name of Molha Khashar Andrutsang was derived from this ancient, tiny village—a grouping of about two dozen hamlets and an equal number of families. Overlooking the village, sprawling north to east, was a mountain, some 10,000 feet in height, and in the southwest ran the river Lithang. To the fanciful and highly imaginative villagers, the towering, massive mountain and the swift, gushing river appeared as if some mighty dragon had descended from the sky to slake its terrible thirst on earth. Near the village was the abode of a deity known as *Daktsen Dalha*; it was worshipped by everyone as the protector of the land.

The valley where my village nestled was a large one. On horseback it took a rider more than one day to traverse it from one end to the other. Down the middle of the valley's length ran the Lithang river, its banks crowded by most of the villages. About four hundred families lived in this area. They earned their living either from agriculture or from raising livestock. The lower slopes of the hills in the northeast were fertile pasture land, ideal for the

maintenance of livestock. Every family kept milch cows (known as *dzomo* and *di*) besides other animals and had ample stocks of milk, butter and cheese for their own consumption. Tibetan cows produced a high yield of milk and the butter obtained from it was one of the richest in the world. The yaks or bulls were sturdy animals very useful for transport over snow-covered land. They were commonly used by all classes of the people. The *dzo* a cross between the yak and the common cow, was another strong animal used for transportation and ploughing.

Apart from the animals kept on a farm, large herds of cattle were looked after by a separate group of dairy farmers who stayed away from the villages in the summer and spring, so that the cattle did not eat or damage the crops. These dairymen camped on the plateaus where there were plenty of grass for the animals. They lived in black tents made of canvas and yak's fur which gave them adequate protection against rain, wind and the severe cold of the winter. The average herd consisted of about three hundred milch cows and other animals. Besides cattle, large flocks of sheep were also reared in the pastures. The village children, equipped with knapsacks full of food, often helped the herdsmen to gather their flocks. In return for their services, the children were regaled with stories and fables around night camp fires.

The main food crops cultivated in my village and the surrounding area were barley and wheat. Vegeta-

bles such as peas, potatoes, turnips and radishes were also grown. The produce was not marketed but consumed by the families themselves; any surplus that materialised was stored for future use. There was enough food for everyone and the rural community was more or less self-sufficient. The only articles they purchased were cloth and salt, apart from firearms and other special equipment. Purchases were made at the trade fairs which were periodically held in the monastery at Lithang. Barter was common and money changed hands only in relatively big transactions, such as the purchase of horses or guns. Carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors and other artisans usually earned foodgrains in exchange for their services.

Everyone in the village was busy and each member of the family attended assiduously to the work assigned to him. During the planting and harvesting seasons, both men and women undertook back-breaking labour in the fields. At other times of the year the men normally went away on long trading trips while the women looked after the household chores, weaving woollen cloth for the family and feeding the domestic animals.

The Tibetan winter is undoubtedly a rigorous season but it nevertheless has its compensations. Wrapped in a blanket of snow, the mountains and the higher plateaus make an imposing spectacle as they glisten with blinding glare in the sun. In the valleys the white canopy of snow is dotted with large unsha-

ply patches of clear ground, formed by the protective overhang of the pine trees. Weary travellers sometimes stop at such spots when no inn nearby can be found. The natural vegetation of the valleys, such as plants and bushes, are heavily weighted with snow flakes and look like myriads of white cherry blossoms. During the early and late hours of the day, wild animals—deer, antelope, wolves, bears and others—roam the valleys in search of food and water. The villagers sometimes laid traps and preferred to capture the animals alive.

In the winter, family life naturally centered around the kitchen. Except for the head of the family, who would almost invariably be away on a trading trip, everyone else remained in the house, attending to some domestic need or the other. Gathered around the kitchen fire, large amounts of tea would be drunk or wine sipped, the men fashioning riding gear, bags or ropes, while the women wove woollen cloth, knitted socks or prepared food. Everybody, the servants included, shared the same type of food—meat, butter, cheese, and tea. The main winter garment consisted of a loose cloak of sheepskin, with long sleeves—that kept the hands warm—and a sash around the waist. The women's cloaks were similar, with small differences in design. They reached down to the ankles and sometimes even covered the shoes. In summer and spring, cloakes of a much lighter variety and sleeveless were worn by both men and women.

As everywhere else in the world, the advent of spring was welcomed with much enthusiasm. It signified the end of the long period of winter confinement within the house; snow and ice would be to melt. Not only human beings but all the creatures would emerge from their shells. The wild flowers would once again blossom, the birds sing, and the animals gayly frisk and gambol about in the thickly wooded forests, the air filled with a sweet medley of sound.

A spirit of cooperation prevailed in the community and it was usual for families to help one another at harvesting time or with the household chores. For such labour no remuneration was expected although the neighbours who came to the family's help usually shared their meals. Festivities and amusements also brought all the people together. To celebrate the Losar, or New Year, people gathered in a large, spacious house where young men and women danced, often throughout the night. On such occasions the older folk sat, drinking refreshments, watching the fun or listening to folk songs.

The New Year was also a time for competition in such manly games as riding and target shooting from a galloping horse. The winners were awarded white khatas or scarfs. I participated in a number of such competitions which helped develop my skill as a rider and a marksman. My other pastimes were wrestling and rock climbing. I was also fond of reading tales of legendary heroes, especially those who had distinguished themselves in war.

Our family appeared to have adopted its present name toward the end of the nineteenth century. It then consisted of three brothers, the eldest of whom, Adrug Giduen was a monk in Lhasa's Drepung monastery. The brothers lived together and prospered in business. In the Tibetan year of the Water-Monkey (1875), Adug Giduen gave a large donation to the religious order at the annual assembly or monks at Lhasa. He was the first Tibetan to make such a large donation for religious purposes. The initial payment was followed by similar donations to the religious assembly every year, and this act of piety and devotion continued upto the time of the Chinese invasion of Tibet. At the time of his death, Adug Giduen had made many friends among Lamas, traders, and Government officials throughout the country.

Fortune continued to smile upon the family and it extended its trading activities to the whole of Tibet. At the same time as devout Buddhist, the members of the family made many religious offerings, They contributed butter lamps and money to the monasteries and gave alms to beggars. By their virtuous deeds and generosity they won much renown.

My father, Poen Nyandak, the youngest of the three brothers died when I was eight years old. As a child I looked after the large number of horses, mules, yaks, goats and sheep which my family owned. I might mention here that the economy of Tibet was mainly agricultural and pastoral; it

was usual for the well-to-do families to own several hundred heads of livestock. Besides the yak and the di, sheep were reared for their mutton and wool—a precious and valuable export item.

Tibet's educational system was closely linked with the monasteries and the emphasis was on religious studies. When I was thirteen I began to study religious books; these included Sakyapa's *Kunrig* (Knowing All), *Kangso* (Pleasing or Worshipping of Deities) and *Mitak Denkuel* (Reminder of Impermanence). Two years later I attended a monastery in Lithang where I studied more books relating to different kinds of prayers and religious offerings.

When I was seventeen, an event occurred which gave me the opportunity for putting my physical prowess to the test and was perhaps an early exercise in the art of war. It concerned my first encounter with bandits who infested the more remote parts of Tibet including my native district of Lithang. These bandits usually wandered in groups of a hundred or more and were well equipped with horses and weapons. They raided the villages and camps of nomadic herdsmen, robbing them of cattle and other property. Their attacks were swift and ferocious and more often than not they managed to escape with their loot. They were sometimes caught and jailed, but in cases of repeated crimes they were sentenced to death.

At that time a group of about four hundred bandits had been active in our part of the country.

It was reported that they had robbed some forty families in the neighbourhood of Molha Khashar, and another eighty or so in other villages and towns. To combat this menace, monastic and civic leaders decided to organize a citizens' posse force consisting of approximately four hundred and fifty horsemen. As my elder brothers were away in Lhasa and other towns on trade, I volunteered for the service. I saddled a good horse and equipped myself with a German-made rifle (7.92), which my brothers had bought earlier in Lhasa.

My companions thought I was too young to engage in fighting and they counselled me to look after the horses and avoid combat with the bandits. But I was determined to be in the thick of the fight and eagerly entered the fray when the bandits were surrounded from four directions. In order to avoid unnecessary casualties, we decided not to immediately rush the bandits. Instead we adopted a gradual approach and deprived them of water for as long as seven days. At the end of this period, no longer able to stand the thirst, they surrendered to us and an agreement was concluded with the bandits. We allowed the leaders to retain their horses and arms, but decreed that the rest should hand over their weapons, keeping only their horses. Following this, hostilities were suspended and as a gesture of goodwill on our part we provided them with drinking water. The bandits, however, went back on the understanding reached and fighting was resumed early next morning. In the ensuing

battle that lasted about four hours, we killed twenty eight bandits and wounded about sixty. Our loss was fortunately very small—only one of our horse-men was killed.

After this initial experience of fighting I developed a liking for firearms and became fond of hunting and shooting. Although I was conscious that it was morally wrong to destroy living creatures, I did not in the beginning lose much sleep over it. But my mother, who was staunch Buddhist, condemned my behaviour strongly. She pointed out that it was sinful for one who had been educated in Buddhist doctrine, with its reverence for all forms of life, to regard hunting as a pastime.

My mother died when I was twenty one and I was called upon to assume greater responsibility for running our home. I took to trading in wool, deer horns and musk, and did some travelling, too. My initial business ventures were not very successful. But with experience and encouragement from my older relatives, I soon began to fare better and built up a prosperous business. To the items of merchandise already mentioned, I later added tea and silver. But although I was very successful in developing trade along these lines, I regretted that my business preoccupations left little time for the pursuit of Buddhist studies. Whenever any relation died, I made religious offerings. For about six months I also attended every day the sermons delivered by Fabong Kha Rinpoche Dechen Nyingpo,

a reincarnate saviour. I was happy to listen to these religious discourses, because it was said “the good teachings of gracious lamas prevent one from straying to the path of stupidity, lust and anger”.

In the year of the Water Horse (1942), after the death of Jamyang Norbu, the head of my family, I undertook a pilgrimage of holy places in eastern Tibet, India and Nepal. Among the places I visited in India were Amritsar, Banaras, Bodh Gaya and Nalanda. At all the shrines I offered much money to the monks, besides thousands of butter lamps as part of the essential ritual of Buddhism, in sacred memory of my departed relatives. I felt that in making these offerings I was making the right use of my wealth.

CHAPTER TWO

THE COMING OF THE CHINESE

I had my first experience of the ruthless methods employed by the Chinese Communists in 1949. In that year of the Earth Ox I sent 110 loads of woollen material and cigarettes to Datsedo, (Tatsienlu), a large trading town on the eastern fringe of Kham province. The Chinese confiscated the goods in Jyekundo en route on the plea that they were the products of foreign imperialists. They also arrested four of my employees who were supervising the transport of the goods. After much pleading by our hostess in Jyekundo, one of the famous Trade Centres of Eastern Tibet, the Chinese released the men but did not return the goods, nor did they reimburse me in any way.

From this experience and from the reports which I began to receive, around that time, from friends and relatives in Eastern Tibet, it became clear that the Chinese were oppressing the local population and gradually depriving them of many civil rights, including freedom of worship and speech. I learnt that the people had been driven to desperation and fighting was going on in Chamdo, the administrative centre of Kham province. Many people were buying British-made rifles from Datsedo for their protection; in the

Lithang area alone, about 1,500 rifles were purchased.

To explain the Chinese presence in Tibet it is necessary to go back into some past history. Tibet first emerged as a single nation about 2,000 years ago when it was under the rule of a line of kings. These early kings of Tibet traced their ancestry to a royal house of India; it was during their long period of rule, lasting till the mid-thirteenth century, that Tibet built itself up as a formidable Asian power. More precisely it was between the sixth and tenth centuries that Tibet reached the zenith of its territorial expansion and military prowess.

Under Srongtsen Gampo, the 33rd Tibetan king (635–649 AD), a strict code of public conduct was drawn up and the administrative apparatus centralised, enabling him to unify Tibet into a strong nation. He effectively harnessed the energies of the nation into the goal of expanding the realm of Tibetan domination and of establishing a Central Asian Empire. The Tibetan king annexed Western China, comprising the modern day provinces of Kansu, Yunnan and Szechuan. He conquered Nepal and parts of northern Burma, and successfully intervened in India where an emperor of Tibetan choice was installed.

Following the death of Srongtsen Gampo, Tibet continued to exert its military supremacy in the direction of China, which sought to limit Tibetan

expansionism and encroachment over its territories. The Tibetan army again invaded China in the eighth century, capturing several towns. The performance was repeated on an even more impressive scale in 763 AD when the Tibetans captured the imperial Chinese capital, Chang-An, now called Yaan. This time a puppet Chinese ruler was appointed and the Tibetans demanded a yearly tribute. When the Chinese failed to pay the tribute a few years later, the Tibetans attacked again for the fourth time. During this period, the Tibetans also entered into several military alliances with neighbouring states. In opposing China, the common enemy, the Tibetans sometimes allied with the Arabs and twice assisted the Siamese kings.

At the close of the eight century, efforts were made to stabilize the frontier between Tibet and China. A peace treaty was signed and the frontier was marked by pillars with similar ones erected at Lhasa and the imperial Chinese capital. Soon after this, the Tibetans began to concentrate their attention and energies towards expansionism in the West. Rapid inroads were made into the Pamirs in Soviet Kazakhstan and Tibetan forces even reached the Oxus River. The Arabs noticed the change in Tibetan policy and became alarmed at the danger which it spelled for their existence. They joined forces with China and successfully managed to thwart the expansionist dreams of the Tibetans. What is surprising, however, is the very fact that it took two of the most powerful Asian powers to check the rise

of Tibetan arms. Thereafter Tibet once again turned eastwards and after a brief war concluded another peace treaty with China, reaffirming the earlier boundaries.

Simultaneous with the rise of Tibet as a great military power were also the beginnings of its decline—Buddhism began to spread and take root about this period. In the two centuries following the reign of Srongtsen Gampo, Buddhism increased its following of monks enormously and gained royal patronage. When the line of kings ended, the Tibetan empire broke up into numerous principalities involved in internecine warfare, but the influence of Buddhism waxed further. Tibet passed into the period of the priest kings: the Sakya Lamas. Beginning with the head Lama of the Sakya monastery, a succession of high priests ruled the country for about 200 years. The Sakyas however, failed to maintain their power and in 450 AD Tibet relapsed into secular monarchy for another two centuries.

After the eclipse of the Sakyas, eleven Lamas of Phamo Drupa lineage held power for about 80 years, They were followed by four kings of the Rinpung family and three of the Tsangpa line. The Rinpung rulers exercised control for 130 years while the Tsangpas briefly figured for 70 odd years.

During the rule of the second monarchy, a comeback to power was staged by the priests. The institution of the Dalai Lama, a form of government known as *Gaden Phodrang*, combining both the

secular and religious powers, was established during the reign of Ngawang Lobsang, the Fifth Dalai Lama, who along with Thupten Gyatso, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, are regarded the most outstanding. For over 300 years the Dalai Lamas ruled over the country as spiritual and temporal overlords. In cases of absence and minority the country was ruled by regents selected from incarnate Lamas. The present Dalai Lama is the fourteenth in succession.

As head of not only Tibet but also the Tibetan Buddhist Church, a special eastern relationship called patron-priest developed between the Dalai Lamas of Tibet and the foreign rulers of China, firstly with the Mongols and later the Manchus. It was a relationship whereby the Lama (or Guru) gave spiritual guidance in return for lay support from his religious disciple—an understanding that was strengthened by usage since the time of the Mongol, Kublai Khan, who ruled over China in the thirteenth century. Tibet twice invoked the understanding in the eighteenth century by requesting military aid from its then lay supporter, the Manchus, who had embraced the Tibetan form of Buddhism. But along with the troops sent to Tibet, the Manchus also sent their *ambans*, who were left behind in Lhasa as representatives of the Chinese Emperor. Although initially they had no political authority, the *ambans* did later on exercise some indirect influence through the Tibetan Government. Yet these powers were gradually lost as time went by and the *ambans* were reduced to mere observers. The Chinese date their

claims over Tibet from these historical events, putting forth the view that China possessed “suzerainty” and “sovereignty” over Tibet. However, Chinese overlordship in any form whatsoever has never been acknowledged by Tibet, a fact that they ignore, and China has cynically distorted the patron-priest relationship to suit its selfish interests.

The next development in Tibet’s international relations occurred when, after some minor disputes about the Indo-Tibet border in the Himalayas, the British Indian Government signed a convention with China in 1893. Under this agreement the boundary was fixed and the British acquired some trading rights in Tibet; but the convention was repudiated by the Tibetans who removed the boundary marks. In 1903 the British, incensed at not getting their trading rights of 1893 translated into action, sent a military force to Lhasa. The Tibetan army bravely resisted the invading force but was defeated, and the British signed a convention with the Tibetan Government. The Chinese did not figure at all in this convention nor did their government raise any objection to the treaty concluded between Tibet and British India. In fact Tibet entered into this international agreement as a fully sovereign independent power.

About 40,000 Chinese troops, veterans of many years of civil war and the Second World War, crossed the Driчу River at several points on October 7, 1950, and defeated the pitifully outnumbered and outgunned Tibetan force dispositioned around

Chamdo, in eastern Tibet. These massed attacks, heralding the "peaceful liberation of Tibet" announced by Radio Peking on 10 September 1949,* were launched from Tibetan areas across the Drichu River such as part of Amdo, Dege, Kantzu, Bathang, Lithang, Nyagrong, and Dartsedo, (Tatsienlu), which were forcibly seized and occupied by the Chinese before 1950. The Tibetans had always considered the frontier to be well east of the Drichu River, starting from Lake Koko Nor, with Silling, in the northeast and running south to include the Goloks in the bend of the Machu? (Yellow River), then bulging east and south along longitude 103°E, enclosing Horkhok, Gyalrong, Nyagrong and Dartsedo. Going further south, the frontier also included the Mili area and northern parts of the Chinese province of Yunnan, roughly at latitude 26°N.

When news of the disastrous defeat of the Tibetan army followed by the fall of Chamdo reached Lhasa, it was obvious to the Dalai Lama's Government that any serious attempt at resistance would be futile. Appeals were made to Britain, the United States, India, Nepal and also the United Nations for help, but these fell upon deaf ears and proved entirely fruitless. The countries concerned were sympathetic but un-willing to render any assistance. At Britain's initiative, the General Assembly of the United Nations decided not to consider the question as the Legal position, according to the British representative, was not clear.

Faced with this situation, the Tibetan Govern-

ment had no option but to negotiate with the Chinese. The Governor of eastern Tibet, Ngapo, who had fallen into the hands of the Chinese, was instructed to start these negotiations on the clear understanding that the Chinese armies would advance no further. Subsequently a Tibetan delegation, headed by Ngapo, left for China and arrived at Peking in early 1951.

