

Report from Lhasa

Dor Bahadur Bista

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Publisher's Note

The trend of events in China today has become a subject matter of diverse speculations, and also serious study. It will not be correct to assume, as some people do, that decisions to set the new trend were taken only after the death of Chou En-lai and Mao Tsetung.

The author of the present volume spent in Lhasa, the forbidden city, three eventful years, 1972–1975, when immediately after the Great Cultural Revolution (1966–1968) decisions to launch China on the path of modernisation were reached and preliminary steps to implement them were taken.

In the pages of the book, the interested or curious reader will, it is hoped, find answers to many queries concerning Tibet.

Sajha Prakashan, while congratulating the author on a very valuable contribution to the study of Tibet, expresses its gratitude to him for giving it the opportunity to bring out the present book.

1979

Sajha Prakashan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have experienced all the difficulties of a person who tries to write in a language acquired during adulthood. There were other problems of course. I, therefore, needed considerable help and assistance from many people. I must confess that it is not going to be possible to mention the names of all of these people. But I must not fail to express my sincerest gratitude to those who had gone through my manuscript at different stages and given me very valuable suggestions for improvement without which the manuscript would not have reached the stage it has now. They are Mr. Kirti Nidhi Bista; Professor Yadu Nath Khanal; Mr. Narayan Prashad Shrestha; Mr. Chiran Shamsheer Thapa; and Mr. Halvard Kuloy.

But most of all this book would not have been ready for press without the intensive reading and editing done by Mr. Ranadhir Subba; Dr. Ludwig Stiller S.J.; Dr. Theodore Riccardi Jr; Dr. David Ruben and Dr. Linda Stone. I owe a deep sense of gratitude to all of them and to those Chinese friends who had been extremely courteous and hospitable and helpful during the entire period of my stay and during travels in different parts of China.

Lastly I owe an apology to the sympathetic readers for any inconsistencies, inadequacies and inaccuracies for which I am entirely responsible.

D. B. B.

PROLOGUE

Tibet has always been the “land of mystery” a “forbidden land”, forbidden by man and also by nature. Lhasa, the capital and the center of Lamaism, was so far from anywhere, the journey to it so arduous, from any direction, that only the hardest souls, impelled by the strongest motive or curiosity, penetrated to the holy city. But it is not quite so with the Nepalis. It is not far enough away to awaken any particular interest or curiosity among Nepalis except for those who make a living out of trans-Himalayan trade or for those religious people who made pilgrimages to various places in the plateau. Tibet has never been closed to Nepalis as it has been to people of other countries.

Since I as a Nepali was no exception to this, privileged access to Tibet did nothing to arouse my imagination until I developed an interest in the various communities living in all parts of my own country. Gradually my interest in the different cultural groups of Nepal led me to develop an interest in the Tibetan speaking areas. The language, religion, culture, and the entire way of life of the Nepalis in the high altitude Himalayan settlements provoked my interest in Tibet itself. Then of course, I came to understand how difficult it is even for a Nepali to go there unless one has a good excuse. If you are not a trader, a religious pilgrim or a foreign service officer, how else do you as a Nepali justify the time, purpose and, more important, the cost of the travel ? Fortunately through the grace and kindness of His Majesty, King Birendra, I got the opportunity to work in Tibet as the Royal Nepalese Consul General in Lhasa.

For three and a half years just before I was assigned to

Lhasa, I worked with the “Remote Regions Development Committee” where we were involved in the planning and execution of multiple development projects for raising the standard of living of the Nepali people of the northern border region. Frequent visits to these areas for many years had made me realize that many problems of economic development were of an international nature. I realized then, for the first time that our interdependence with our northern neighbour had been completely ignored. We had been looking only to the south and west and not to the north. This began, of course, at the time when the largest empire in human history extended right up to our southern borders. But our external orientation, even towards the subcontinent to the south and to the west, was at a very thin level. The country had isolated herself and had made us oblivious of the world outside. When we finally woke up from our sleep, we realized, among other things, that our ties with the north were also in pitiful disrepair even though we had had good relations since ancient times. All of the educated Nepalis of my generation and the preceding one had been educated in a foreign land under a foreign educational system. Naturally, therefore, the majority of our political and social leaders, educationists, and administrators were not geared towards the realities of Nepal’s geopolitical situation until quite recently. Because of this background, the thinking of the educated Nepalis in the main was focussed away from the northern region. There was no reason to change or question this attitude as long as the Tibet Region of China remained one of the most backward areas in the world. Finally, however, Nepal realised the situation and signed an agreement with the People’s Republic of China in 1955 under the five well known principles of mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; non-interference in each other’s internal affairs for any reason of an economic, political or ideological character; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence. The two governments also agreed to establish normal diplomatic relations at the same time. Thus the normal channels for communications were updated, but there remained a wide gap of understanding and the heretofore neglected situation had to be viewed in a new light. His

Majesty's Government took a series of steps, including official visits by the leaders of both sides to each other's countries.

During visits to the northern border areas in the early sixties, I had also seen the catastrophic economic effect of the encroachment of a large number of Tibetan refugees and the subsequent brigandage of the Khampas. Nepal was by no means in a position to be able to handle this problem on her own. Naturally international agencies came to help the refugees and along with them came complications that bothered Nepal for many years.

Gradually, China provided generous economic and technical assistance in the development efforts of Nepal. In addition to the number of other Chinese assisted projects, a highway was built during the mid-sixties, connecting Kathmandu with her border. This has opened up possibilities of reviving the traditional Nepal-China trade that had been diverted to Kalimpong via Sikkim at the beginning of the present century.

I realised at the time of my appointment in June 1972, that my main responsibility would be to open up new ways and means for trade and mutual intercourse between the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and Nepal. This was the directive given to me personally by His Majesty.

I was able to gather much valuable information and guidelines for my work through personal interviews with senior foreign servicemen, former ambassadors, former Consul Generals to Lhasa, individuals who had held important positions in those departments of government, which had relevance with the work of our Consulate General, and a number of individual traders and businessmen who had a personal experience of Lhasa and other parts of the Tibet Region of China. This gave me lots of ideas, knowledge of the existing situation, and guidelines for my work.

This was not all. On this mission I did have some of the most exasperating experiences in my life too. Every morning and

evening, before and after office hours, until the day I left for Lhasa, I had visitors of all descriptions—young and old, reasonable and obstinate, rich and poor, successful traders and ruined businessmen — asking for my favour and assistance. Most of them wanted me to take them along, and a few wanted me to carry parcels of unspecified goods for their friends or relatives residing in Lhasa and Shigatse. Of course there were many others who applied for jobs. They were individuals who claimed to be experts in skills ranging from boot polishing to guiding and building contacts for me in Lhasa. There were a few attractive offers, of indirect bribe in some cases and annoyingly threatening in others, let alone the “no obligation” gifts. One young man not only offered his free service but suggested that I could travel in his own car all the time if only I would recruit him as an official chauffeur. To all of them, without exception, my answers were, and had to be in the negative.

Lhasa, the city on the roof of the world, has always been attractive for people the world over. Moreover, the exodus of the Dalai Lama and his entourage into India in 1959, had aroused opinions of all kinds throughout the world; and so, just the mention of Lhasa and Tibet would attract the attention of the people everywhere.

Nepal, the only country allowed to maintain a foreign mission in Lhasa, is envied by many. There must be many people who would jump at the chance to visit Lhasa or any part of Tibet. There are many friends and acquaintances of mine who have expressed their strong desires to visit Tibet and who talk about other people who would do the same. Thus I realize that it must have been a privileged opportunity for me to have had this experience, as it looks as though the Chinese government is not prepared to open the area for the average tourists for a while. Actually, this is what led me to make an effort to present this “**Report from Lhasa**” however sketchy it may be and given that the recent changes in China are a little bit out of date.