*The first announcement was, however made during a congress of the Chinese Communist Party in the thirties.

After prolonged discussions, during which the Chinese refused to acknowledge the fact of Tibet's independence inspite of the arguments and evidence advanced by the Tibetan delegates, the Chinese produced a draft agreement containing seventeen articles. The agreement started with the false assumption that Tibet was a part of China. One of its clauses referred to the need for "uniting and driving out imperialist aggressive forces from Tibet." These forces of course existed only in the imagination of the Chinese. Another clause laid down that the "local government of Tibet shall actively assist the People's Liberation Army to enter Tibet and consolidate the national defence." It was further stipulated that the Tibetan army would be absorbed into the Chinese army and Tibet would be deprived of all authority to conduct its external affairs. The Chinese promised under the agreement not to alter the existing political system in the country, nor the status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama,

and further, to respect the religious beliefs of the Tibetans and protect the monasteries. As subsequent events showed, however, none of these solemn promises were kept, in fact they were all grossly violated.

The Tibetan delegation was not permitted to suggest any amendments in this one-sided agreement nor were they allowed to refer to their government in Lhasa. In fact they were threatened with dire consequences if they refused to sign it, and had to affix their signatures under duress. When they refused to affix Tibetan seals to the document, the Chinese with characteristic unscrupulousness had these seals forged in Peking and used the duplicate seals to validate the agreement.

CHAPTER—THREE

THE TIBETAN WAY OF LIFE

Until recent times the world knew very little about Tibet and its people. The geographical location of the country—long known as “the roof of the world”—and poor communications partly accounted for its inaccessibility; Lhasa was called the “forbidden city”. The accounts of explorers and men of adventure who occasionally managed to penetrate Tibet only enhanced the aura of mystery and mysticism about the simple in which it was shrouded. There was however nothing mysterious about the simple, unsophisticated people of Tibet. Two factors which greatly influenced their lives were physical isolation and religion. The former resulted in the evolution of a simple, pastoral and agricultural economy and the Buddhist religion with its rituals affected their everyday life.

Religion deeply permeated Tibetan society and a sizeable proportion of the population consisted of monks and nuns. The laymen were exceptionally scrupulous about observing the elaborate and frequent ritual of prayers and offerings. Great importance was attached to religious studies and monasteries were the main repositories of what was deemed the profoundest scholarship and knowledge. The entire educational system had its basis in religion and the highest examinations—conducted orally

—tested a candidate's knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures and philosophy, as also their proficiency in religious debate. All the members of the priestly order and the Dalai Lama himself had to qualify in these examinations.

A deeply religious character is inconsistent with at least some of the qualities which are needed for material progress. Apart from Tibet's geographical isolation and lack of contact with the outside world, one reason for its simple, undeveloped economy on the eve of the Chinese invasion was doubtless the state of contentment and limitations of wants induced by religious devotion. But if the economy was simple, it was also self-sufficient. The average Tibetan farmer with his small agricultural holding and his livestock of yaks and cows, or the nomad with herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, was contented and happy. Nature endowed the country with a climate which while extremely cold and forbidding in winter, was in many parts favourable for pastureland and crops in summer. In the summer months and after the rains the fields in the valleys turned a wonderful green. The farmers cultivated barley, wheat, oats, potatoes and other vegetables. As in India, agriculture depended largely on the whims and fancies of the weather, and in times of drought the farmers would ask the monks to intercede with the gods on their behalf.

The staple food of the Tibetans was *tsampa* flour, prepared mostly from barley, although other

foodgrains such as wheat and maize were also used. The barley was roasted in a frying pan partly filled with sand and heated on a strong fire, and the roasted grains were then ground into flour. *Tsampa* flour was usually eaten with tea, milk or beer. It was usual for Tibetans, when travelling or visiting friends, to carry small bags of *tsampa* flour with them and pour some into a bowl of soup or tea offered by the host. Preparing the flour into dough was something of an art in which housewives specialised. Tea was an important ingredient of Tibetan diet and was taken several times a day, with butter or salt. Brick tea was imported from China through the eastern province of Kham. Other items of food were meat, cheese and vegetables, Buddhists of course regard all forms of life as sacred but an important exception was made on the need to eat meat; in Tibet's rigorous climate, consumption of meat was considered a necessity. Butter was in plentiful supply and was also used extensively in butter lamps, which were an essential part of religious offerings. The menu of the well-to-do or rich families was of course more varied and included such items as dried fruits and pastries.

The woollen cloth used by most Tibetans was indigenous and woven by craftsmen who went about the countryside and set up their looms in the yards of village houses. The thread was spun by the farmer or his wife and clothes were made also at home except dresses for festive occasions, for

which a tailor's services were needed. Farm-grown jute was used to supply thread for the family's boots. The villagers also prepared the boots at home from leather either obtained from slaughtered cattle (the slughtering was done by professional butchers) or from the market. Most people used boots only in the winter and went about bare-footed during the summer. There was also a breed of itinerant craftsmen who supplied the simple needs of the villagers; they included the cobbler, the carpenter and the potter. Green-glazed earthen jars to store water and smaller pots for food-stuffs were part of the average home's household effects.

Most Tibetans enjoyed robust health. When illness did occur, it was treated by physicians who practised the indigenous, herbal system of medicine. Allopathy and modern surgery were unknown although it is said that at one stage Tibet had a highly developed surgical science, which latter fell into disuse and obscurity. The indigenous system was well perfected and the collection of herbs was efficiently organised under the supervision of experienced physicians. Medicines were prepared and administered mainly in the form of powders and tablets. In diagnosing an illness, Tibetan physicians relied on checking the patient's pulse rate, urine and stools. This indigenous medical system proved very efficacious, especially in the treatment of certain chronic and old-age diseases. In India the Tibetan administration—in-exile recently estab-

lished a medical centre, based on this system, at their headquarters in Dharamsala. It is becoming increasingly popular among both Tibetans and Indians.

The amusements and festivities of the Tibetans were closely linked with religious observances. Monks, in red or yellow cloaks, beating gongs or tinkling bells, invariably participated in these events. Almost every locality or region had its own deity and on special occasions people travelled long distances to make their offerings to the deity and seek its protection or guidance. For instance Taktser, the small village in Amdo province where the Dalai Lama was born, had its protective deity Kye and its throne was the nearby mountain of Kyeri. Often temples or *labtses* (heaps of stones) were erected in a village or town and dedicated to the deity. Prayers and offerings were followed by dances and feasting.

The biggest celebration throughout the country was that of the New Year's Day. This was an occasion for much rejoicing and feasting, when people visited their relations and friends not only in the same village but also in neighbouring villages and towns. Housewives vied with one another in entertaining their guests as lavishly as possible. There was plenty of food and locally brewed beer kept flowing nonstop to keep everyone in good spirits. In Lhasa the great Dance of the Lamas was held the day before New Year's Eve and the

Dalai Lama's winter palace, the Potala, was the centre of the festivities.

Known as the *Torgya* celebration, it consisted of a series of Lama dances which were witnessed by the Dalai Lama, who sat in the highest balcony of the palace. On such an event, thousands of Lhasa citizens gaily dressed thronged the roofs of neighbourings buildings. The dances, which mimed legendary episodes in the country's history, lasted several hours and were performed by masked monks. The dancing groups followed one another in quick succession and the audience welcomed them with laughter and applause. Each mask, with its animal or other symbols had a special significance and history, although only a few knowledgeable people were aware of it. But the Black-Hat dancers, representing the destroyers of evil, were immediately recognizable as such and created a powerful, if somewhat sobering impression on the audience. For this dance the performers wore dark-coloured costumes and long, grisly chains made of human bones. The whole effect was eerie and anewesome. The last sequence was a big dance in which all the groups participated. Surrounding a figure painted on a large sheet of rice paper and representing the old year, they danced wildly, jumping high in the air to the accompaniment of a medley of music produced by trumpets, drums, oboes and cymbals. At the end of the dance, the *Champon* or Chief Dancer, threw the paper image into boiling oil and poured raw spirit on the fire. As the flames rose

high and consumed the image, the scene symbolised the end of everything evil in the past year.

Another highlight of the New Year festivities was the Festival of Light on the fifteenth day of the first month of the year. Comparable to India's *Diwali* festival but differing from it in important aspects, it was celebrated by lighting thousands of butter lamps and decorating public buildings and houses. Monasteries, which were especially decorated and illuminated for the festival, attracted large crowds of sightseers. A distinctive feature was the display of elaborate and carefully constructed butter structures of buildings, people and landscapes. These ingenious creations were made of butter with a framework of wood. The work of skilful artisans, they were much admired by the spectators. But tradition decreed that the butter creations should not see the light of day after being displayed on the night of the festival, They were destroyed and cleared away before dawn.

Besides the elaborate and prolonged ritual which ushered in the new year, Lhasa itself was the venue of many other ceremonies, dances and dramatic performances throughout the year. The great religious assemblies, known as *Chhotul Monlam Chenmo* and *Tsokchhoy Monlam*, were held in the first and second months of the Tibetan calendar lasting twenty one days and eleven days respectively. *Chhotul Monlam Chenmo* celebrated the subjugation of evil spirits by Lord Buddha and *Tsokchhoy*

Monlam the death of the Fifth Dalai Lama. These two religious assemblies attracted congregations not only from Lhasa but from the remotest parts of Tibet. Thousands of incarnative Lamas, monks and laymen participated in them and the assemblies were marked by many learned discourses, recitations and debates. At such assemblies Tibetans deemed it a privilege to receive the blessings of high religious dignitaries. They distributed large donations of tea and money to the monks and gave alms to the beggars. As part of the religious ritual during the assembly sessions, people went round Lhasa, prostrating themselves before the sacred places in the city. The assemblies were also the occasion for brisk trade in all kinds of merchandise. People from the outlying districts brought their products for sale in Lhasa and purchased goods which were not easily available in the remoter parts of the country. Life in the capital city was not all austerity and meditation. Blended with its religious and spiritual activity was plenty of liveliness and gaiety. The richer people in the city entertained lavishly and held picnics on the river banks in summer. Their costly and decorative dresses lent colour to these festive gatherings. It must not be assumed that the Tibetan preoccupation with religion repressed their natural zest for life or sense of humour. In fact they always enjoyed a joke and even a Lama or a monk was apt to laugh heartily at one. The people's religious beliefs and training engendered the qualities of

tolerance, courtesy, kindness and humility. And the average citizen had these qualities, although of course the country was not entirely free from crime and among the nomadic tribes there were some who tended toward banditry.

The Chinese, in trying to justify their invasion of Tibet and the wholesale destruction of its institutions, have grossly exaggerated the inequalities and so-called inequities of the Tibetan social system. While admittedly there was inequality of wealth as between the landed aristocracy and the poorer sections of the peasantry, the material condition of the people as a whole "compared very favourably with that of some European countries". (The Legal Inquiry Committee on Tibet of the International Commission of Jurists.)

The system of land tenure in Tibet has been described as feudal but it was different in important ways from the medieval feudal system of Europe. All land was the property of the State and most farmers held their lands under leasehold direct from the State. Although technically tenants, in actual practice they had all the rights of a freeholder. The land was heritable and they could lease it to others, mortgage it or sell the right to it. They paid the rent to the Government largely in kind and the produce thus collected by the State was the main source of the stocks held and distributed to monasteries, the army and the officialdom.

Apart from this class of farmers, there were

others who worked on the large estates which had been granted to aristocratic families and monasteries. On these estates the peasants or tenants cultivated the land on behalf of the landlords and also had separate holdings for the support of their families. They either paid rent in kind to the landlord or placed at his disposal the services of one member of the family. The other members of the family were free to engage in any business or to follow any profession. Such a system cannot certainly be described as serfdom, and there were no serfs in Tibet. The landlords did exercise the administration of justice, which may have been abused sometimes, but under a rule instituted by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama all tenants had the right to appeal to him directly in cases of suppression and maltreatment by a landlord. Another factor which prevented the landlord from acting harshly was the constant shortage of labour; he could not afford to let the peasant-tenants leave the farm and run away.

Whatever the merits and demerits of this ancient system, it certainly needed reforming and the present Dalai Lama and his *Kasheg* (Tibetan Cabinet) had prepared a scheme by which the large private estates would revert to the State on payment of compensation. The land thus acquired was then to be distributed among the actual tillers. But before this scheme could be implemented, the Chinese took control over the administration and began to impose their ideas on the country.

Critics of the Tibetan agrarian and social system are apt to overlook some very relevant factors which countered its apparent faults. In spite of differences of status or material possessions, there was no great gulf between the rich and the poor. The landowner was more of a patriarchal head of a household than an exacting or oppressive master. The universal belief in the principles and teachings of Buddhism encouraged, on the one hand, generosity and the desire to improve the lot of the less fortunate and, on the other, the absence of envy or resentment on the part of the poor. Acceptance of the law of *karma*, which postulates that each man reaps in this life what he has sown in a previous existence and that the good or evil he commits now will effect the status of his next rebirth—produced a passive contentment with life but did not stifle the urge to improve one's lot. Also the doctrine of reincarnation, as reflected in the search and discovery of a new Dalai Lama or other high dignitaries of the church in humble homes, tended to narrow differences of birth, heritage or wealth. In a country where a boy born in a poor peasant family could be elevated in this way to the highest position in the land, it was inevitable that material values should be of less significance than religious, spiritual or scholarly merit. Apart from reincarnations, which thus had a democratic influence, promotion to higher ranks in the monastic order was also democratic and there was nothing to prevent a boy from the poorer classes entering a

monastery and progressing by dint of his own ability.

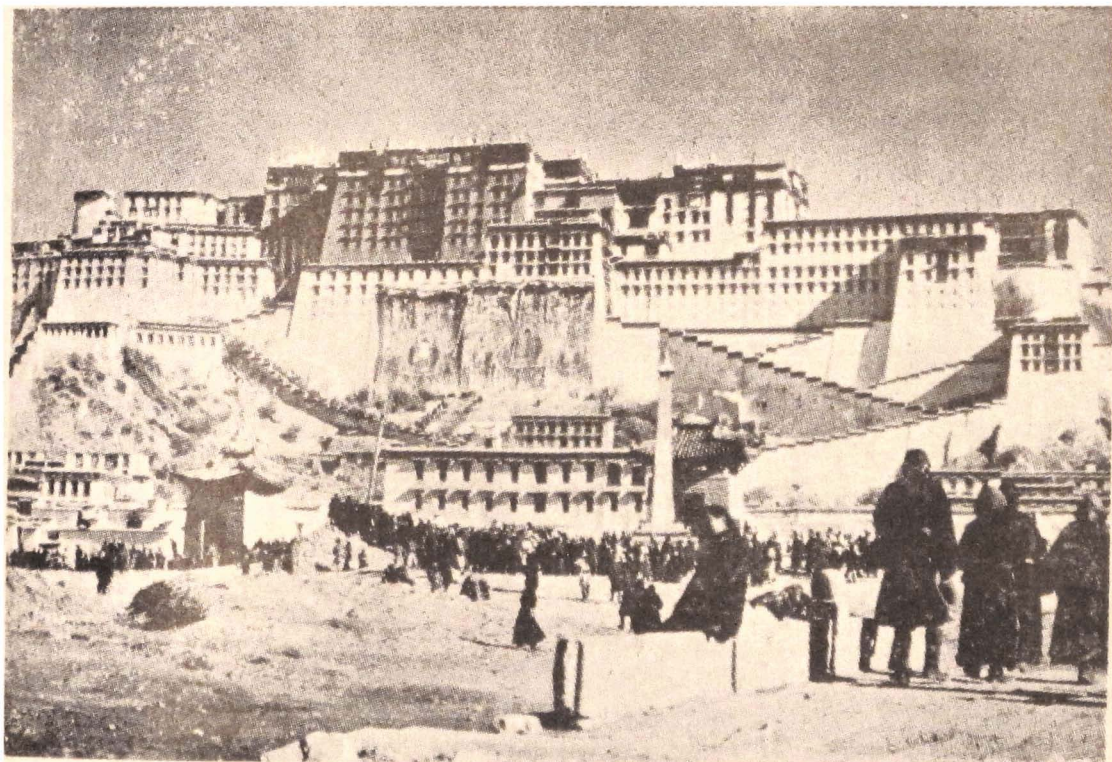
Tibetan customs and traditions may seem strange and outdated to people accustomed to Western ways of living or prone to Western influences. But to the Tibetans their cultural heritage, handed down through the centuries, was - and is - extremely precious. A simple, peaceful people, contented with their lot, engrossed in religious ritual and taking delight in traditional forms of recreation, all they asked for was to be let alone in their isolated valleys and hilly plateaus. And yet this was asking for too much. Tibet was invaded and the Tibetans were forced to resist the Chinese by violence. Despite the awareness that China was a big and powerful nation possessing an awesome armed might, the Tibetans struck back, fired by the patriotic conviction that theirs was a just cause. This was particularly true of the brave Khampas of eastern Tibet.