ACROSS THE FRIENDSHIP BRIDGE

My information about living conditions and the availability of food supplies in Lhasa was varied and contradictory. Many people who declared themselves to be authorities on conditions in Tibet and who were only eager to divulge their knowledge of the area, proved to be either completely out of date or confused. It was impossible to get a realistic picture of the situation. My wife, therefore, did not want to take any chances as far as her requirements were concerned. She piled up supplies of rice, wheatflour, butter, candles, soap, dried vegetables, dried fruits, sugar, tea, coffee, spices and pepper enough to last us for six months. There were other supplies, such as warm clothes, books, bedding, pots and pans. Actually after reaching Lhasa we found that all of these items were available in the local market and we could have done without almost everything except the books.

We had been advised by some people that we would need at least two days to go through customs at Kodari and the police security check at the Friendship Bridge on the border. This was incredible. To spend two days at the customs office checking one's luggage would be the most ridiculous inconvenience one could imagine. But it turned out to be not quite so true. There had in fact, been cases in the past in which both customs and police had spent more than two days checking the luggage of Lhasa Consulate employees. So the apprehension was not totally irrational. However, to make sure that we would not be wasting our time at customs the bulk of our luggage had been sent a day in advance of July 22, 1972, with my attendant, Krishna Man, and our son, Hikmat, who was accompanying us to Lhasa.

The next morning on July 23rd we cleared ourselves through the check post and crossed the bridge. Some half dozen Chinese were waiting with a landrover and a tarpaulin covered transport truck on the other side of the Friendship Bridge. A handsome young man came to us when we got to the other end of the bridge, greeted us with a smile and spoke in flawless Nepali. He invited me, my wife and our children, Hikmat and Asha, into the guest-house built on the small ledge above the level of the bridge, and suggested that we rest a while.

I had often come to Nepal's side of the border and had looked wistfully over the red line drawn in the middle of the bridge and at this guest house which I had always seen closed.

The soft-spoken, young Chinese official, Mr. Shya Jiu-tran, asked courteously about our health, the condition of the road we had travelled, and about the weather. The rest house was clean and tidy. A large board with Chinese inscriptions hung on one wall and near it another one with a slogan in the English language. A large portrait of Chairman Mao dominated the room. There were comfortable sofas with leather upholstery and a large, low table in the middle of the room over a medium sized Tibetan rug. The table was full of trays filled with sweets and cigarettes. There was a girl waiting with a vacuum flask full of hot water for tea. Mr. Shya continually offered us Chinese green tea, sweets and cigarettes.

Meanwhile our luggage was being carried by Nepali porters from one end of the bridge to the other. All of it was ready in a few minutes time. But we had to wait for Moti Raj Bajracharya, the temple attendant of the Consulate, who was also returning after home-leave in Kathmandu. It would not have taken long but for the fact that over a dozen people were pressing him to take parcels of gifts for their relatives in Lhasa. He was trying to avoid this because of my strict instructions that he should not carry anything for others; and if he did, I had clearly warned him that it would be at the risk of his job. But some of these Nepalis who had once lived in Lhasa followed us to the border and were not de-

tered by Moti Raj's timid refusals. They had pursued him to Kodari customs, and then on to the border checkpost, like a flock of baby chicks with a mother hen. They pressed him, quarelled with him, and created such confusion that the clearance of Moti's own luggage was delayed for hours while we waited impatiently for him at the Friendship House (the rest house) across the bridge. The obstinacy of these people could have exasperated anyone but Moti. As he had spent several years in Lhasa, he could understand their point of view. As a matter of fact, he himself was not very different from them in his own behaviour.

After a while these people hurriedly scribbled a petition and sent it over to me through a porter. They insisted that I should allow Moti to bring their gift parcels with him. From the other side of the bridge, I could see the crowd of people and the great confusion in front of our terminal building. As is human nature, each of us considered the other party to be very unreasonable.