CHAPTER FOUR

OPPRESSION AND OPPOSITION

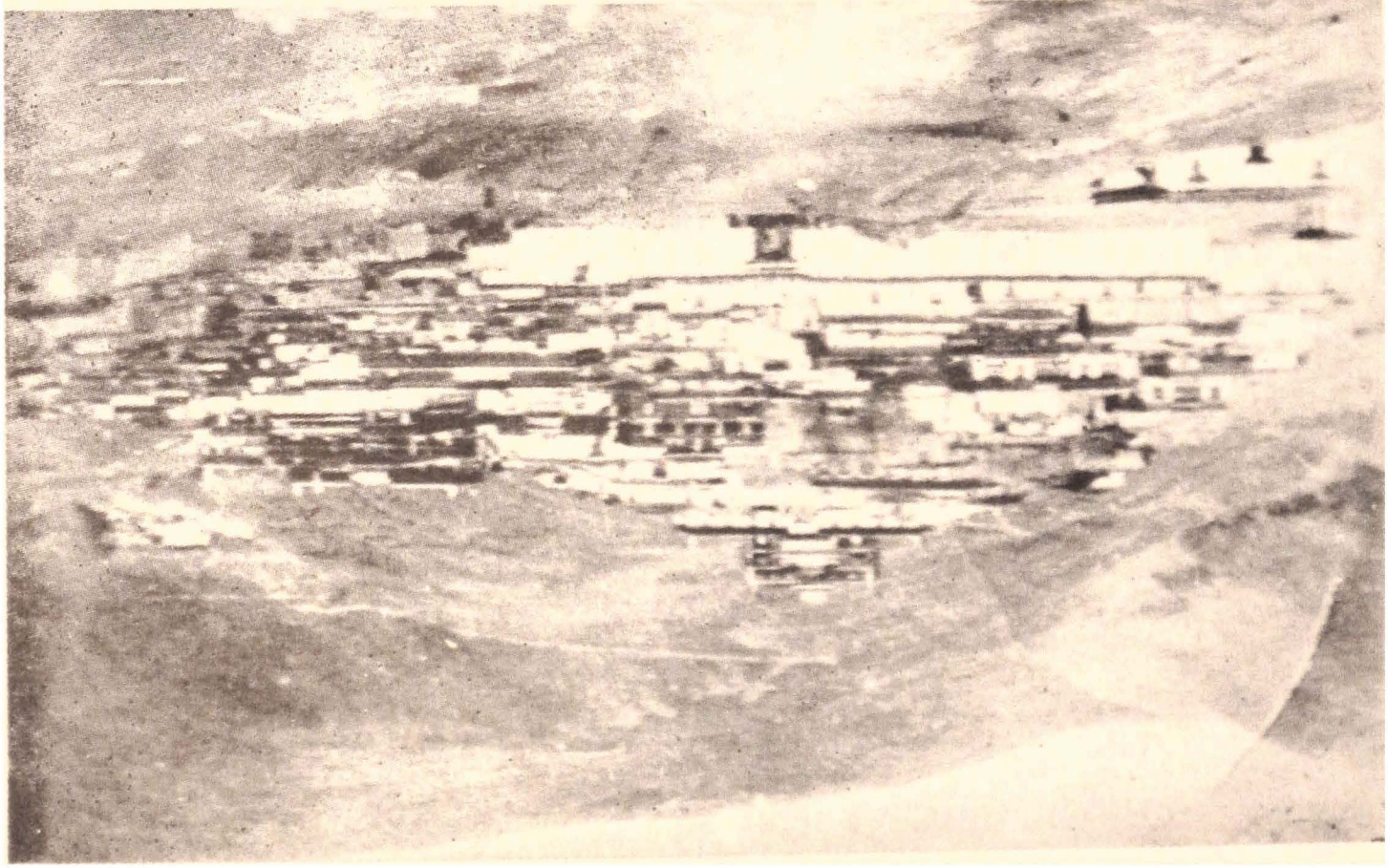
Following the conclusion of the Seventeen Point Agreement, the Chinese army, which was already in occupation of eastern Tibet, marched into Lhasa and the other major towns and cities of Tibet. And now commenced a period of increasing troubles, trials and tribulations for the Tibetan people. The Chinese not only occupied an extensive area for quartering their army and requisitioned a large number of houses, but also made huge demands on the food supply. Tibet's simple economy was unable to stand the stress of these continued demands, and it was not long before prices spiralled sky high and famine conditions prevailed. Discontent grew and, along with it, resentment against the Chinese army which had obviously come to stay and expected the country to feed it indefinitely.

When Chamdo fell, the Dalai Lama had fled for safety to Dromo, close to the Sikkimese frontier. Behind him in Lhasa, he left two able Prime Ministers with full powers to handle the affairs of the state, except those requiring his personal attention. Of the two Prime Ministers one was a top ranking monk official called Losang Tashi and the other Lukhangwa, an extremely



Potala—Winter Palace of H. H. the Dalai Lama

A general view of Lihang Monastery





Rear view of Lithang Monastery and general view of Lithang



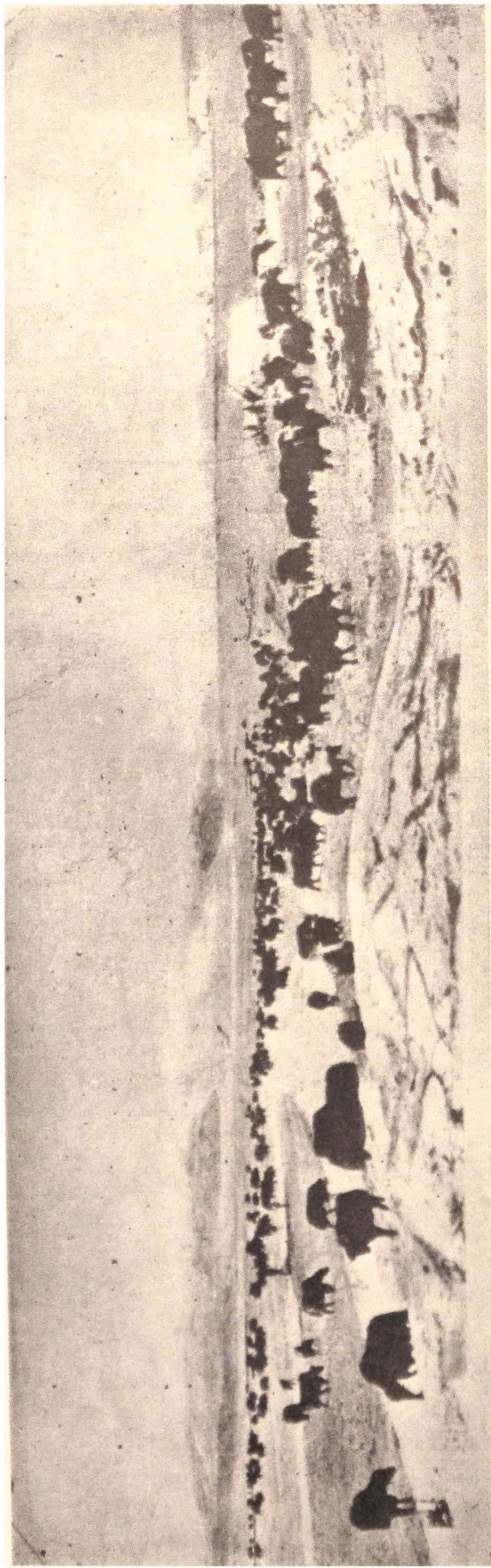
Tibetan Khampa Women farming on the outskirts of Lihang Monastery

Famous milch cow (Known as Dzomo)





Tibetan traders travelling on a business trip near Lithang Monastery



A herd of yaks grazing not far below Lithang Monastery



↑ A Division of Tibetan Army at Lhasa ↓





↑ A Tibetan Government Army (Artillery Group) near Lhasa ↓



capable, experienced and courageous lay administrator. As bitterness against the Chinese mounted the Tibetan Government was subjected to forceful and repeated complaints from the Chinese authorities, who accused the Dalai Lama's two Prime Ministers of leading a conspiracy against them. At meetings with members of the *Kashag*, the Chinese generals often lost their temper and insulted the Tibetans. A crisis arose when the Chinese announced that they intended to absorb the Tibetan troops into the "People's Liberation Army" in Accordance with the terms of the Seventeen Point Agreement. The Dalai Lama's Prime Minister Lukhangwa strongly protested against the move. He pointed out at the meeting that the people of Tibet did not accept the agreement and the Chinese themselves had violated some of its terms. He spoke strongly as a true patriot and criticised the Chinese bluntly for their forcible occupation of eastern Tibet. In another verbal battle, he refused to have the Tibetan national flag replaced by the Chinese one on the Tibetan army barracks.

Lukhangwa's uncompromising attitude angered the Chinese, who regarded him as a serious trouble maker, and pressure was brought upon the Dalai Lama and his *Kashag* for his removal from office. As recorded in his memoirs, His Holiness, in the interests of Lukhangwa's own safety and future of the country, sadly accepted the *Kashag's* recommendation and asked both Prime Ministers to resign. No successors were appointed.

After this ugly incident the Chinese maintained a show of friendliness. In the summer of 1952 they suggested that a delegation of Tibetan officials and other citizens should visit China to see for themselves the conditions in that country, and the "freedom" of religion enjoyed by the people there. They prepared a long list of thirteen families, including my own, who were invited to send one of their members to China. I had no desire to accept this invitation, odious as it was and which in fact was in the nature of an order. Eventually I avoided the trip to China by sending one of my employees, Phuntsok, who I pretended, was a near relation of mine. The Tibetan Government met the travelling expenses of the delegates from Lhasa to Chamdo, and from the latter point onwards all expenses were borne by the Chinese.

The Chinese took them on a grand conducted tour of Peking and several other cities in China, Inner Mongolia and north-east China. Everywhere they were treated to lectures on the progress made by the country under the communist regime and asked to publicise its blessings on their return to Tibet. The delegates were given photographs of Chinese military parades and public works and pamphlets describing the improvements attained by the Chinese. On their return to Tibet, the delegation again submitted a report on China. No one, however, was deceived by these propoganda stunts sponsored by the Chinese, and it was implicitly understood that the Tibetans who participated in it

had been forced against their free will. According to Phuntsok's opinion, expressed to me privately, the Chinese pamphlets were—in plain language—simply a long list of lies. After this visit, more groups composed of representatives from religious and trading circles and the Tibetan youth were also taken on a tour of China.

In 1954 the Dalai Lama himself was invited by the Chinese Government to visit China. Suspecting a sinister motive behind the invitation and fearing that the Dalai Lama might not be permitted to return, the Tibetans were opposed to the visit. But there was little they could do to prevent it. His Holiness regarded it as his duty to go to China in an effort to persuade the highest authorities there to keep their promises. On the day of his departure, I was among the many who prayed fervently for his safe and speedy return to Tibet and listened to his sermons in front of the mausoleum of Lama Tsongkhapa and Choegyal. I was privileged with the opportunity of having a private audience with the Dalai Lama and received his precious blessings. As a mark of reverence, respect and gratitude I offered a set of seven gold bowls weighing a hundred and ninety three tolas and a gold lamp weighing sixty three tolas.

The Dalai Lama's absence from Tibet lasted about a year till the middle of 1955. He met Mao Tse-tung, Chou En-Lai and other Chinese leaders and had several conversations with them about

Tibet and its future. His Holiness had stated in his memoirs that Mao Tse. tung had expressed his happiness at Tibet's return to the "Motherland" but also assured the Dalai Lama that the Chinese had not come to his country to exercise any kind of authority over the Tibetan Government or the people. This assurance of course was belied by what was happening even then in Tibet, and more so by subsequent events.

Mao told the Dalai Lama that it had been decided to set up a "Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet". The Committee was to consist of fifty one members, of whom all except five would be Tibetans. The Dalai Lama was to be the chairman and the Panchen Lama and a Chinese official vice-chairman. The Committee was to undertake the task of preparing the country for regional autonomy by setting up sub-committees for economic and religious affairs. On the face of it the Committee appeared to have weightage in favour of the Tibetans; its actual composition however was such that—as later developments showed—authority was almost wholly vested in the Chinese. Only fifteen members represented the Tibetan Government, eleven were to be chosen by monasteries, religious sects and public bodies and ten each by two new bodies which the Chinese had created—namely, the "Chamdo Liberation Committee" of eastern Tibet and the "Panchen Lama's Committee" at Shigatse, west of Lhasa. The remaining five seats were to be filled by Chinese officials, and all

the appointments had to be approved by the Chinese Government.

On his return to Tibet, the Dalai Lama was warmly welcomed by people from every section of the society, and receptions were held at Datsedo (Tatsienlu), Chamdo and Kongpo (east of Lhasa) on his route to the Tibetan capital. In Lhasa itself there was a huge gathering of government officials, incarnate Lamas, monks and other citizens in his honour. The Tibetan army held a parade and long lines of monks carried religious banners. Everyone's heart was filled with joy and relief and there was general thanks giving; prayers were offered at the Norbulingka, the summer palace of the Dalai Lama, and the ceremony ended with a sermon by his Holiness.

In the midst of this rejoicing there was a foreboding of disaster. Most of the people in Lhasa were not yet aware of the drastic changes which the Chinese were carrying out with much ruthlessness in eastern Tibet. Others such as myself had however received many reports of their cruelty and the bitter, mounting resentment of the people. Traders arriving in Lhasa from Siling, Bathang, Markham and other places in that area brought many tales of Chinese oppression. According to them the Chinese had forcibly collected millions of silver dollars from the local people; the pretext being that funds were sorely needed to pay the salaries of the troops and to meet other military needs.

Those who had no cash were coerced into selling their livestock and supplies of foodgrains to meet this levy. Along with such outrageous taxes, the Chinese had begun experimenting with their program of so-called reforms and the "Liberation" of the countryside, as early as 1952. In the area of Gyalthang southern Kham, the following year, the local population was divided into five strata and a terror campaign of selective arrests launched by the Chinese. People belonging to the first three strata were either publicly humiliated or condemned to the firing squad. Scores of Tibetans were arrested and many of them were shot mercilessly at mass gatherings. This alarming development reached such a stage that the Chinese had destroyed thousands of monasteries in the areas of Bathang, Lithang, Gyalthang, Derge and many places in Amdo. The entire wealth of the monasteries, including sacred images and scriptures, was seized and removed to China. Many Lamas and monks were imprisoned without reason, others subjected to various ignominies or condemned to death after a farcial trial.

A number of wealthy farmers and businessmen who had accumulated property through many generations, were branded as capitalists; their wealth was confiscated, their houses sealed and the owners thrown out, resourceless and defenceless. The poorer people were forced to work in vegetable gardens or on road and building construction, without wages. At the same time the Chinese

launched an intensive propaganda drive, seizing hundreds of Tibetan youths and sending them for a communist education to China.

In April 1956 the Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet was inaugurated by the Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Marshal Chen Yi, who came to Lhasa specially for the purpose. Although the Dalai Lama and his cabinet were prepared to give a fair trial to the constitutional scheme drawn up by the Chinese, it soon became apparent that the so-called autonomy was nothing less than a farce. With a solid bloc of controlled Tibetan votes in the Committee in addition to those of the Chinese members, the real representatives of the Tibetan people had little voice in decision making. In any case all important decisions were made by another body, the committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet, which had no Tibetan representatives.

When the people began to learn how the Chinese were foisting their authority and their own system of government on the country, the simmering discontent against them, nurtured by the stories of atrocities in the east, grew into open resentment and hostility. Public meetings were held to protest against the new organisation. Resolutions were passed and copies sent to the Chinese officials, the *Kashag* and the office for internal affairs. They demanded that all the members of the Preparatory Committee should be appointed with the approval

of the Tibetan people, that the Dalai Lama should be consulted on all matters concerning the welfare of the people but that, in view of the unique personality of His Holiness, he should not have to attend meetings of the Committee or any other meetings called by the Chinese. Another popular demand was that Tibet should continue to have its own currency and its circulation should not be stopped.

The Chinese were of course determined to crush all opposition to their policies. Under pressure from them the Dalai Lama and his cabinet were obliged to issue a proclamation banning public meetings and ask the people to refrain from anything that would impair the good relations between Tibet and China. But popular opinion could not of course be suppressed by such measures and it found expression in other ways. I contacted several big traders in Lhasa and the heads of Kham monasteries and we agreed that we could no longer continue to remain silent spectators of Chinese atrocities. Encouraged by the response, I distributed leaflets exhorting all Tibetans to unite and protect their freedom and country in an active and not—what was until now—a passive posture.

The *Monlam* festival, held in Lhasa at the beginning of 1956, gave popular Tibetan leaders an opportunity to express their resentment and to renew their demands which, in a nutshell, were that the Chinese should go away and leave Tibet

to the Tibetans. But the Chinese had of course come to stay and were more resolved than ever to crush all agitation. They indulged in many threats and insisted that the *Kashag* should issue orders for the arrest of three prominent leaders—Alo Chouze of Kham, Tsodak Lhakchuk of Shigatse and the secretary of Lhoka Bumthang—who, they alleged, were responsible for the distribution of anti-Chinese pamphlets and posters in the city. Although these people had broken no Tibetan law, the *Kashag* had no option but to imprison them in the interests of their own safety. When on my return to Lhasa after a business trip, I learnt of the incident and immediately arranged a meeting with the three men, trying to devise some means for their escape or release from prison. After consulting the some of the influential officials and incarnate Lamas, I decided that the best way to help them was to appeal to the authorities through the three big monasteries of Sera, Ganden and Drepung. To get the monasteries to move on behalf of the imprisoned men, I had to contact many individuals and about a dozen *khangtsens* or regional monastic groups. I also approached the security department of the Tibetan Government but the department refused to act without instruction from the *Kashag*.

Unfortunately these contacts wavered and the withdrawal of support by some of the *khangtsens*, who had second thoughts about their involvement, resulted in much delay and one of the men, Lhakchuk, died in prison. I made an offering of one

hundred *dorzes** (Tibetan currency) for butter lamps in his memory. The abbots of the three monasteries later appealed to the *Kashag* to release the other two men and stood surety for their behaviour. The appeal was accepted and the men released with a warning that they should not engage in such activities in future. I was impressed by Alo Chouze and thought he might be useful in furthering Tibet's cause if he could go to India. I provided him with two horses and a 40-calibre pistol with a fully loaded magazine, and he proceeded secretly to India via Bhutan.

The need for organised resistance against the Chinese was becoming increasingly urgent and vital, but we had to make our moves with much caution and circumspection. In December 1956 (the tenth Tibetan month of the Fire Monkey Year) I thought it was time to enlist the support of various nationalist elements in Kham. So, on the pretense of undertaking a business trip, three of my men proceeded to Dokham (south-eastern Tibet) with a message from me to various leaders in the area. The message read: "For some time you people have been rebelling against the Red Chinese. The time has now arrived to muster all your courage and put your bravery to the test. I know you are prepared to risk your lives and exert all your strength to defend Tibet. I also know that the tremendous task that you have undertaken is a noble

* 1 *dorze* equals 50 *sangs* (coins)

cause and that you will have no regrets despite the ghastly atrocities committed by the enemy. In this hour of peril, I appeal to all people, including government servants, who value their freedom and religion, to unite in the common struggle against the Chinese. Messages are being sent to people in other parts of Tibet and the neighbouring countries, such as India, to explain that the Tibetans now have no alternative but to take up arms against the Chinese.”

CHAPTER FIVE

A FIRE FROM THE EAST

In 1956, the Tibetan year of the Fire Monkey, His Holiness the Dalai Lama was invited by the Mahabodhi Society to India to attend Buddha Jayanti, the 2500th Anniversary of the birth of Lord Buddha. The Dalai Lama was anxious to avail himself of this invitation. Apart from the religious importance of the anniversary, it would give him the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to India's Buddhist shrines. It would also enable him to meet Mr Jawaharlal Nehru and other Indian leaders and seek their sympathy and advice on Tibet's growing troubles. For these reasons the people, too, were keen that he should go to India and hoped that the visit might benefit Tibet in some way and improve its deteriorating relationship with China.

But the Chinese were reluctant to let the Dalai Lama go, and General Fan Ming, who was the senior Chinese Government representative in Lhasa at the time, advanced several reasons against the visit. The main reason, of course, although he did not explicitly mention it, was that the Chinese wished to prevent any contacts between the Dalai Lama and the Indian Government. He was asked to send a deputy to India

instead, and it was rumoured that he would nominate his junior tutor, Trijang Rinpoche, to represent him. When I heard of this I was greatly disappointed and I met the abbots of the three leading monasteries and other influential Lamas and monks to enlist their support for the Dalai Lama's visit. In the meantime, however, the Mahabodhi Society's invitation was followed up by a telegram from the Government of India requesting the Dalai Lama to attend the celebrations as their guest. This seems to have forced the hands of the Chinese and they agreed to let him go out, as was revealed later, but not without first warning him about what he should say and not say while in India. Among other things they asked him to propagate the myth that the Tibetan enjoyed complete freedom including religious freedom.

I was glad when the Dalai Lama's visit to India had been finalised but I had misgivings again when I heard that he was going to travel by a Chinese plane. I wondered if the Chinese had some sinister design to take him to another destination. I conveyed my suspicions to Ngawang Dakpa, the abbot of Sera monastery. But we were both relieved when the Dalai Lama made the trip to the frontier by car. Tibetans everywhere felt happy and celebrated the occasion by feasting, dancing and making religious offerings for his safety and happiness.

The Dalai Lama spent several months in India. Be-

sides participating in the Buddha Jayanti celebrations and addressing the symposium held on the occasion, he visited Sanchi, Ajanta, Banaras and Bodh Gaya, where thousands of pilgrims had gathered to greet him. He was also able to see some of India's development projects and get an idea of the economic progress which the country was making under a free, democratic government. He had several meetings with Mr Nehru and with the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-lai who also happened to be on a visit to India. From what His Holiness reported afterwards, Chou En-lai was polite and suave and professed to be sympathetic to the wishes of the Tibetans. He said he was desirous of redressing their grievances, and stressed that China did not want to interfere in Tibet's affairs or to be an economic burden. Chou promised that the Chinese troops would be withdrawn from the country gradually. He seems to have given similar assurances to Mr Nehru, who two years later said in a statement to the Indian Parliament: "He (Chou En-lai) told me that while Tibet had long been a part of the Chinese state, they did not consider Tibet as part of China.... They consider it an autonomous region which would enjoy autonomy. He told me further that it was absurd for anyone to imagine that China was going to force communism on Tibet."

Meaningless and empty, Chou En-lai's promises were being cynically disregarded in eastern Tibet where the situation was rapidly deteriorating into

open warfare. Atrocities continued on without let up while the Dalai Lama was away and thousands of Khampas had fled to the mountains, organising themselves into compact guerrilla bands. A rash of rebellions broke out and enveloped the entire regions of Kham and Amdo in fire and smoke, indicative of more dangerous developments that were to follow in later years. Chinese military outposts were brazenly attacked, communications cut and large chunks of territory seized by the rebels. In early 1956, Chamdo, Lithang, Bathang and Kantzu were temporarily overrun and the Chinese garrisons stationed there completely wiped out. Some six thousand Tibetan irregulars, during this period, ranged freely from their mountain hideouts, wreaking widespread havoc and destruction. A major uprising flared up in the northeastern region of Amdo where several towns fell to the Tibetans. The Chinese succeeded in squashing the rebellion after a protracted struggle, during which the land communications to China were brought to a standstill.

Retaliations inevitably followed and in June the same year Lithang was bombed by the Chinese Air Force. The Tibetans replied by staging hit and run attacks on Chinese communities across the border. These outbreaks of violence were regarded seriously by the Chinese authorities who were afraid that they would spread to the interior. But instead of adopting a constructive remedy, they followed up with additionally repressive measures

and about 40,000 soldiers were deployed to restore control over the countryside. The harried Chinese also attempted to seek the support of leading local Tibetans to implement their reforms. Similar meetings were also held in all the important towns and villages in the region.

In the meantime many refugees had been streaming westwards from the eastern provinces. They camped in the environs of Lhasa and their number gradually rose to about ten thousand. The arrival of the refugees added a new and dangerous element to the Lhasa atmosphere of discontent and resentment against the Chinese. Hate and tension increased at a frightening rate and anti-Chinese incidents began to occur frequently.

Unfortunately, there were some Tibetans who collaborated with the Chinese. One of them who came from Kham to Lhasa at the end of 1956 was Baba Phuntsok Wangyal. He called a meeting of traders from southern Kham who were then in Lhasa and in the course of a long speech, tried to mislead them about the causes behind the war in eastern Tibet. "There is a war in Kham", he said, "because the Khampas are ignorant of the real motives behind Chinese policy. In actual practice the treatment of the Chinese is very good. If your traders wish to return to your homes and resume business activities there, the Chinese Government is fully willing to give you all the help it can." Later he arranged another meeting, this time attended by the traders from

northern Kham and addressed them in similar terms. Baba Phuntsok also met incarnate Lamas and other influential monks of the three big monasteries and tried to deceive them about conditions in Kham.

I deemed it my duty to expose these lies and to give the Lamas and others a true picture of what was happening. I told them that the people of Kham were compelled to fight and resist the Chinese because of their destructive policies against the Tibetan state, religion and the individual. On the pretext of carrying our revolutionary reforms, the Chinese were making the lives of ordinary Tibetans miserable, confiscating property and murdering and torturing people arbitrarily. I pointed out that the Khampas had put up with such cruelties for a long time and were now convinced that they had no choice but to oppose the introduction of the Chinese system. I also reminded them that the Chinese were disregarding the clauses of the Seventeen point Agreement. Finally I suggested that it might be useful if a communication describing the people's plight could be sent to Mr Nehru and also to the World Buddhist Society. It was further agreed that the three monasteries would lend their support to the document by affixing their seals to it. Although a draft of the communication was drawn up, it could not be sent. At this time a number of influential monks and government officials in Lhasa felt that any foreign intervention would not affect the Chinese attitude, and

in fact they were against any secret meetings to discuss such moves.

In the meantime the resistance movement in Kham was gathering strength. Early in 1957 the treasurer of Lithang monastery and representatives of other monasteries met me with letters from many people in Kham. These letters urged that since the people were engaged in a fight against the Chinese, which they were determined to carry on at all costs, the Tibetan Government should give them military aid. In responding to these letters, I thanked my fellow Khampas for what they were doing for the nation and encouraged them to continue the struggle even if they did not get aid from the Tibetan Government. Military aid seemed out of the question, but I nevertheless approached the monasteries and government officials to contribute their support to the freedom fighters in whatever way they could. About this time I received a letter from the Tibetan Trade Mission in Kalimpong, praising my work on behalf of the nation. I was deeply touched and thanked the Mission for their appreciation, asking them if they could not do something to further the Tibetan cause in India.

While vital problems of freedom and security were uppermost in my mind and claimed the attention of most Tibetans we were not oblivious of our other obligations. The return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet after his Indian visit was greeted

with much joy. Prayers were offered and religious banners displayed and, on arrival in Lhasa, he was accorded an enthusiastic welcome by government officials, monks and the general public.

A proposal to offer *Tenshuk Shapten*, a special religious ritual involving gifts and prayers, to the Dalai Lama was made. This ceremony was also significant for its political nature; it expressed the people's loyalty and confidence in the Dalai Lama's leadership and confirmed his earthly sovereign powers. Besides, the occasion was convenient for a gathering of important Tibetan leaders. It was at this time that the decision to form a resistance organisation was taken and conveyed to His Holiness through Thupten Woyden Phala, an important official who was the *Dronye Chenmo* or Lord Chamberlain. All my later communications to His Holiness were routed through him. This was done to avoid implicating the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government and to maintain secrecy.

I was anxious that the Khampas should not lag in participation; and contributing to the success of *Tenshuk Shapten*. I met several popular leaders, Lamas and wealthy merchants in the various districts of Kham, Amdo and persuaded them to cooperate. My visits also served the dual purpose of enlisting further support for the resistance movement against the Chinese.

After approaching the Dalai Lama who agreed

to accept the offer of the religious ritual, the *Kashag*, important officials of the government, and representatives of the people gathered together and decided that His Holiness should be provided with the gift of a golden throne. Various people were entrusted with the task of collecting contributions from different parts of Tibet and from monasteries and estates. Along with three other men, I was assigned to take charge over some districts in Kham. Contributions were to be either in cash or in the form of gold and silver ornaments and precious stones.

When all the collections had been received, it was found that they contained a fairly large quantity of gold and silver besides diamonds, pearls, onyx, coral and turquoise. So great was the reverence for the Dalai Lama and the eagerness to contribute to the fund that women willingly sacrificed their personal ornaments, such as the *Padug* (a head ornament) consisting of a triangular frame of gold studded with corals and turquoise), *gawu* (chest ornament of gold and turquoise), and ear-rings. Even beggars cheerfully offered their small contributions.

As a result, a large fund was collected to make the planned golden throne worthy of His Holiness. Forty nine goldsmiths, five silversmith, nineteen engravers, six painters, eight tailors, six carpenters, three blacksmiths and three welders, in addition to thirty general assistants, worked for several weeks on the construction of the fabulous throne. While

the work was going on, the scriptures were read out, prayers conducted, prayer flags hoisted and incense burnt. When completed the throne weighed 3,164 tolas of pure gold with many priceless stones, *The Dorjee*, or symbolic thunderbolt in front of the throne, alone accounted for 133 tolas of gold, and in it were embedded diamonds and turquoise in the shape of lions. To paint some parts of the throne eight tolas of gold were used. A golden table weighing 203 tolas and side of the throne.

Besides the throne and other items described, a number of golden and silver lamps and vessels were also prepared for the monasteries as part of the ceremony. These included a 720-tola gold lamp engraved with the symbols of deities, three sets of golden bowls weighing 112 tolas each, one 85-tola gold pitcher with turquoise, one 75-tola gold lamp, one set of silver cups and pitchers, one 50-tola gold lamp, four 100-tola silver lamps and four sets of silver bowls weighing a total of 547 tolas.

The completion of the throne was celebrated by religious offerings and cash presents, along with the ceremonial white scrafs, were distributed to the workers. The throne was offered to the Dalai Lama on July 4, 1957, which was considered an auspicious day. Thousands of people watched the most important ceremony which still continues to linger on in the memory of those who have witnessed it. The throne was placed in one of the balconies of the Norbulingka palace, and when the Dalai Lama sat

upon it there was general rejoicing. A 75-tola golden wheel, with eight good luck symbols, and many other gifts were offered to His Holiness, who recited prayers and blessed the people. The officials of the Dalai Lama decided that the throne should be kept in the Potala and the ceremony repeated every year, when the Dalai Lama would sit on the throne and receive the people in audience.

CHAPTER SIX

BIRTH OF THE VOLUNTEER FREEDOM FIGHTERS

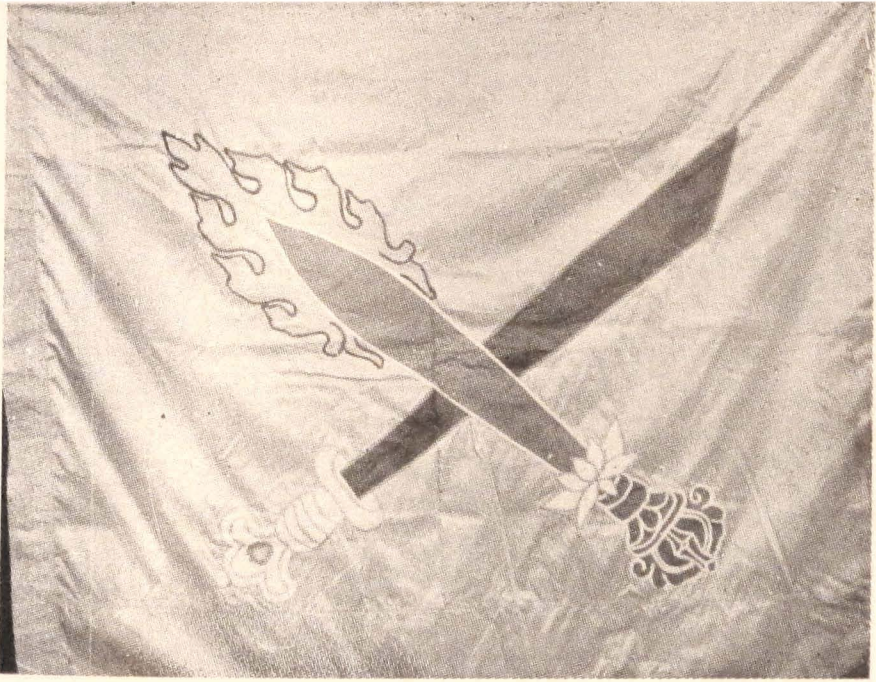
By early 1958 my activities had begun to assume suspicious proportions in the eyes of the Chinese authorities. Although no move to arrest me was made, they were eagerly on the look out for some pretext or the other to take punitive action. I however had no intention of giving up the efforts to create organised resistance, or of remaining passively subdued and cowed by Chinese threats and intimidations. Reports of increasing Chinese repression only further strengthened my conviction that we would have to strike back with force—and soon.

About this time the Chinese administration deported some 1,500 Chinese civilians from Tibet to China. These civilians had migrated to Tibet during the past few years to escape the rigours of the communist regime and had established small businesses as shopkeepers, restaurateurs and playhouse managers. The Chinese officials suspected them of anti-communist activities and of passing information to the Tibetans. It was clear from this move that the Chinese administration was preparing to impose their dreaded reforms on a more extensive scale on the country.

I wished to warn the Tibetan Government about the likely trends of Chinese policy and its effects but

had no way of communicating direct with the Dalai Lama. I did, however, make my suspicions known to Thupten Woyden Phala. Subsequently I called a meeting of the leaders of twenty three groups of the *Chushi Gangdrug* (Four rivers, six mountains ranges), the resistance group that sprang up in eastern Tibet. I said: "The Chinese have invaded our land and imposed a foreign system of government. They have deceived us with their promises and deprived us of our freedom. Our way of life has been ridiculed, our religion attacked, and many of our contrymen killed senselessly. I am sure I don't have to point out to you the enormity of these crimes. And furthermore, who can say they don't also have designs against His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In the face of this challenge, we should unite strongly in the common cause of resisting the Chinese and forget our petty, personal interests."

The decision to actively resist the Chinese Communists was unanimously approved, and soon after we feverishly began preparations for war. We had to collect guns, ammunition and horses; two officers of the Khadang division of the Tibetan army and a number of monks promised their support. When news of the meetings reached the Chinese, they became jittery about the consequences of a combined resistance by the Khampas, Amdowas and a part of the Tibetan army. They called a meeting of the *Kashag*, the leaders of the three big monasteries and Tibetan military officers, and warned them of the consequences of the reported move to oppose the



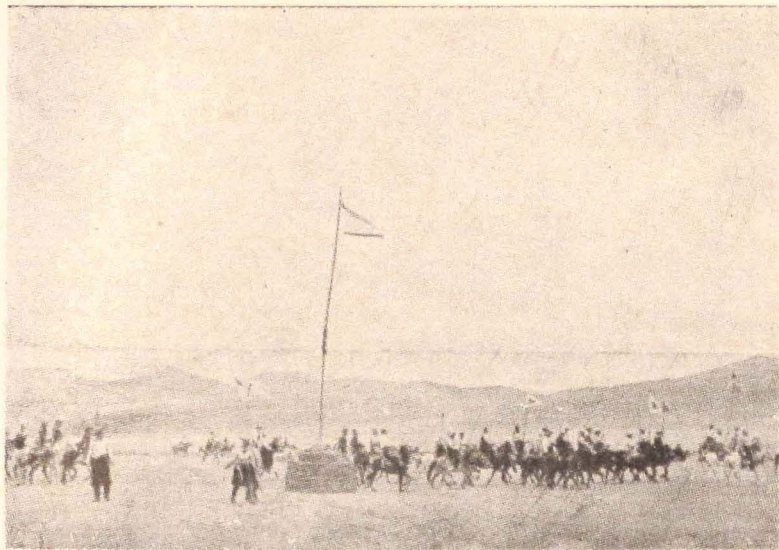
A Flag of V. F. F. (Chushi Gangdrug)

Gompo Tashi





Myself in Khampa Dress



Gathering of Freedom Fighters at Drigu Thang

Myself inspecting the formation of the Freedom Fighters





Examining the captured Chinese weapons in front of Sharlho Building at Tsethang



Testing the captured Chinese weapons



Putting the captured Chinese weapons in working order



Testing the captured Chinese weapons



Freedom fighters in their foxhole before the actual fight

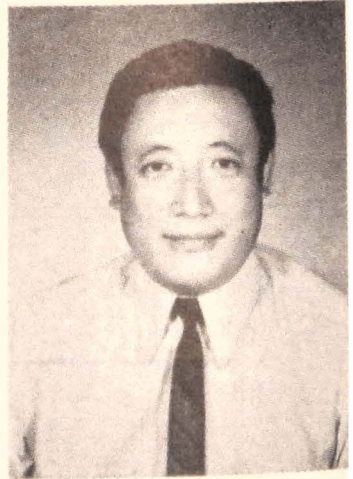


Freedom Fighters taking rest after the Fight

MY NEPHEWS



K. G. Gyatotsang



Wangdu Gyatotsang



Bhugan Gyatotsang

People's Liberation Army. With their usual hypocritical talk, they tried to convince the Tibetan leaders that they had the interests of the country at heart. The Chinese assured them that the recent mass arrests and deportation of Chinese civilians to China need cause no anxiety to the Khampas and Amdowas as they belonged to the Tibetan race, and no such action was contemplated against them.

At this time the Kashag was under considerable Chinese pressure to suppress our movement. Breathing down their necks, the Chinese forced the *Kashag* to issue proclamations forbidding anyone to help or join the opponents of the Chinese on pain of punishment. Similarly orders were given to the army commanders to prevent any links with the resistance movement.

The Tibetan Government was in an awkward position. Although they sympathised with us, as did the people, no doubt, they were hamstrung and unable to help us. To do so would have been an unequivocal invitation for the Chinese to introduce intolerable measures that central Tibet had been so far spared, but which then existed in eastern Tibet. The *Kashag* fully realised the gravity of the situation—and so did we.

In his memoirs, the Dalai Lama has explained the dilemma succinctly: "Part of me greatly admired the guerrilla fighters, they were brave people, men and women, and they were putting their lives and their children's lives at stake to try to save our

religion and country in the only remaining way that they could see. When one heard of the terrible deeds of the Chinese in the east, it was a natural human reaction to seek revenge. And moreover, I knew they regarded themselves as fighting in loyalty to me as Dalai Lama; the Dalai Lama was the core of what they were trying to defend.

Despite it, however, many Tibetans from the central and other parts of the country, including the army, joined our movement as Chinese oppression steadily became unbearable. Their decisions were taken on an individual basis as nationalists who could not see their people butchered. The *Chushi Gangdrug* as a result grew from a regional to a *pan-Tibetan resistance movement*.