Our Chinese friend, Mr. Shya, was watching all of this. At some stage I suggested that the behaviour of Nepali citizens based in Lhasa and travelling frequently back and forth across the border must be difficult for him to deal with. But, typically, in correct Nepali, and with the gentle smile, he denied this. "Oh no ! We should never say such things. It is no trouble for us at all. Our great leader Chairman Mao teaches us that it is our duty to help our friends."

Finally, I decided to leave the truck behind to wait for Moti until he cleared himself through customs and proceeded with my family in the landrover to Khasa (Tsangmu), the Chinese border transit town. I had to leave the truck behind for Moti, as he would not be able to travel to Lhasa for some time without this. There was no regular public transport system to and from the border at that time. Arrangements were made, and transport was provided, only when there were enough people to pay for the entire cost of a truck transport, which meant that the first applicants usually had to wait until the required number was reached. Sometime after they began to organize a transport

truck on a regular basis once every month or sometimes once every two months. There was regular public bus service only between Lhasa and Shigatse in this direction. It was a very difficult problem, therefore, for the people travelling from the border to Lhasa. Sometimes they had to wait for months in Tsangmu until a truck was ready to take them. However, from the spring of 1974, the Transportation Department of Lhasa provided a bus for people and a truck to accompany it for goods at regular intervals of a month or sometimes of two months. It became much more comfortable to travel between Lhasa and the border by 1974 than it was at the time I travelled in July 1972. A single journey between Lhasa and the border now costs RMB. 42, a little over twenty US dollars in addition to a small amount for freight if the luggage exceeds a valise or a portmanteau.

OVER THE HIMALAYAS

From the bridge at the border, it took us twenty minutes to drive upto Tsangmu (Khasa). The road was good for two-way traffic and was well aligned. For pedestrians and porters there was a shortcut trek straight up the hill from the bridge. The town is situated at an altitude of just over 1,770 meters above sea level. It perches on a steep slope of not much less than 75 degrees. Each building in the town stands on a narrow, carved out terrace with a very high wall on the upper side and a deep drop on the lower. There were godowns and a hotel built on the available spaces. There were also big heaps of merchandise, lying on the road-side for lack of space in the godowns.

After very brief formalities at the customs and immigration we proceeded to the headquarters of the Foreign Bureau which was only a couple of minutes drive ahead. Mr. Chu, the Chief of the local Foreign Bureau, was waiting on the roadside. He greeted us and invited us to proceed to the visitors' room. This was several hundred feet down some steep stone steps. The room itself was large and spacious. It had a wall to wall blood red rug with patterns. Several large, leather upholstered sofas were lined against the wall.

Tsangmu had a most beautiful and commanding view of the Bhote Kosi Valley. One could see the Friendship bridge and part of the highway leading to Kathmandu. We exchanged greetings and casual conversations about each other's health, living conditions and road conditions with Mr. Chu. He spoke English but mostly our conversations were carried on through the assistance of Mr. Shya who interpreted between Chinese and

Nepali. Mr. Chu spoke in a soft voice. He always had a smile on his face.

It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon Peking time, which was the time they followed in Tsangmu. It was getting late in Tsangmu although it was only forty minutes past noon according to Nepal time. We had to decide our itinerary. Mr. Chu advised us to leave Tsangmu as soon as possible and pass the difficult part of the road the same afternoon while the weather was still clear. Since clouds were collecting in the Himalayas ahead of us, it could rain at any moment. The road on the southern side of the range could be slippery and muddy. Once we were on top of the pass, which was about one hundred kilometers from Tsangmu, the road would be good and the weather clear. We decided to take the advice of Mr. Chu and leave right away. He also advised us to take some warm clothes in the jeep. It would be cold higher up, a fact rather difficult to believe while we were still so close to the sub-tropical zone in the middle of the summer monsoon.