Nevertheless the orders issued by the *Kashag* worried us and we had to postpone a planned meeting for several weeks because of the risks involved. The *Saga Dawa* or Buddha Jayanti celebrations in the latter half of April, however, gave us the desired opportunity. While we collected funds for religious rites and to repaint holy statues, we also discussed how we should act to further our plans against the Chinese. Shortly after this the Chinese themselves took an ill conceived step which precipitated matters and goaded us to action. They began to take a census of all the Khampas Amdowas and who were living in Lhasa or in the numerous tents which had sprung up in the outskirts of the city. Their officers went around noting details of the personal history of

everyone and their messengers announced that no one hailing from Kham, Amdo or any other part of the country would be allowed to stay in Lhasa without an identity card, containing his name, age and place of birth, signed by a Chinese official. These orders caused considerable resentment and indignation among our people who feared that the census might be followed by mass arrests. They began to move out of Lhasa, and I, too, decided that the time had come to leave the capital and make a determined stand for our freedom.

Sounds of gunfire were now being heard in Lhasa almost every day. We feared further trouble and were worried about the safety of the Dalai Lama. Before leaving the city, I and my lieutenants held a detailed meeting to determine our future course of action. We decided that the Tibetans should no longer remain indifferent or idle in the face of Chinese oppression and that the people should unite to defend the country and its institutions.

Without further delay or hesitation I now set about organising a volunteer force. I knew that in making this final decision to take up arms against the Chinese, I had to set aside all considerations of my own welfare and that of my family. But there was no greater or nobler cause to which I could devote myself and the wealth of the Andrutsang family. Our first need was for arms and ammunition. Most Khampas already possessed rifles or pistols, so a sizeable quantity of firearms was immediately avail-

able to us. I decided to buy more. Among these were Russian-made guns of short and long range models, and German, Japanese, British, Canadian and Czechoslovakian rifles and pistols, together with large quantities of bullets. The arms and ammunition were transported secretly to our freedom fighters base camp and distributed among the volunteers. As my contribution of recruits for the force, I supplied forty six of my employees, all of whom were armed to the teeth and provided with horses. Another hundred pack horses and mules were also supplied to the force, besides large supplies of white canvas and khaki cloth for making tents.

News about the birth of the volunteer freedom fighters soon reached the Chinese, not all of whom were anti-Tibetan. There were some who did not approve of their government's policies and sympathised with us and our cause. One of their artillery commanders named Chang Ho-ther rebelled, deserted the Chinese army and sought refuge in the headquarters of the Khadang Dashi division of the Tibetan army. He brought with him two rifles, two pistols and about 650 rounds of ammunition. The Tibetan commander of the division was reluctant to grant him asylum and was thinking of handing him over to the Chinese authorities. But when I came to know of the Chinese officer's defection, which I believed was genuine, I thought he would be useful to us and advised the Tibetan officials against such action. My advice was accepted and Chang was hidden in the monastery of Dashi for several

days. Later, dressed like a Khampa, he was escorted by our freedom fighters to Trigu Thang, in Lhoka, the region south of Lhasa, which was the headquarters of the volunteer freedom fighters. This Chinese officer, who assumed the Tibetan name of Losang Tashi, fought alongside our men for nine months and is now living in a Tibetan settlement in the Indian state of Mysore.

Time was running out and the moment of confrontation with the Chinese drawing nearer. I sent a letter to His Holiness the Dalai Lama explaining how the mounting Chinese oppression had driven the people to desperation and that they were no longer prepared to submit to it. I mentioned that the Chushi Gangdrug had repeatedly asked me to come to the headquarters of their organisation and I could no longer ignore their call. I sent similar letters to the Dalai Lama's two tutors and then prepared to leave Lhasa and join the force.

Before I set out on what was destined to be a momentous journey marking the beginning of a new chapter in my life, I made some last minute preparations. I sent two of my servants with three horses in advance to Thip, a village south of the Tsangpo, on the way to *Tranggo, in Lhoka*, which was to be our first halt. I reached Thip by motorcycle and from there my servants and I rode to Tranggo. Resuming our journey the next morning, we were joined by about three hundred volunteers from various parts of Tibet. When we arrived at

Lhodak Dhama Dzong, we met the local Tibetan Government officials and explained to them the objectives of our organisation. We also requested their help in the obtaining foodgrains and they responded generously by collecting a large quantity of barley from the local estate and residents.

Near this place on June 16, 1958, we held a meeting which was largely attended by the Chushi Gangdrug and their supporters from all over Tibet. An impressive cavalry parade was held, incense burnt and a photograph of the Dalai Lama was ceremoniously carried to a tent. Then our new flag, especially designed by a Tibetan craftsman, was unfurled. It was a yellow flag with an emblem of two sword represented that of a deity, and on the handle was a symbolic dorjee or thunderbolt and lotus flowers. As the flag of the Volunteer freedom fighters (VFF)—the name we adopted for our organisation went up, there were shouts of joy and much rejoicing.

A representative of the organisation next addressed the gathering. He said: “The Red Chinese invaded Kham in 1950. Since then their atrocities and deceitful activities have been on the increase. During the last two years, they have burnt, bombed and destroyed thousands of monasteries in northern and southern Kham. They have also destroyed private property and murdered and tortured monks and incarenate Lamas, as well as regional officials, traders and others.

It is obvious that they intend to wipe out the power and influence of the Government of Tibet through their so-called reforms. The situation today is extremely dangerous and we, the Chushi Gangdrug cannot bear the thought of our countrymen being oppressed, and our freedom and government being destroyed. We are willing to risk our lives and our property to resist the Chinese and have thus established this *organisation—the Volunteer Freedom Fighters*.

“We realise that we cannot assault the enemy in or near Lhasa as that would endanger the safety of the Dalai Lama and the holy places and relics in the city. Hence we have established a garrison here in Trigu Thang.”

“The volunteer force must be fed and we are therefore obliged to ask the people in the surrounding areas to contribute grain, meat, butter and other necessary foodstuffs. We shall issue receipts for whatever the people may supply us, and we promise recompensation when Tibet becomes free again. At the moment we have about 5,000 volunteers gathered here and, no doubt, more will arrive later.”

Our appeal met with enthusiastic response from the people. A representative of the provincial government, who also spoke on behalf of the monasteries and the citizens, assured us of their wholehearted support. He undertook to collect food supplies for us from all the twenty five district headquarters of the Lhoka area, and

from monasteries, estates and individuals. He also promised to enlist recruits for the volunteer fighter as our cause was the cause of the entire people. He paid a tribute to our patriotic fervour but hoped that, while engaged in the fight against the enemy, we would observe the laws of the land, and restrain any unruly elements in our ranks from robbing the people or causing them any trouble. Since our entire struggle was of the people, we naturally accepted these wholesome stipulations.

SKETCH MAP OF MAJOR BATTLE SPOT



CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM BEGINS

Formed amidst considerable popular support and hope, the organisation of the VFF was now faced with the problem of selecting suitable commanders and other leaders who could direct the war and lead our men to victory. We needed honest and sincere men, with the necessary courage, military skill and the ability to control the force. They had to be men capable of making quick decisions and with a keen sense of responsibility. They had to be tactful not only in handling the fighters but also in their behaviour towards the people whose goodwill and friendship were vital to our cause.

We did our best to appoint persons who possessed these qualities. Four experienced men were selected as top commanders, five as liaison officers to establish understanding between the force and the people and another five to take care of all supplies and equipment for the force. We also set up a secretariat and a finance department. There were eighteen field commanders and a captain for each group of ten freedom fighters. *A 27-point code of conduct* was drawn up and adopted, which was later enlarged and amended as circumstances necessitated.

An important provision of our code of conduct

was the protection of people from bandits and other unlawful elements in the population. One of the first acts of the VFF was to take note of the activities of wandering group of bandits who went about robbing people of their animals and other property and often inflicted severe injuries on them. Sometimes these groups pretended to be acting in defence of the country, but in fact they were unscrupulous self-seekers and robbers.

We publicised their nefarious activities in the Lho Dzong area and encouraged the people to capture the bandits whenever possible and to seek our assistance if they could not cope with the menace themselves. We despatched our freedom fighters in groups of fifty to a hundred to those areas where the bandits were reported to be active. The freedom fighters had instructions to capture them if possible and to kill them if they resisted arrest. At the same time the freedom fighters were warned that they themselves should observe strictly the 27-point code of conduct of volunteer force and refrain from the harassing the people in any way.

The Chinese administration fully appreciated the potential of the bandit menace for creating animosity and distrust between the *freedom fighters* and the local populace. They took advantage of a few disloyal Tibetans and exploited them to raid and pillage the countryside, masquerading as freedom fighters. These traitorous, pro-Chinese elements were also used to collect information and

data on the strength, arms, movement and plans of the freedom fighters. The Chinese rewarded them generously with large sums of silver dollars and encouraged them to continue on with their destructive, anti-national activities.

In spite of the Chinese attempts to sow discord among the Tibetans, the freedom fighters continued to enjoy good relations with the people. A solid foundation of understanding between the two sides on their respective positions had been established at an early stage, and we were, largely because of this, able to weather through the storm of Chinese deception and deceit. It was not long afterwards that the Chinese realised the fruitless nature of their quest and suspended the whole scheme.

The task we had undertaken of fighting the Chinese was a tremendous one. Although we had a great deal of popular support there were some sceptics who for reasons of self-interest, and perhaps fearful of their own safety, were reluctant to align themselves with us. They asked: "What are the facilities for fighting the war? What are the sources of military supplies? What will happen if the plan to drive out the Chinese Communists fails?" It may have been some of these sceptics who carried the news of our activities to Lhasa.

Copies of our report to the *Kashag* were sent to the three monasteries, important courts and institutions. We requested them to publicize the facts we had submitted as widely as possible. We made it

clear that we had no personal or individual grievances, but that the oppressive and deceitful policies of the Chinese left us no option except to fight.

Having dealt with the Kashag representatives, we turned our attention to problems of military strategy. By now the existence of our freedom fighters base in Trigu Thang had become widely known and for reasons of security, we deemed it prudent to disperse our forces and divide them into three groups. Our new headquarters were set up in Tsona.

The strength of our force being very small in comparison with that of the Chinese, I was anxious that it should be deployed to the utmost advantage. For this purpose information about the enemy forces and their location was of vital importance. To scout and patrol the area, one of our divisions consisting of 670 horsemen under eighteen commanders was sent on a secret mission. As we were short of firearms and ammunition we borrowed whatever we could from a military depot of the Tibetan Government in the district. Some of the commanders in charge of the mission were deputed to enlist the people's help in getting supplies of foodgrain, animal fodder and firewood. Others were instructed to ensure that the freedomfighters did not ill-treat the people in any way.

At this time two incidents occurred which emphasised the need for greater vigilance and discipline in our ranks. Some of the freedom fighters stole about a hundred horses and mules from a nearby pasture and

drove the animals to our camp. The owners followed them to the camp and asked for the return of the animals. I considered it a disgrace that the volunteer force should stop to indulge in such acts of banditry, and insisted on the animals being restored to the owners. After some argument, this was arranged and the owners went away satisfied. The other incident concerned a Chinese collaborator whom we had captured. While our men were building a rope bridge to cross a stream with the help of local people, the prisoner escaped. As subsequent events showed, this was unfortunate since the prisoner passed on information about our movements to the enemy.

We were not surprised when we received eight messages from the *Kashag*; it was apparent that the Chinese were behind them. The *Kashag* said: "The recent deportations of some Chinese civilians from Lhasa has led to unfortunate rumours that similar action would be taken against the Khampas and Amdowas. This matter has been taken up with the Chinese authorities and settled to our satisfaction. People, high and low, are now living in Lhasa in peace, free from any anxiety. Yet, in the fourth month of our calendar, you people from Kham, without informing the government,⁶ have suddenly taken up arms against the Chinese Communists and established yourselves in the areas of Lhoka (South) and Jhang (North). Such an unlawful move should not have been made at a time of peace. It has created worries and anxieties both among the Chinese and

the Tibetans. If you give up your warlike attitude and resort to peaceful methods, the Government of Tibet will be glad to consider any problems you may have about food, housing or your other needs.”

These messages were followed by the visits of four representatives of the Tibetan Government to Trigu Thang. I learnt that these representatives had not come of their own free will nor was the Tibetan Government anxious to send them. But apparently our government had been pressurised by the Chinese into deputing them to ask the Khampas why they had taken to arms and ignored the government’s orders. The messages of the *Kashag* had also been despatched under similar coercion.

The representatives of the Tibetan Government urged that our actions were shortsighted and that we should be concerned about their consequences which might be disastrous. I was not present at these talks which the government representatives had with my deputies. They insisted that for discussions, I should appear before the *dzong* or provincial government. I considered their request—which was practically an order—and decided that if I presented myself before the *dzong* it might lead to complications and possibly endanger our plans. I therefore sent some leaders of the volunteers force to represent me.

My representatives informed the authorities that I was on an inspection tour of the force and would be unable to meet them. But the government repre-

sentatives refused to have any discussions with my men. A stalemate resulted and ultimately my people asked the government representatives to issue whatever orders they desired and to return to Lhasa. They were informed that freedom fighters of the volunteer force were gathering in the neighbourhood and responsibility for their safety could not be guaranteed.

Left with no alternative, the representatives issued a declaration to the effect that the peaceful relationship with the Chinese was not to be undermined. They asked us to report to the government in writing, our reasons for starting the resistance movement, and to explain why I and my associates had left our homes and taken up arms. They also desired that all disturbances and rumours should stop forthwith, as a religious ceremony in honour of the Dalai Lama was due to take place shortly.

Some of the important officials sent by the Tibetan Government to dissuade us from our activities even joined us for example Tekhang Khenchung Thupten Samchok and Tsepon Namseling, both were fourth ranking government officers.

Complying with the government's wishes, we submitted a report which clearly set forth the reasons for our actions and the objectives of our movement. We stated that our movement did not generate from any motives of disloyalty or disrespect toward our government nor was it conceived in any spirit of lawlessness. Our sole objective was to resist and

oust the Chinese who were oppressing our people. Under the cloak of reforms, they were confiscating property, arresting people and imprisoning them without just cause. Not only was personal safety at stake, but our national institutions and way of life were being extinguished slowly and cunningly. Individual freedom had become non-existent since the Chinese invasion and the communist doctrine was being barbarously enforced. Patriotic people felt that there was nothing left to look for or live for. We were rebelling not from choice but from sheer compulsion.

It now appeared that our confrontation with the Chinese army would take place very soon. The first encounter occurred near a village called Nyemo Dukhak Sumdo, at the end of August 1958. The Chinese had apparently received advance information about our plans and had made preparations to ambush us. Our scouting party of 150 men was proceeding cautiously and made discreet enquiries from passers-by about the presence of Chinese troops in the locality.

Although two women whom they met on the way said that they had seen Chinese soldiers digging trenches and making other preparations, this was contradicted by other people and our freedom fighters decided to risk a further advance. Passing two road construction projects, they found the road blocked and could not proceed any further. This was the point where the Chinese had decided to ambush

and attack our men, and they had walked right into the trap. The Chinese began to fire furiously on them from all sides with cannons, machine guns and rifles.

A fierce battle ensued and our freedom fighters fought back gallantly. As I crossed the river with some fifty horsemen behind the scene of the fighting, I had a view of the battle and immediately decided our moves. The freedom fighters following and accompanying me were dispersed to take up positions of vantage in the hills and across the river. They were divided into groups of ten and by noon had occupied a number of strategic sites in the valley and in the hills. The fighting continued without a break for two and a half days and when we finally ran out of ammunition, we rushed at the Chinese with our swords.

In spite of the sophisticated weapons that the enemy were using, we inflicted severe losses on them. An estimated 200 Chinese were killed and an unknown number of them wounded in this engagement. We suffered 40 dead, 68 wounded and lost about 50 horses and mules. Our relatively low losses were perhaps because of the holy charm boxes which our freedom fighters wore around their bodies. Even those who were wounded continued to fight tenaciously and gave the enemy much trouble.

We gradually withdrew from the scene of the battle on the third day and travelled along the main road. But before we could cross another river near

Marjangla the Chinese had prepared another ambush for us. Fighting took place at this spot late in the evening and next morning, but we did not suffer any casualties.

Continuing to travel northward we reached Shang Gyatso Dzong or Shang Gaden Choekhor, (Tibetan Government armoury located west of Tibet) where we hoped to replenish our depleted stock of arms and ammunition. But we were informed by the local people that, under orders from the *Kashag*, most of the weapons had been distributed among the monks of a neighbouring monastery, and only twenty five guns were left at the dzong armoury. Desperate for arms, a group of twentyfive volunteers were sent to the *dzong* while another fifty secretly surrounded the monastery at night. We however failed to secure the cache of arms and for three days negotiations were held with the representatives of the monastery and government officials. They were reluctant to let us have any weapons as they had received orders from the *Kashag* not to give arms and ammunition to the Khampas.

After much persuasion and pleading, we finally succeeded in winning them over, pointing out that the weapons would serve no better purpose than that of ours. The haul of arms was sizeable and we were very glad to have it. There were two sets of 80 MM Mortar; eighteen lots of shells, each containing six shells; two sets of 60 MM Mortar, with sixteen lots of shells, each containing eighteen

shells; ten Bren guns, with five packets of shells each containing 2,660 shells; 18 Sten guns, Three Hundred Eighty-five 303 rifles; 378 bayonets; and sixty boxes of shells each containing 1,000 shells.

The people in the area in general were very helpful. They provided us with food and expressed their appreciation of our activities. They hoped that the volunteer force would succeed in driving away the Chinese from the land.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MANY FIERCE BATTLES

Our war with the Chinese thus brought us some initial victories and during the next few months our force scored many more successes in spite of the vastly superior numbers and armament which the Chinese were able to marshal against us.

I sent one of our commanders with fifty freedom fighters on a reconnaissance trip to the *Uyug Zomthang* area to study the movements of Chinese troops. A group of hundred freedom fighters under another commander followed to help the advance party in case of trouble, while the main body of the force stayed behind. These two advance units managed to ambush a convoy which was proceeding to Shigatse. The Chinese were taken completely by surprise and our freedom fighters destroyed sixteen of their trucks including two loaded with horses. The Chinese army officers and eighteen soldiers were killed and a number of guns captured, while we escaped unscathed.

Our advance units now travelled south to join the main force and took a circuitous route to avoid the enemy. They were unaware of heavy Chinese troop concentrations in two valleys on their route, and came face with a large enemy force. In the brief clash that followed one of our men was killed

and another wounded. After the return of the two scouting parties we sent further groups of twenty freedom fighters to watch and report Chinese movements. They, too, encountered strong enemy troops in overwhelming numbers and were chased by the Chinese from many directions. We rushed reinforcements and a fierce battle broke out on the banks of the *River Nyemo*, lasting three days.

The Chinese had gathered in great strength; the nearby fields and houses swarmed with their soldiers and they were armed with cannons, automatic weapons and grenades. They kept up a constant fusillade of gunfire and shelled us relentlessly. In this situation it became obvious to me that to remain in the camp was to invite certain death. I decided that our best course was to hack our way through the Chinese ranks.

As the buglers in our camp sounded the signal to attack, I led seventy horse, on to the field. Galloping at full speed, we charged the enemy like wild animals, fighting them hand to hand. The Chinese were unable to resist the onslaught and withdrew to a nearby village. We pursued them and battled in and around the village until they retreated further and took shelter in the houses.

Most of them had taken refuge in two large houses that contained an office and some telegraph equipment. We shot down every door and window in these houses and eventually had to burn them as this was the only way to destroy the Chinese who

were hiding inside. It pained us deeply to learn later that some Tibetans, too, were in the buildings and were burnt to death along with the Chinese. I believe at least 700 Chinese were killed in this battle and many more were seriously wounded. We captured a number of automatic weapons and grenades and large quantities of ammunition.

Around noon on the day that the battle ended, I went to a hilltop and saw through my field glasses that the Chinese were bringing reinforcements and were getting ready for another battle soon. We had a brief council of war and I pointed out that, since we had been fighting ceaselessly for several days, it would be a good plan to move westward and avoid further immediate contact with the enemy. The other commanders agreed with my suggestion and we prepared to move out from the area. A company of fifty men was sent in advance to reconnoitre the ground ahead of the main body which followed an hour later with the horses and mules. To protect our rear against a surprise attack by the Chinese, another company of 100 men was detached and ordered to move two hours behind the main force.

We travelled for several days without a halt and finally arrived in the vicinity of *Nyemo Junpo* near which was located a local office of the Tibetan Government, known as the *Karkhang*. We had planned to rest here but found that the Chinese had gathered at this point, too. Our scouts reported that there were about a thousand Chinese soldiers in the

neighbourhood and when our guards went to the nearby hills, they were shelled. I decided against a major showdown and sent the bulk of our freedom fighters to Jhang Yangpa Ching, while I led an advance party of 150 men toward the *Karkhang*.

Before long we abruptly collided with a large number of Chinese and a group of fifty of our men launched a frontal attack. The remainder of our force was divided into two companies and I directed these to assault the enemy position simultaneously from the right and left. The battle lasted several hours, at the end of which the Chinese lost more than 200 soldiers while many more were wounded. We lost an able captain and two of our men were wounded. In this battle, too, we were able to capture many Chinese weapons.

After rejoining the main force at Jhang Yangpa Ching and a few hours of respite, we despatched a reconnaissance group to assess enemy dispositions in that locality. They established contact with some Tibetan nomads and from them learnt about the presence of a very large concentration of Chinese troops—probably around 10,000—on a nearby plain. The nomads reported that the Chinese had dug trenches, built fortifications and made other preparations for an attack. They advised our forward element not to proceed any further and the men returned to camp. A little while later we were informed that the Chinese were preparing to move more than two hundred trucks of soldiers into our rear.

With this piece of ominous news, it was obvious that if we remained overnight at our camping site we would be in imminent danger of being overwhelmed and crushed between two enemy forces. The situation had become critical and we were left with no alternative but to advance and attack the Chinese, even if it meant fighting to the finished. We gathered our forces and promptly mounted a furious charge on horseback. The unexpectedness weight of the attack, accompanied by our unearthly battle cries, created utter among the Chinese ranks. They fell rapidly back in disorder and returned our fire erratically. Four jeeps were destroyed and one Chinese officer killed.

After this narrow brush with the enemy, we moved to Jhang Namtso and camped there for several days. A small scouting party which we had left behind rejoined us and reported that the Chinese soldiers were massed all round. About a thousand of them were following us and Chinese aircraft were trying to locate us. We had a hurried meeting to discuss a way out of the fast enclosing Chinese dragnet and to see if anyone was familiar with the terrain in this part of the country. A small group of four experienced freedom fighters was sent ahead to investigate if there were any unknown routes or short cuts we could follow. Our main forces, followed later, divided into groups of a hundred each; their departure was timed to allow for a distance of ten miles between each group.

En route we attacked and captured a Chinese

storehouse, close by to a Chinese army airfield at Dhamshung (Tang Hsiung), killing all the guards and soldiers in the surrounding area. We removed the rice and foodgrains and burnt down the storehouse. A Chinese truck travelling from Nagchu to Lhasa was also intercepted at this point and destroyed. We then headed south, preceded by the usual protective screen of scouts, but ran smack across another two Chinese trucks that were going to Nagchu from the airfield at Dhamshung. These, also, were promptly dealt with.

Aware that the Chinese were pressing hard upon our heels, we suddenly doubled back from a bridge ahead of us and attacked our pursuers twice, inflicting heavy losses on them. By this time our stocks of food were running low and a group of fifty men was sent to forage for any foodstuffs they could obtain for the force. All that they could bring back was a small bag of barley flour from a neighbouring monastery at an exorbitant price.

Meanwhile 100 of our scouts who were ahead of the main force were attacked by the Chinese at Dugong Lungshur (dikhung). Unable to cut their way through the enemy ranks, the men had to withdraw and attempt to find other routes. They sent us a number of messages describing their position as desperate and asked for our assistance. I acknowledged these messages and planned to send reinforcements the next morning. But shortly after midnight the situation took a turn for the worse.

I learnt that the Chinese had massed a strong force and were threatening to wipe out our scouts. An emergency meeting was immediately called and we decided to move forward without delay.

While our cavalry rode straight ahead on the main route, two groups of 100 foot freedom fighters each marched on either side of the valley. Reaching the battlefield before dawn we joined hands with the advance force and promptly attacked the enemy from different directions. Unencumbered by our pack animals and loads which we had left behind in charge of a few men, we were able to manoeuvre freely. In the resulting battle, we killed 50 Chinese, including two officers, and captured ten horses, three Bren guns, one burp gun, 38 rifles, some field glasses and a complete set of medical equipment. On our side eight men were killed and fifteen wounded including a nomad woman who was hit by a stray Chinese bullet.

Although we were victorious, it was obvious that the Chinese, with their vastly superior number, were determined not to let us escape. When we arrived at Dhamshung and sent some of our men to reconnoitre we received word that truckloads of Chinese soldiers had covered the entire area our men could see through their field glasses. At a rough guess there were some 500 trucks and 10,000 soldiers. I called my officers for a meeting on a nearby plateau, but while we were still considering our tactical moves, there was a deafening explosion and we were enveloped in a huge cloud of smoke and dust.

The Chinese were firing hundreds of cannons and machine guns and were resolved to wipe out our entire force. Two of our men were immediately killed and we also lost twenty horses and mules in the first burst of firing; twenty one other men—and I was one of them—were wounded. As the battle raged, I asked my men not to worry about me but to take care of themselves. Our immediate objective was to extricate ourselves from the death trap which the Chinese had set up for us, and I gave instructions to my various commanders, assigning them specific duties and responsibilities.

I was wounded all over the body and was in much pain, but by the grace of the Three Precious Jewels my life was not in immediate danger. It appeared that the Chinese had spotted me and the horse I was riding, for when we began to move away, they made me a special target of their gunfire. One of my companions noticed this and gave me his horse to ride.

By evening of that day our force had moved out. A large number of Chinese soldiers made for the hilltops in an effort to surround us, and our men had to gallop fast to get out of their range of fire. We travelled without halting in the darkness of the night while the Chinese vainly tried to probe us with flares and descultry small arms fire. But luckily we suffered no further casualties and the Chinese must have been disappointed to discover that we had escaped intact the next morning. For

CHAPTER NINE

VICISSITUDES OF CONFLICT

We rested at Kong Tse la for one day but it was an uneasy rest as we knew that the Chinese were following us. We were also very short of food and send fifty men to scout the countryside in search of foodgrains or meat. So acute was our need for food that most of the men who had been assigned scouting duties went into the hills to hunt and bag any animals they came across.

The five men who remained to watch enemy movements soon spotted a large number of Chinese soldiers who began to close in on them and started firing. When we received news of this, I acted immediately and ordered some of my freedom fighters to take up position on the surrounding hills. The rest saddled their horses and prepared to move out.

In the meantime, the Chinese were fast approaching us and we came within range of their gunfire. They attacked us with cannons, machine guns, rifles and grenades. We had no alternative but to stand and fight back. The firing continued till late in the evening when we broke contact and with drew along a difficult and almost unusable route.

Our journey that night was not without its share of misfortune. The Chinese had prepared many

ambushed and we were trapped in some of them. We lost fifteen men and three others wounded; but our biggest loss occurred due to the lack of ammunition. In a particular engagement 100 of our men were captured after they had run out of ammunition, and this was a serious blow to us despite having killed six Chinese officers and more than 170 soldiers.

Around midnight we reached a plain which was suitable for camping and we rested for about three hours as the men were weary and exhausted. On the move again about a dozen of our men overslept and were left behind; we later learnt that their horses were driven away by the Chinese and these scattered each on his own.

No longer daring to stop for any lengthy interval of rest, a forced march was carried for several days and nights. The disturbing effects of this punishing exertion soon began to manifest themselves. Both men and horses were thoroughly exhausted by fatigue, many of our scouts wounded and the main body of the force starving. It was evident that we could not carry on blindly in this condition with the enemy hotly behind us. It was only a question of time before we were either trapped and annihilated or dropped from sheer exhaustion and starvation.

We liked neither of these possible scenarios and defiantly decided to hit back. A carefully prepared and elaborate ambush was laid down and we expectantly waited for the Chinese to fall into it. But the episode ended in an anti-climax; the freedom

fighters pursuing us took another route, missing us for the time being.

The fifty men whom we had sent in search of food now rejoined us. Their quest had been fruitless and we were not able to replenish our depleted stock of food. We resumed our march with an advance guard of fifty, followed by another 150 and then the main force. Reaching a place called *Japho Jakey* at the confluence of two rivers, we camped there for two days.

Our scouts reported that the Chinese were again massing in great strength not far from our camp site, but had not yet reached the point where we had planned to ambush them. On getting this report, I issued orders that a company of freedom fighters led by three commanders should saddle their horses quickly and race to the spot. They managed to reach there ahead of the Chinese and their first group of eighteen freedom fighters arrived on the scene, our men killed them all. More Chinese troops soon poured in, to the sound of rifle shots and machine gun fire. Our men fought hard and furious till dusk, but they were at a great disadvantage both in weapons and manpower. At one stage of the battle the Chinese fired over a hundred cannons but fortunately none of our freedom fighters was hurt.

Our company was reinforced by the arrival of the advance guard of 100 who joined the fray on hearing the sound of cannon fire, but we were still greatly outnumbered by the Chinese. The battle

progressed quickly and a large number of Chinese soldiers were killed and wounded. Two of our men were also wound but no one was killed. Under cover of darkness, we rapidly withdrew and could, from a distance, still hear the Chinese wildly shooting at the spot which we had just vacated.

The next intelligence we received about enemy movement was that a force of 5,000 soldiers was lying in wait for us at Jhang Lhariguo, in readiness to attack us. This timely information enabled us to avoid them and we took another route. On the way we captured a Chinese spy; he was executed and his rifle and pistol taken.

We had now reached the northern plain of Tibet, about 15,000 feet above sea level, extremely cold and forbidding at this time of the year. The weather had deteriorated and there was heavy snowfall—in some places knee deep— but inspite of it and a freezing cold wind we kept on marching for many days and nights until we reached Jhang Mitikha.

Here we met a local herdsman and, with his assistance, bought a hundred loads of grain and five sheep from the nomads in the locality. We paid them partly in money and partly with two mules, two rifles and three hundred bullets. We also undertook in writing to compensate and reward them further when the war had been won and our government firmly established.

One of our officers, Captain Ahzin, whom

the Chinese had taken prisoner sometime ago, managed to escape from their custody and rejoined us. He reported that during his captivity he had picked up the Chinese language, often listening attentively to the conversations between his captors. The Chinese soldiers frequently vowed, he said, that they would totally destroy the Khampas. One of their officers and remarked that even leaving one or two Khampas alive would be dangerous as they would continue to commit acts of sabotage and cause widespread damage. Ahzin also mentioned that he had heard a Chinese radio broadcast appealing for troop reinforcements in Chamdo and Nagchu to combat the Khampa menace.

In every force I suppose there are some people who are notable to withstand hardship for a long time and whose courage cannot be sustained when the fortunes of war do not favour them. The tidings we had just received aroused fear in the minds of some of our people, and five of our officers with 120 freedom fighters deserted the volunteer force to follow their own destiny. For these people apparently their lives and safety were more important than the national cause for which we had taken arms. Some of the deserters headed for the west and some for south Tibet. Most of them took to banditry, robbing people of animals and food and other property.

It was the end of October, corresponding to the ninth month of the Tibetan calendar, when we arri-

ved at *Gyashoy Benkar in Kham*. The monastery and the local people gave us a warm welcome; they also provided us with grain, butter and yak meat. We camped at this place for four days before proceeding to our next halt which was *Dramthang*. Here too the people were very cooperative and supplied us with hay and firewood. But the monastery and a number of citizens complained that Zenang Ahkar and Relpa Bhuchung—leaders of the two groups which had deserted us—and their men were attacking and robbing the people. These complaints caused me much distress as the deserters had tainted the reputation of the volunteer force.

Marching on we collected much vital—and often painful—information about Chinese activities in the area. we heard that Chinese had confiscated arms, thrown abbots and other high ranking monks into prison, and inflicted untold hardships and misery on the people. On top of all this they suffered from the depredations of bandits headed by our two leading deserters. Some citizens had been robbed of all their belongings and reduced to beggary. Women, too, had been molested and maltreated.

Our dwindling foodstocks were augmented by a large quantity of grain expropriated from Chinese storehouses. Our main force had now moved into Sating (Chulthun). Before planning any further action against the Chinese, we consider it important that the bandits should be punished. Four commanders, each in charge of a hundred

men, were assigned to the task of locating the bandits and of enforcing the law.

They traced Zenang Ahkar, Relpa Bhuchung and their men to a place called Chokorgye. The bandit leaders were told that their lawless activities had caused great resentment among the people and brought shame and disgrace to the volunteer force. They were immediately tried, found guilty and sentenced to death. Their followers were given the option of paying a fine or receiving fifty lashes. Their arms were taken away and the looted property returned to the rightful owners. This summary meting out of justice was appreciated by the people and had a wholesome effect on the force.

In early December, or towards the end of the tenth Tibetan month, we reached Chakra Pembar. Once again we had the help and cooperation of the monastery and the public in full measure. We were in need of reinforcements and had also to decide our military strategy, keeping in view our limited resources and the enemy's almost inexhaustible reservoir of manpower and weapons. A meeting of local leaders and others from neighbouring towns was held and prolonged discussion carried out for about a week.

A number of important decisions were arrived at after careful deliberation. Four commanders were nominated to take charge of our main force in the Lhoka area; they had about 800 armed horse men under their command. In two specific districts—

Isethang and Dre—guerrilla activities were to be continued by a force of 150 Freedom fighters. A large force was also positioned at Jhang.

Our plans called for the force in Lhoka to combine with the other forces and launch a two-pronged attack on Nyiti, a Chinese stronghold in Kongpo area. In another major assault the target was to be Po Tamo, a town built by the Chinese. This attack was to be sprung from two bases and by two separate forces—first, the force from Jhang, and secondly, a force of 200 freedom fighters, supported by an equal number of local volunteers, from Shota Lhosum, (Shopando, Lhor Dzong & Chakra Pembar). Specific dates were worked out for the various force movements and the attacks.

The assaults were launched according to the plan except that our force from Lhoka could not reach Po Tamo in time, and the Chinese were able to bring large reinforcements from Lhasa and other towns. Even so one of the fiercest battles of the war was fought at this place and it lasted for fifteen days. More than 550 Chinese soldiers were killed while our losses were relatively light amounting to no more than twenty killed and nine injured. In another battle in the same area, 400 locals with the aid of 29 of our freedom fighters inflicted heavy casualties on the Chinese, who were successfully ambushed. A number of their trucks were destroyed.

Our drive to get more recruits for the volunteer force met with considerable success. At a largely

attended meeting held in Shota Lhosum, at the end of December, at which about seventy local leaders were present, I appealed to all Tibetans, between the ages of eighteen and sixty, to enroll in the force. The response was wide and enthusiastic; we were able to get about 7,000 new recruits. We were also in vital need of more arms and ammunition. One likely source was the Tibetan Government armoury in the district. I made an appointment with the Governor, who was a friend of my family, and requested him to turn over to us all the firearms and ammunition in his charge.

He was willing to help and handed over to us 100 rifles and fifty boxes of bullets, each containing 1,000. This was almost his entire stock and he kept back only six rifles which he said he might need for the defence of nomads. With his cooperation and that of other officials, we were able to obtain supplies of food and other necessities. We helped ourselves to more than 200 loads of rice belonging to the Chinese, besides candles, soap, printing equipment and medicines held in storage.

Three of our commanders, with 130 freedom fighters of our regular force and a number of other supporters, attacked the Chinese at Tengchen in the last week of January 1959. They overpowered the enemy and took over their fortresses. This success greatly impressed the local people who offered themselves as recruits for our force in large numbers. The fighting in this area went on till the end of

February and would have resulted in the complete destruction of the Chinese forces there, had they not resorted to bombing and gunning our men from the air. We were simply not equipped to resist this kind of warfare, but despite it we inflicted substantial losses on the enemy. We lost twenty-one of our men and a sizeable number of them wounded.

The Tibetan New Year's Day marking the beginning of the year of the Earth Hog—was celebrated by us with much feasting and religious rites in Lhor Dzong. We set the throne of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in the palace of the Fifth Dalai Lama in Kyirong, and later our freedom fighters and monks from the local monastery held a ceremonial parade. A photograph of Holiness was carried out in procession and prayers were offered for his welfare. On the third day of the celebrations, horse races and archeery competitions were held in which the local people also participated. In the evening there was singing and dancing.

Shortly after, to organise the resistance movement systematically in other parts of Kham, I left for *Shopando* along with a group of our volunteer leaders and some units of the force. A very warm welcome awaited us here and a ceremonial parade was held on our arrival. Messengers poured in from the surrounding areas reporting the progress of the movement and the determination of the people to continue on at all costs.

We exhorted the people to join our force in large numbers and to share among themselves whatever weapons they possessed. We appealed to them to destroy all Chinese communications in their area and seize every opportunity for damaging and harassing the enemy war machine. Leaders in each area were asked to form their own armed force to defend their native towns and villages and we promised to help them with whatever arms and ammunition we could spare.

To start with, we supplied them a number of rifles, and also gave them provisions such as food-grains, tsampa, flour, tea butter and meat. By rendering similar assistance to district organisers at many places, we aimed at building up an effective network of resistance groups throughout Tibet to fight the Chinese and defend our country.

CHAPTER TEN

DRAMATIC EVENTS IN LHASA

Having assigned duties and responsibilities to the leaders in whom we had confidence, it was unnecessary for us to stay any longer in that part of Kham. Nor was it safe to do so for strategic reasons. So far in spite of many engagements we had not suffered any mortal blow from the Chinese. We had attacked them at will and with success at many points and had also foiled or blunted their counter-attacks.