Leaving Moti and my orderly behind to pick up a Nepali lady from Lhasa, we left in our jeep with the Chinese driver, Shu and our escort, Hishi Dorje. Hishi Dorje had been sent to the border to escort us on our journey by our Consul, Mr. Khagendra Bahadur Rayamajhi.

It took us about three and half hours to reach the top of the pass, the highest point on the road for the day. It is about 5,500, meters above sea level and just over one hundred kilometers away from the border, which is only 1770 meters above sea level.

The first thirty kilometers were along a very dangerous looking road, carved out of rock faces along a precipice with towering cliffs on one side and a very deep gorge on the other. The river roared and echoed thousands of feet below, but we could not see it. The landscape itself was not so strange to me. All the river gorges along the Himalayan range are of a basically similar nature. What I found very strange was the feeling while driving in a jeep that hugged the road along the precipice so pre-

cariouly. I wished I could dispense with the jeep and walk so that I would be sure of my own feet. Ony the slightest mistake, a jolt or a careless turn of the steering wheel would finish our journey at the bottom of the gorge. It was very unfair of me to have any doubts about the dexterity of the driver. But this did not stop my hair from standing on end. Everybody in the car held his breath.

Once the river bed rose upstream to the level of the road the drive became more interesting. The tall oaks and pines on the lower valley gradually gave way to medium sized rhododendrons and finally to shrubs. Even the shrubs gradually became smaller and smaller until the only vegetation we could see was the moss on the rocks beside the stream. The mosses had flowers of many different colours, but our enjoyment of them was limited to what we could see from the window of our jeep as we drove along at an average speed of 25 kilometres per hour.

After a while we penetrated the level of overhanging clouds that we have seen from Tsangmu. We were now in bright clear afternoon sun and quite safe from and above the monsoon rain. The drive along the cliff under the heavy dark clouds was now past. Everybody in the car relaxed with a feeling of relief. Hikmat and Asha were beginning to get excited and a little bit chatty. My wife Nani was beginning to be affected both by the altitude and the wildness of the landscape even more than her children. Just about this time we saw two women in characteristic Tibetan clothes and with the Nepali hill type *doko* (basket) on their backs. They were picking up dried cowdung along the road, for fuel, I presumed. I became nostalgic, rightaway, for our Himalayan areas where I had travelled, lived and worked for so many years as a research student and as a development planner as well as administrator for some time. The Himalayan region has a charm and can cast its spells on anyone who once gets into these areas. To me it meant so many things—the serenity of its great beauty, the vastness of quiet space, the massive majesty of the mountains, with their awe-inspiring effect, the glacial valleys and green meadows, the brightness of the clear, blue skies, the simple life of the

people, the sweetness of the music made by rushing streams and the tinkling of cattle bells.

The same stretch of road looked very different when we were returning to Kathmandu at the end of January 1973. A deep furrow had been dredged through snow which was more than fifty feet deep in some places. Our jeep travelled with the walls of snow on both sides, sometimes we went through temporary tunnels of snow in other places. These narrow and sharp 'V' shaped gullies collected all the snow that fell over the steep slopes on their wind-swept sides. Higher up we saw the white shroud of snow in which there was not a patch of naked earth or rock. At one point we skidded off the road down an incline as the driver was trying to follow the tracks made invisible by fresh snow. It took us about an hour to pull the jeep back onto the track. Five people who had escorted us in another jeep had to work very hard to shovel the snow out for a track. It would have been impossible to get out of the snow without their help. But the first time we drove up the opposite direction we saw only the colored grandeur and the benign beauty of the majestic Himalayas.

My reverie was broken at the roadside settlement of Kuti (Nyalam). Nyalam is an old town of some significance, as it always has been on the main trade route between Lhasa and Kathmandu. The old settlement, with its grey walled, flat-roofed structures, looked rather shabby in comparison to the new, large, long, single-floor buildings erected in a cluster slightly below the old ones. Further along the valley the road led us past several other smaller villages—groups of low, stone houses with flat, mud roofs and surrounded by fields of barley and mustard. Then the road took us still higher through a desolate, dry and barren landscape. The river by the roadside became much smaller.