But the Chinese were wily and well-informed of the disposition and strength of our force. Our most urgent task was to rejoin the main force at Lhoka, but this was not easy as the Chinese kept us constantly under fire and ambushed us frequently. Despite the risks involved, however, we decided after holding a war council at the end of February to move towards Lhoka.

Two advance reconnaissance groups, each consisting of a commander and fifty freedom fighters were sent to check on enemy positions and build up. They were followed by convoys of pack animals carrying arms and ammunition and food supplies. Each convoy was escorted by a small group of freedom fighters. I myself set out with a freedom fighters of 250 to reinforce another unit which had

left earlier. Altogether 500 freedom fighters were involved in this operation and I was anxious that it should be carried out successfully.

Letters and verbal messages were sent to various local leaders on the route of the march asking for their cooperation. They were requested to supply foodgrain, firewood and hay to the freedom fighters when they passed through or camped in their areas.

While we were engaged in this manoeuvre, dramatic events were taking place in Lhasa, fraught with the gravest consequences for our country. The first intimation we had of the uprising in the capital was an All India Radio broadcast on March 22, 1959. At the time I was at *Gyashoy Benkar* and was of course unaware of the happenings which led to the uprising nor of the details which I am now recording.

The Dalai Lama's palace was shelled and thousands of innocent Tibetans were massacred. Since these events profoundly affected the course of the war, I have to interrupt my account to take note of the momentous events which culminated in the final crisis in the Tibetan capital and the escape of the Dalai Lama to India.

The Chinese army camp had been located in the outskirts of Lhasa for some years and Chinese interference in Tibetan affairs, through the Preparatory Committee and otherwise, had steadily increased. But there had been no evidence so far of any attempt

to dislodge the Dalai Lama from his exalted position or of any other sinister design against him personally.

At the beginning of March 1959, however, it seems that the Chinese had made up their minds to deprive him of the leadership of the Tibetan people and possibly even to remove him from the country. While His Holiness was in the Jokhang Temple celebrating the *Monlam* festival, the senior Chinese general, Tan Kuan-san, sent him an invitation to a theatrical show in the Chinese army camp. In extending this invitation the Chinese obviously had an ulterior motive as not only did they press for its early acceptance but simultaneously stipulated some unprecedented conditions.

It was the normal practice for the Dalai Lama to be escorted by a bodyguard of twenty-five armed men whenever he went out, and armed troops were also posted along the route. Further his journeys were never kept secret and the people invariably lined the route to see and salute him. Yet on this occasion the Chinese insisted that he should not be accompanied by any armed guards, and also that his visit to their camp should be kept strictly secret.

Although these conditions caused uneasiness and resentment among members of the *Kashag* and others closely associated with the Dalai Lama, he decided to accept them in order not to give the Chinese any cause for annoyance. The visit was scheduled for March 10, and on the day before it the

Tibetan policy were instructed to warn the people that no one would be permitted beyond a certain point on the road leading to the Chinese camp.

Unfortunately, these instructions, which had the object of preventing any untoward incident, had exactly the opposite effect. A rumour spread among the people that the Chinese were planning to kidnap the Dalai Lama and an excited crowd began to assemble outside the palace. By the morning of March 10 the crowd had increased to about 30,000 and there was much shouting and slogan raising.

Incensed by this latest example of Chinese high-handedness and disrespect toward the Dalai Lama and highly suspicious of their intentions, the people of Lhasa had decided that they would not let His Holiness leave the palace and become a victim of Chinese machinations. All the pent-up resentment of the people against the presence of the Chinese army in Tibet and the gradual diminution of their freedom, found apt expression in a sudden outburst of anger: they wanted the Chinese to quit and leave Tibet to the Tibetans.

During the next few days they kept up an unceasing vigil outside the Norbulingka palace, and their attitude towards the Chinese became more uncompromising. Many people in the crowd had armed themselves with sticks, knives and even firearms. Some Khampa freedom fighters had even brought machine guns and mortars.

Apart from the crowd outside the palace, people

held meetings at other places in the city and passed resolutions to the effect that the Chinese would have to go. A number of junior government officials also attended these meetings and endorsed the "Quit Tibet" resolutions. A regiment of the regular Tibetan army tore up their Chinese uniforms and declared their allegiance was strictly to the Dalai Lama and their country.

No one expected that the Chinese would tolerate or overlook what they regarded as rebellion against their authority and their government, and yet nobody could have anticipated the ferocity and cruelty with which they suppressed the demonstration of popular feeling against their regime. General Tan Kuan-san accused the Dalai Lama's government of encouraging the revolt and vowed to destroy all "reactionaries". Soon news of Chinese preparations to attack the Norbulingka and possibly other places in Lhasa began to reach the Tibetan *Kashag*. Large movement of Chinese troops trucks and artillery including heavy guns were reported.

Tension in the city and in the crowd assembled near the Norbulingka increased but, in spite of the imminent danger of Chinese bombardment, the people did not disperse. They were determined to protect the Dalai Lama even at the cost of their lives. On the morning of March 16, the situation seemed quite desperate and everyone was anxious about the safety of His Holiness. When the boom of Chinese guns in the vicinity was heard in the after-

noon the Dalai Lama and his advisers had urgent consultations and it was decided that he would have to leave the palace and the city immediately.

His Holiness has since emphatically contradicted the Chinese propaganda claims that he was under any duress and “kidnapped” out of the country against his will. While his advisers and others were naturally aware of the danger to which the Dalai Lama was exposed and ardently wished to ensure his safety, the final decision to leave was entirely his own. Disguised as an ordinary Tibetan and accompanied by some of his close associates and those members of his family who were in Lhasa, His Holiness left that night to begin the long and arduous journey which was eventually to take him to India.

The Dalai Lama’s departure was kept a closely guarded secret and the Chinese were not aware that he had left the palace when they began shelling it on the morning of March 20, forty-eight hours later. The shelling continued throughout the day and besides the Norbulingka, the Potala, several monasteries, schools and other public and private buildings were also heavily bombarded and suffered serious damage. The death toll of this indiscriminate and senseless orgy of destruction ran into thousands.

As I have already mentioned, it was from an All India Radio broadcast on March 22 that we learnt of the tragic events in Lhasa, but news about the

Dalai Lama's safe escape did not reach us until the beginning of April. A few days earlier I had received a letter from His Holiness who was then at Lhuntse Dzong with some of his senior officials, trying to set up a temporary government there. The letter read in part: "You have led the Chushi Cangdrug force with unshakeable determination to resist the Chinese occupation army for the great national cause of defending the freedom of Tibet. I confer on you the rank of *Dzasak* (the highest military rank equivalent to general) in recognition of your services to the country. The present situation calls for a continuance of your brave struggle with the same determination and courage."

His Holiness was also kind enough to send me some priceless religious relics including an earthen statue of Jigchi Mahai (God of Protection) and some holy beads. I was happy to receive these gifts and symbols of His Holiness' consideration for me and longed to receive his blessings in person. But our war with the Chinese kept me busy, and I could not meet him until several weeks later in India.

On April 3, I received a letter from our headquarters in Lhoka informing me that His Holiness had escaped and arrived in India, safe and unharmed. This news was hailed with great rejoicing by everyone. Suddenly the worry and tension of the past few days, when we had no tidings of His Holiness and when we earnestly prayed for his safety, disappeared. It was indeed miraculous that the Dalai Lama had escaped unnoticed while sur-

rounded by such a large force of Chinese soldiers, and we were truly thankful for this miracle. We could well imagine the enemy's chagrin when they discovered too late their foul plans to abduct or get rid of the Dalai Lama had failed so ignominiously.

But this was not, of course, the end of the struggle for us. We knew that the Chinese were trailing us and would try their utmost to wipe out the Kham-pas and the volunteer force. We were equally determined to resist and fight them to the bitter end. Several hundred of our freedom fighters had provided an escort for the Dalai Lama on his journey to India; but they did not cross the border with him and returned to carry on the struggle.

We arrived at Gyamda, in Kongpo, on April 4. We had to move cautiously as Chinese planes were looking for us, although we had not come across any of their troops. The following day one of our units, which was in charge of a supply convoy, was taken unawares by the arrival of some 300 Chinese trucks with soldiers from Lhasa. Our men fought fiercely but they were greatly outnumbered and had to retreat, leaving the supplies behind. This was a serious setback for us.

As we continued our march, we received messages from our men in nearby places reporting Chinese advances. I responded to these reports by asking our freedom fighters everywhere to keep on fighting with all their might and not to lose sight of

the noble cause for which we had taken up arms. But discouraging reports continued to pour in.

The Chinese had brought large reinforcements and within the next few days they advanced further and occupied a number of towns: Among these were Tsethang, Yamdrok Dagey Ling, Lhodrak and Tsona. The loss of Tsona on April 14 was particularly unfortunate because of its importance as one of our main bases and I could not reconcile myself to it. I called a meeting to discuss plans for recapturing the town and measures to prevent disintegration of the volunteer force.

The serious reverses we had suffered had, however, affected the morale of our force and the will to continue the struggle was considerably weakened. Commanders and freedom fighters alike deemed further resistance useless and my views and exhortation did not carry much weight with them. They had apparently decided that there was no alternative to accepting the new status which fate had thrust upon them, namely, that of refugees. Even so I did not give up hope of retrieving the position.

I stayed at Jora monastery for a day, and with me were 126 men of the volunteer force and forty soldiers of the Dashi division commanded by Colonel Tashi Pehray. The Dashi Division of the Tibetan Army was noted for its long-standing anti-Chinese views. Before the open revolt of March 1959, Junior Officers of the Division, such as Captain Kalsang Damdul and Rupon Wangden,

were in secret contact with the Chushi Gangdrug. As a cover up the Commanding Officer, who had full knowledge of these contacts, never allowed himself to be associated with us. This was part of an elaborate plan to deceive the Chinese of the real loyalties and feelings within the Dashi Division. I sent messages to the Dashi division headquarters appealing to them to launch an attack on Tsona which we would support by a separate assault. But there was no response and my plan could not be carried out. It was a galing thought that the volunteer force, which had fought so long against such heavy odds and performed so many deeds of valour, had no further role to play.

A little later, as we approached Kata monastery, one of my field commanders and another official met me. "Do you realise", they said, "that to remain here is to invite danger? If something happens to you all that the Chushi Gangdrug stood and fought for will be forgotten and there will be no one to carry the torch of freedom movement. Let us consider our ultimate goal and save ourselves and our energies for a future struggle. At present your wisest course is to leave the country and go to India. A man has been hired to guide you and show you to the route." They added that in speaking to me thus they had only conveyed the wishes and orders of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

After this I had no option but to follow the instruction I had received from the highest authority.

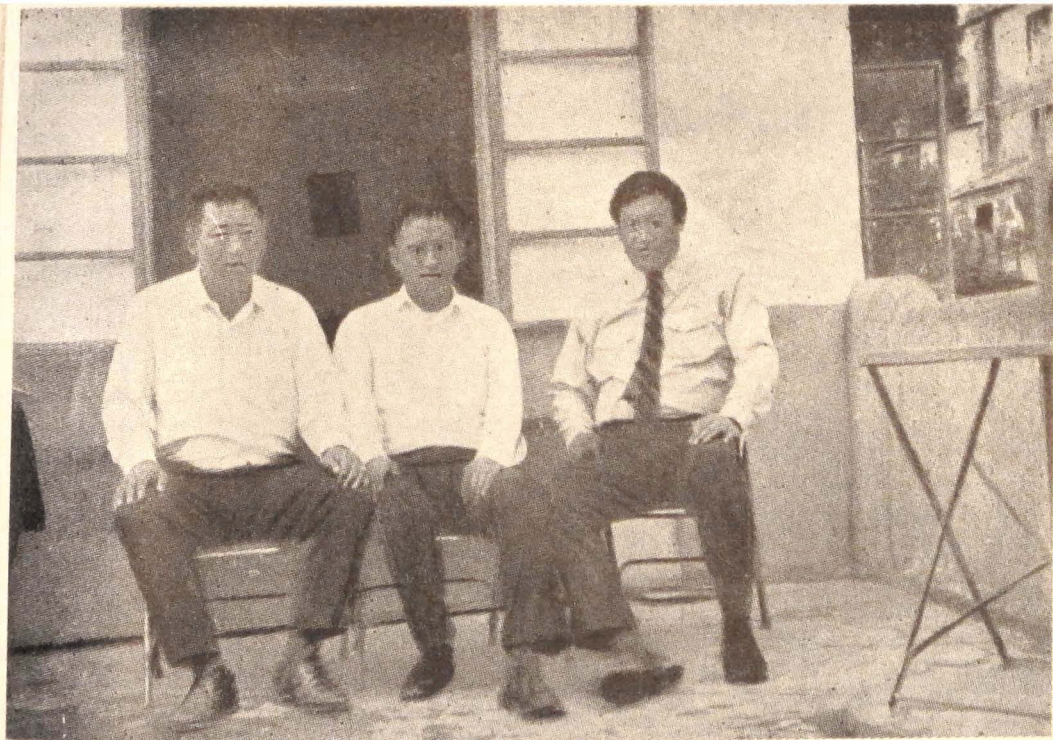


Myself and my younger cousin Ngawang Phulgyung
at Darjeeling



↑ Members of my family at Darjeeling ↓





L—R (1) Bhugan, (2) Kalsang Gyaltsen and (3) Wangdu
(My Close Relatives)



Myself



Lodo Phuntsok (Cousin)



Leaders and Members of the Chushi Gangrug at a reception (Sonada, Darjeeling)



Myself and some of Chushi Gangrug Leaders



Myself and my friends



Myself in Guys Hospital at London

Yet the urge to strike one final blow for our cause and our country was strong within me. And the opportunity for it seemed to arise when the Indian guards at the border would not allow us by travel beyond Mhargo la where we arrived on April 20.

We held a meeting and I appealed to my companions to join me in a final assault on the enemy. My appeal appeared to have some effect, and in fact about 2,000 freedom fighters were selected to launch the planned attack the next morning. But in the morning the men had second thoughts about it. They reasoned : “What if the entire force is wiped out in this final battle ? It would only leave us with a sorrowful memory. Besides, if we have to go to India, we must consider the Indian Government’s possible reaction to renewed fighting close to their borders.”

The idea of any further fighting with the Chinese was sadly abandoned and thus ended the war which we had carried on for almost a year. We approached the Indian guards again for permission to cross the border and presented to them a horse and a khata. The formalities at last completed, we crossed over and were greeted by Tsedrung Jampa Wangdu, a representative of the Tibetan Government. He said that arrangements had been made for us to go to India after handing over all our weapons to the Indian authorities.

Complying with this requirement, we handed over our rifles, ammunition and all other weapons

to the Deputy Commissioner of Tezpur district, whom we met on April 29. We were permitted by the authorities to take with us gold, silver and other valuables we had in our possession. We were also told that all Tibetan refugees were being welcomed in India and adequate arrangements were being made to meet their immediate needs of food and shelter.

རྒྱལ་ཁོངས་འཛུགས་ཀྱི་འཕེལ་རྒྱས་ལ་འགྲོགས་པའི་ལས་ཀྱི་ལྷན་ཁག་གི་ལྷན་འགྲུས་ལྟ་བུར་
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(ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

To

Andrugtsang Gompo Tashi, Commander-in-Chief of the Chushi Gangdrug

Your unshaken devotion towards the cause of Tibet's Buddhist Faith and political stability, expressed in the conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in commanding Chushi Gangdrug victoriously against the spiritual foe, Communist Chinese force, will be honoured hereby with your promotion to the rank of General Dzasak. Therefore, you will report here soon to receive the honour and responsibility and will display similar gallantry and intrepidity action, to sub-side the enemy henceforth. Any other devoted heroes who laid conspicuous heroic deeds will be honoured with due heroic rewards under your recommending reasons and introductions.

Written from the
 Second Capital—Victorious Lhuntse Palace
 on 17th February of Earth-Pig-Year
 (Tibetan Calendar).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A NEW LIFE IN INDIA

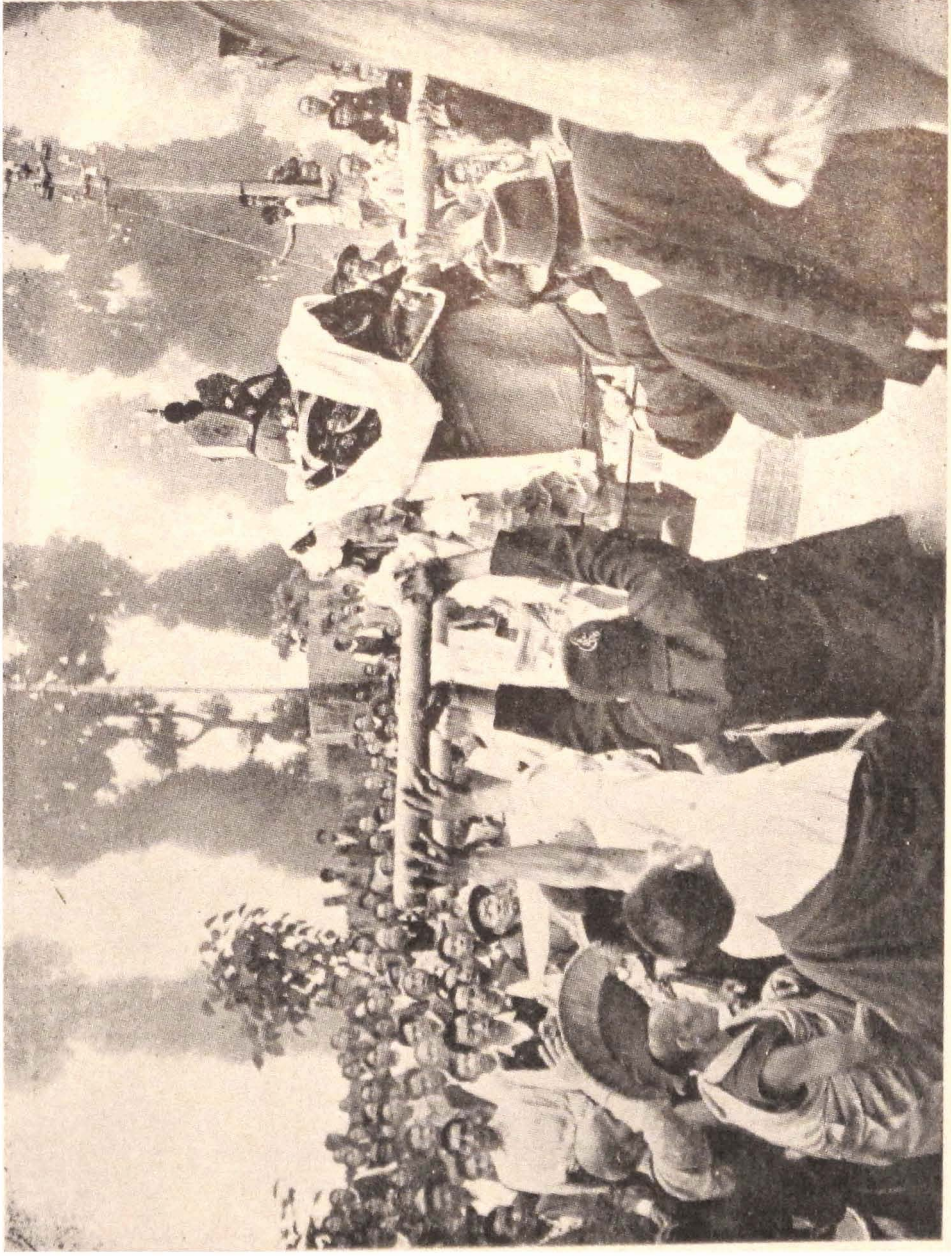
As I pen these lines to describe the past few years of my life in India, I am swayed by conflicting emotions. As an optimist and a staunch believer in the justice of our cause, I cannot entertain the notion that I—and some 80,000 of my countrymen—have been exiled from our native land forever. On the other hand, I am also conscious of a deep sense of frustration at not being able to oppose effectively the forces of oppression, which drove us from our homes to seek refuge in a foreign, albeit friendly land. They say: “Hope springs eternal in the human breast”, and I have not given up the hope that there will be a new dawn of freedom for Tibet.