On the previous day about seventy kilometers from Kathmandu we had crossed a massive bridge over the river Indravati, at a place called Dolalghat near the confluence of the Indravati and the Sunkosi. Then we had crossed a small ridge and had come down on the other side into the valley of the River Sunkosi. This

river was fairly big at that point. The highway ran along the bank of the Sunkosi up to the border where the Friendship Bridge was built over the same river. Here the Sunkosi roared and splashed as it flowed faster through boulders and at higher gradient although much narrower than in Dolalghat where it was quieter. Near its source, in Tibet, this same river was small and insignificant, only a small stream scattered and flowing in small channels through swampland in a wide valley. In a few more minutes we had passed this flat, ledge-like, small valley and had begun climbing up in a sharper gradient. Finally the river was gone and we found ourselves climbing higher than the source of the river.

The homes in the village and the landscape around them near Nylam reminded me very much of the northern part of our Dolpo District. Higher up it was like the Limi Valley of Humla District. The few yaks, dzopas and the sheep grazing on the slopes did not look very different from those of Dolpo or Humla. Once we were on top of the ridge, roughly at an altitude of 5,500 meters above sea level, the landscape changed even more drastically. We saw a dry river bed of rubble with a very small stream on the other side meandering through a wide valley, like parts of the Kali Gandaki in Mustang. The absolute barrenness of the land reminded me of parts of our Mustang District more than any other place. When we came down to the valley and drove along it, approximately at an altitude of about 4,500 meters, we saw one or two villages of mud built houses with flat roofs, not very different from the houses of Mustang north of Jomosom. The few irrigated patches of cultivation around the desolate and dry wilderness were not much different either. We saw a few tents of yak wool pitched in the open by the herdspeople. They were dark, smoke-soiled and were pegged in the same way as those of our own Nepali herdsmen of the Himalayan region. So many of our people exchange brides from across the border. The aristocracies of Mustang including the Raja's family, the upper class families of Solukhumbu and Olangchung Gola, had had marital relationships with their counterparts in Lhasa and other Tibetan towns for centuries.

Just as the marriage relations between some Ranas and the princely families of various Rajput houses had tied us to the sub-continent, so had the marriages of our Himalayan aristocracies with the Lhasa nobility tied us to Central Asia. Princess Bhrikuti, the daughter of King Ansu Varma, married the first historic King of Tibet, Srong Tsen-Gampo in 591 A. D. and lived in Tibet thereafter.

When we arrived in Luglu, a major village on the northern side of the Himalayas, at 7.30 in the evening, we were feeling the effect of the altitude. We all had severe headaches. Luglu was a fuelling station where our driver had stopped to fill up the jeep. We got out to stretch our legs in the meanwhile.

The local PLA (Chinese Peoples Liberation Army) men invited us in for some hot green tea. We had travelled about one hundred and forty kilometers from the border in four hours. We felt as if we had travelled halfway to the moon. Suddenly our daughter Asha collapsed while we were sipping tea. The PLA lifted her up immediately and took her to a small health post nearby where they fitted an oxygen mask over her mouth. They also gave her some medicines

We were all concerned. I ordered a halt for the night although we were advised to proceed further to another more comfortable place. Since I was not sure of what sort of accommodations we would find at the next stop, I decided it would be wise to wait for our truck to arrive since we had our bed rolls, sleeping bags, extra warm clothes, and some food in it. I knew it would be hours behind us.

The driver yielded rather unwillingly. Asha opened her eyes after about half an hour. She looked pale and weak.

There were a few local villagers who surrounded us with the usual curiosity. Men were busy with wool and spindles while the children and younger women giggled. The women and children looked just as greasy as in the similar altitudes of some of

our northern border settlements. But we were too tired to take any notice of anything. We decided to retire to a room provided for us for the night.

The room was reasonably clean and was roughly about 8 feet by 16 feet. It had a mud floor, four wooden beds, two on each side against the longer side, and piles of padded quilts, mattresses, and pillows on each of them. I had a severe headache. Nani and Hikmat looked even more miserable and in more severe pain. But more than any of us Asha's condition looked critical.

We did not have to use our own bedding for the night, or rather it would be more appropriate to say that none of us had any energy left to be bothered. Later in the evening we were invited over for a supper of boiled rice, fried pork, and roasted groundnuts. The food was not bad at all but we had no appetite. The electricity went out at about 11 o'clock as a routine.

It was a miserable night for all of us particularly for Nani and Asha who had not travelled to places like this before. No one could get any sleep. The room seemed to be filled with the cracking of the wooden beds as we changed sides frequently. The whines and groans indicated that none of us felt any better than the other; I was, however, quite concerned about Asha's condition. Every so often I took a flashlight and walked over to her bed to see how she was. She did not feel better until the next morning. The constant barking of the dogs in the nearby village reminded me of many familiar experiences in the hills of Nepal. The night seemed awful and long.

THE NORTH FACE OF EVEREST

It was the early morning of the 24th of July, when we dragged ourselves out of our beds and began to pack. Our truck had already left Luglu at about five with Moti and Krishna Man. We were allowed time for more sleep which unfortunately did not come easily because of the headaches. Even with the help of sedatives it was impossible to sleep. It was half past seven and the day was breaking when we left our camp. Soon a soothing, fresh, cold breeze was upon us. It was quite exhilarating and it helped Asha a great deal. We drove on a straight, gravelled highway through the wide Tingri plain, at first almost due east and then slightly south for a time. The barren rocky landscape with mountains on both sides were unusual to our eyes. Once we turned round the bend of a spur, we were headed straight toward the Everest (Chomolongma) massif. The pure silver peaks and slopes were a very welcome change from the barrenness of our surroundings. It was a beautiful sight but I did not think that it was quite as impressive as the view of Mount Everest (Sagarmatha) from the south. Maybe it was because of the lack of colour. In the south, green forests and hills enhance the effect of the snow and the lower base makes the snow peaks look much taller and more impressive.

Soon we passed the area of Chomolongma. There were some villages on the road, small and far apart except for the major settlement of Tingri, which is right on the road to the north of Chomolongma. This is a station which the Sherpas of Solu and Khumbu talk so much about as their trade mart, and about which there are so many references not only in their

conversation but also in their songs. I was curious as to how well our Solukhumbu people were getting along now.

On a later date in November, when I was passing by, I got the opportunity to stop at this place and check it out. Luckily I found there were two Namche Bazar Sherpas in town. And it was due to a strange coincidence that Pasang Putar, one of my old acquaintances and my host from Namche Bazar, was there. He had come with several Dzopa loads of trade goods and had been held up in the meanwhile by a very heavy snow over Nangpa La, the pass at the border. The unusually heavy snow had also closed my passage to Kathmandu over Nyalam and I was re-tracking my journey to Lhasa. The detailed story of this journey will be told later on. According to Pasang Putar, the trade transactions were quite good, although the trade counterparts of Tingri had changed from private individuals of the traditional old days to the state trading agencies and depots of the present day and were therefore devoid of all the fun and social part of trading. He told me that he and his fellow villagers were treated very courteously and correctly by the Chinese authorities. The only inconvenience, he said, was that they could not buy yak cows, which they needed for breeding. I assured him that His Majesty's Government would help them out in this for transactions in livestock have to be made at the governmental level. I promised that I would take this matter up.

Fortunately, a few months after this incident, we were able to procure forty-four female and four male yaks for the district. I felt greatly relieved when our Consulate signed an agreement on behalf of the Livestock Department of His Majesty's Government for the transaction with the Foreign Trade Bureau of Lhasa in July 1973. We procured some more yaks during the following year and started negotiating also for the year 1975 before I left Lhasa.