About a year before my exit from Tibet, apprehending further serious trouble with the Chinese, I had sent my wife and some members of my family to India. They were living in Kalimpong where I now proceeded to join them. But I could spend only a few days with my family as I wished to pay my respects to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who was then in Mussoorie, and to discuss with him some of the problems which confronted us. At our meeting His Holiness graciously confirmed the Tibetan military rank of *Dzasak* (General), which he had already conferred on me.

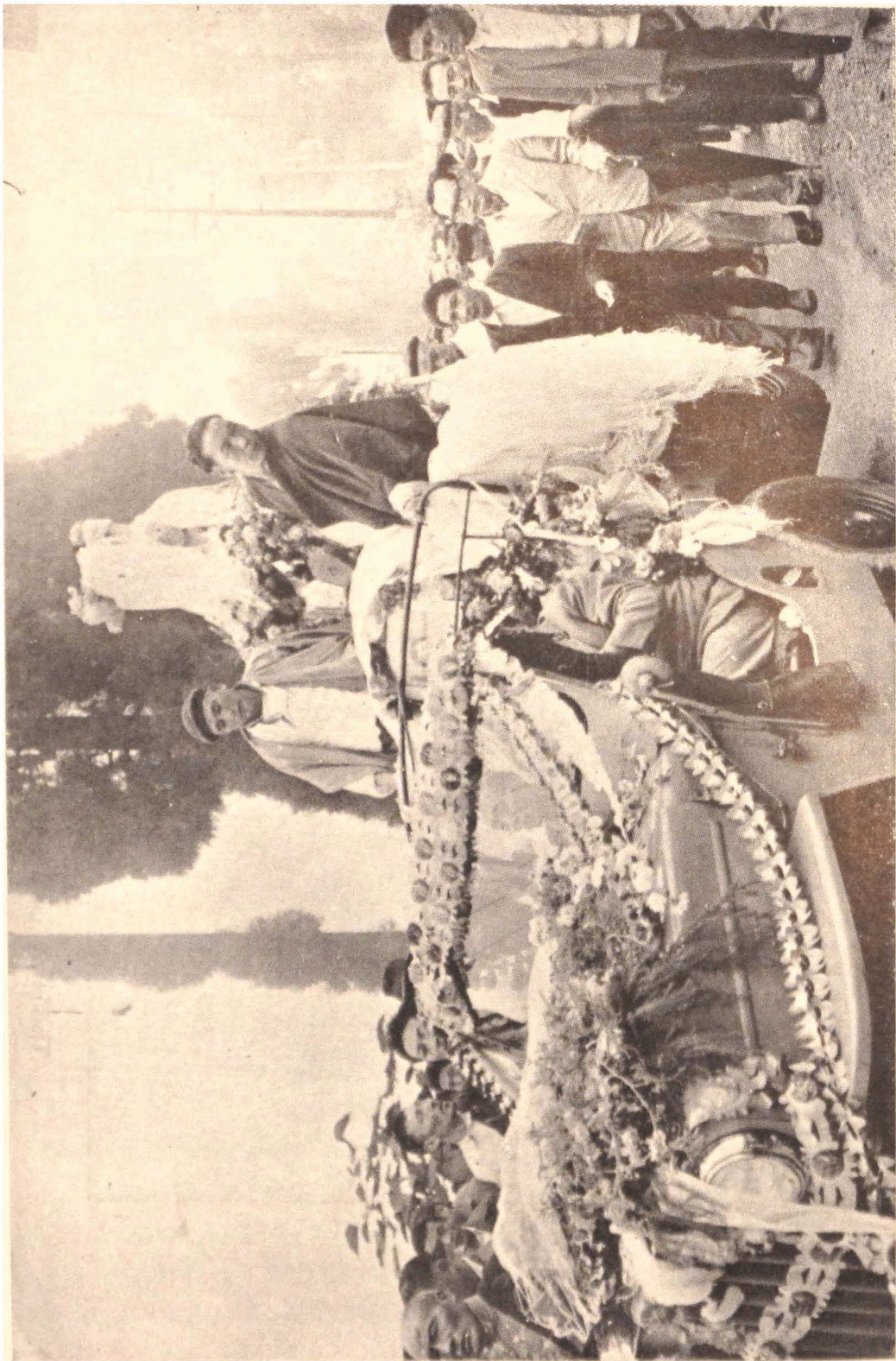
Our immediate and most pressing problem was that of rehabilitation. It was not possible for the many thousands of Tibetans to subsist on the charity of the host government indefinitely; they had to seek some means of livelihood suited to their capacity. Adapting to the radically changed conditions of living in India was not easy; but with the cooperation of the Government of India, the guidance of his Holiness the Dalai Lama and the assistance of other Tibetan leaders, the immense task of rehabilitation was grappled with and progressed satisfactorily. Thousands of Tibetans were initially employed on road building projects in the plains and in the border areas. Others found employment in agriculture, forest clearance and dairy farming.

Before long Tibetan handicraft centres were developed in the hill districts of northern India and many refugees were given profitable employment either as craftsmen or as salesmen in the retail stores set up for the sale of the Tibetan products. These centres have continued to develop and Tibetan handicrafts have established a reputation for utility and quality. A sizeable number of the refugees was also absorbed gradually into Indian industry and Indian Government organisations.

Linked with the needs for housing and employment was that of education for the Tibetan children. It was obvious that if the children were to grow into useful citizens, their education would have to be reoriented to the new conditions we faced in India.



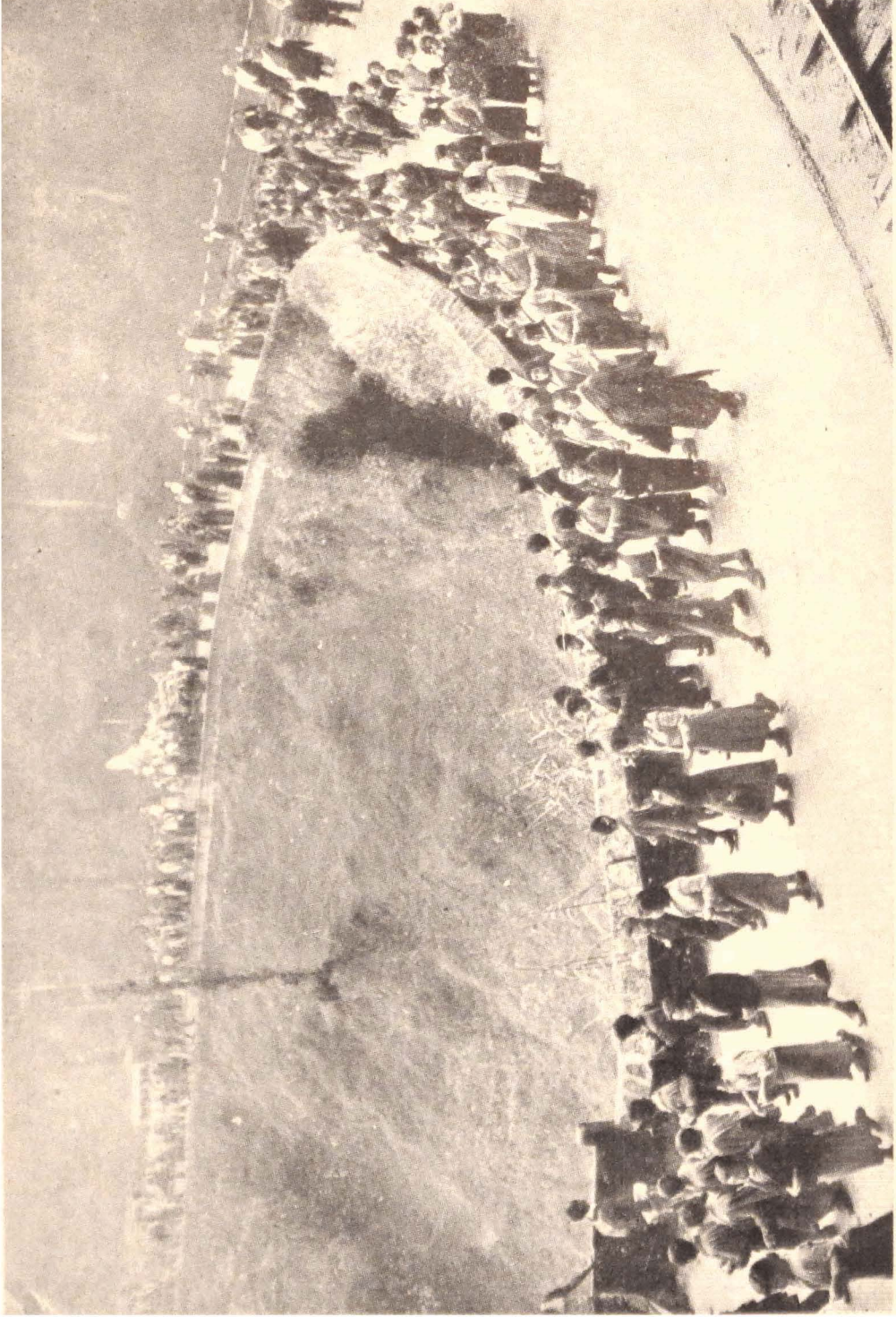
The body of Gampo Tashi being placed on a jeep outside
office of the Chushi Gangrug



The Funeral Procession on its five-mile Journey



The Funeral Procession on its five-mile Journey



The Funeral Procession on its five-mile Journey



People gathered to pay homage to the departing National Hero



Traditional Rites being performed before Cremation of the Body

While the Buddhist religion would continue to be a potent force in their lives, we could not afford to confine their studies to mainly religion and philosophy and neglect vocational or technical training. With this objective, it was also important that the children should learn Hindi and perhaps English and a regional Indian language. His Holiness has been taking special pains in organising education for Tibetan children at the nursery and primary school level, and I have been associated with the activity. I myself have also been learning Hindi to equip myself better to serve the Tibetan cause in India.

Along with rehabilitation was the equally urgent problem of helping those of our countrymen still in Tibet to escape from the clutches of the Chinese. There were many who were anxious to escape to the neighbouring states of India, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, but the Chinese had sealed the borders and made their escape extremely difficult. My comrades, the freedom fighters of the VFF who had fought the Chinese Communists so heroically in the past, were eager to attack the Chinese border posts, with the dual objective of helping intending emigrants and keeping up guerrilla warfare against the enemy. I wished to avoid any possible embarrassment to the Government of India in the event of such attacks being launched from bases in this country.

Soon after my arrival in India, I met the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, along with

leaders of the Chushi Gangdrug and other Tibetan officials. Our meeting was most cordial and Mr Nehru graciously accepted from me the gift of a Tibetan costume. He expressed sympathy with our cause but counselled restraint and patience. And other Indian leaders and government officials, including the Chief of Army Staff, J.N. Choudhuri, whom I met, expressed similar views. I therefore did my best to curb any aggressive anti-Chinese activity among my people in India. But such was their zeal and their burning desire to rescue as many Tibetans as possible that they organised a number of attacks on Chinese posts during 1960 and 1961.

Most of these guerrilla sorties were launched from beyond the Tibet-Nepal border where at one time more than 4,000 freedom fighters were concentrated. In some of these actions Tibetan guerrilla groups, consisting of a hundred or two hundred men, penetrated as far as a hundred miles inside Chinese-held territory. A number of Chinese weapons, including machine guns, were captured during these encounters. As a result of these operations, some 5,000 Tibetans were rescued and found refuge in India, Nepal, Bhutan or Sikkim. Small groups of refugees continued to arrive in these countries upto the end of 1963.

In the meantime the Dalai Lama and his advisers were exploring all possibilities of enlisting international support for Tibet and seeking intervention by the United Nations. To strengthen the hands of

the Dalai Lama and enlist the fullest possible support for our cause in the United Nations, I organised several meetings of Tibetans in India at which our people pledged anew their determination to regain their political freedom and work for an independent, united Tibet under the leadership of His Holiness. We also sent a letter to Mr. Nehru expressing our appreciation of the generous help given by the Government of India to Tibetan refugees and requesting further support for the cause of Tibetan freedom.

At the fourteenth session of the General Assembly in 1959, a resolution was adopted expressing grave concern at the forcible denial of fundamental human rights and freedoms of the people of Tibet. It further called for the respect of these rights and the distinctive cultural and religious life of the Tibetans. A similar resolution was also adopted at the sixteenth session of the General Assembly in 1961.

Besides renewing the call for “the cessation of practices which deprive the Tibetan people of their fundamental human rights and freedoms including the right to self-determination”, this resolution expressed the hope that member states would make all possible efforts towards achieving its purposes. Unfortunately these resolutions have remained unimplemented so far, nor has there been any response to the Dalai Lama’s appeal for mediation by the United Nations.

Beside the United Nations, influential non-official bodies also took note of and discussed the tragedy of Tibet. In an earlier chepter I have referred to the report of the International Commission of Jurists and its findings, published in 1960, "The Afro-Asian Convention on Tibet and against Colonialism in Asia and Africa" was held in New Delhi in April 1960, and was attended by distinguished representatives from nineteen countries. His Holiness the Dalai Lama sent a message to the Convention and eight Tibetan delegates participated in it.

Thupten Jigme Norbu, brother of the Dalai Lama, and I also attended as visitors. Two resolutions on Tibet was passed by the Convention : one, condemning Chinese atrocities and supporting and demanding the right of the Tibetan for self-determination, and the other recording its opinion that "there has been systematic and barbaric violation of human rights in Tibet", and recommending the establishment of a permanent council working for the rights and liberties of the Tibetan people. These resolutions, too, while highly laudable and inspired by profound sympathy for Tibetans, have unfortunately achieved very little.

But, as I have said, we have not abandoned hope and, by the grace of Lord Buddha and other deities, this hope will be fulfilled. Tibetans must continue working for the restoration of their freedom. My own role in this future struggle may be somewhat limited as lately my health has deteriorated and

I have passed through a period of prolonged medical treatment and enforced idleness.

Although I was perfectly fit when I arrived in India in April 1959, the wounds I had sustained in our battles against the Chinese—and which until now had given no trouble—began to stir restlessly. Towards the end of 1962 I began to experience excruciating pains and was admitted into a Calcutta nursing home. After two years of ineffective treatment in the nursing home, the doctors advised that I should proceed immediately to London for surgery. My condition worsened and I was completely paralyzed from the waist downwards. Accompanied by the German doctor and nurse who had been attending to me, I went by air to London in January 1963.

I was taken to Moduly Hospital in the suburbs of London and operated on by a neurosurgeon. The operation was a success. After two weeks of intensive care in this hospital, I was removed to another London hospital for a further operation. This operation, too, was declared successful, but it was followed by a long period—about three months—of confinement to the bed. I was then given physiotherapeutic treatment and made slow progress towards recovery.

After these operations and some six months in London hospitals the doctors were satisfied with my progress and advised that further treatment could be continued in India. In June 1963, I flew

back to Calcutta and remained in the nursing home for another three months under the care of the German doctor who accompanied me to London. When I left the nursing home I was declared quite fit again but was advised to have a regular checkup every two months.

The doctors have doubtless done their best to give me renewed health and strength—in fact a new lease of life. But the future is in the lap of the Buddha and if destiny has no more useful activity for me in this span of life, I can only rely on his wisdom and the promise of a new life hereafter.

I end this brief sketch of my career with a prayer: “May the tragedy of Tibet be a warning and a lesson to all mankind and impel people everywhere to resist tyranny and suppression of human rights. May Lord Buddha bless my country and raise a new Tibet. And may his noblest representative on earth, the Dalai Lama, lead our people once again to freedom, peace and happiness.”

APPENDIX

GOMPO TASHI'S DEMISE AND HIS WILL

During the operation in London, some ten pieces of shrapnel were extracted from Gompo Tashi's body and the operation was declared successful. Unfortunately, after a temporary improvement, his condition again deteriorated and, in spite of the best medical attention, he passed away on 27 September 1964, at a nursing home in Darjeeling.

Tibetans everywhere mourned the death of their great national freedom fighter. According to Tibetan custom, his body lay in state for four days during which Lamas performed various religious rites and Tibetans, from every strata of life, paid their homage to the departed freedom fighter, many placing white scarfs on the corpse. After four days the body was taken by a jeep from Darjeeling to Ghoom Yiga Choling Monastery, followed by a large procession of mourners. It was cremated on a hilltop behind the monastery, to the chant of Lamas' prayers. Thousands of Tibetans and people of other nationalities attended the funeral.

Shortly before his death, Gompo Tashi made a will. An excerpt from it follows: "I know that I am nearing my destination. Before I depart I must address a few words to the leaders of the Chushi Gangdrug. All of you should unite in

thought and action under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Under his guidance all of you must constantly work with inflexible determination for the liberation of Tibet, even at the cost of your lives. The torch of the Tibetan freedom movement must be passed on to the younger generation so that its flame keeps burning and humanity remains conscious of it. Through long and personal association, I have found Mr Gyalo Thondup (the elder brother of H.H. The Dalai Lama) to be a man deeply devoted to the cause of Tibet. He has the capability to contribute much to our national movement. He has done much for the VFF from its very beginning. I feel all of you should lend your full support and cooperation to him.

“I conclude my will by praying for the full success of our cause under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Judging from past history, I know that the world changes fast and no situation remains static. I assure you that the day is not far off when you will again be able to set your feet on the sacred land of Tibet.”

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