After Tingri, we gradually climbed up and drove through a very pleasant, picturesque alpine meadow until we reached an altitude of 5,200 meters above sea level. The hill slopes were

dotted with yaks and sheep. The rarified but cool breeze, the turquoise blue sky, the green pastures, the occasional groups of people we saw working on the highway were all too overwhelming to be taken in at a glance. I wished I were on foot taking days to cross these high mountains. I even felt envious of my predecessors who had travelled this way before the highway was built.

There are permanent quarters built at regular intervals of eight to ten kilometers along the roadside, where maintenance crews live and take care of the section of the highway under their charge.

After we crossed the high pass, the road wound down into another plain. This one looked even greener than the area through which we had already passed. We were driving along the bank of a small river. We saw more villages of better built, larger houses with white washed mud walls. They looked more attractive than the low, naked, stone-built structures which we had seen on the previous day. There were even some willow trees here. After some time we climbed over another pass. This one was slightly lower than the first. It was only 4,500 meters above sea level.

The driver, Shu, and Hishi Dorje, our Nepali escort from Lhasa had filled up a large inflatable rubber pillow case with oxygen and brought it with us in the jeep in case Asha or any of us needed it on the way. Asha did use some of it.

After the second pass the level of the highway was even lower than before. The landscape changed. There were more fields of barely and wheat, more water, larger villages, prosperous white-washed houses, trees, animals and more traffic.

It is interesting that while travelling north of the Himalayas in Tibet, one has to reverse the pattern of what one would expect to see while travelling northward in Nepal. Here, in Tibet as you go northward you go lower, further away from the Himalayas,

from severe cold to warmer areas, from rainless and treeless zones to the zone of rain and trees.

The nearer we got to Shigatse, the better everything looked. The valley was wider. The traffic on the road included some animals but consisted mostly of jeeps, a few trucks and horsecarts. Horse-carts, like all other wheeled transports in Tibet, were a new introduction which had revolutionized not only the economy of the land and the living conditions of the people, but had changed the whole pattern of life.

Near the town we saw Tashi-Lungpo, the famous monastery, on one side and the former residence of Panchen Lama on the other. Both looked very impressive in their medieval grandeur. There were also the ruins of an old fort. But the new town, with its tidy streets, large buildings, hotels and people's cultural palace, represented the modern Shigatse.

It took eight hours to cover the distance of 340 kilometers from Luglu to Shigatse. We were driven up to the front of a small hotel. This hotel had a spacious room used as a lounge with comfortable sofas and scarlet rugs. There were low tables filled with sweets, cigarettes and tea cups in front of each seat.

At a quarter to five we were served a meal of boiled rice, eggs, meatballs, fried pork mixed with onion shoots, and hot soup with cabbages. We were then called on by Mr. Wang Yung Chang, a responsible member of the Foreign Bureau in Shigatse, who was typically polite and soft spoken. Mr. Wang enquired about our health and asked if there was anything we needed. He repeated this several times even after I had thanked him and said that we had everything. He also apologised several times for the bad road and difficult travelling conditions, almost as if they were his personal fault.

The hotel had one large room with several beds and a few other smaller rooms with twin beds. The one double bedroom, adjacent and open to the lounge, was given to me and my wife. All the beds were springy, had soft mattresses and bright colored

silk-lined quilts. The floor had rugs comfortable soft chairs with low tables, desks, reading lamps, and supplies of ink and writing pads. But the hotel had no plumbing. There were no bathrooms but each bedroom had wooden washstands with bowls, soap, towels and thermos flasks full of hot water supplied all the time. In the backyard, fresh pits had been dug to be used as latrines which were enclosed and roofed with thick cloth. This was done apparently to spare us from using the dry latrines which inevitably smelled.

The electricity supply in the town was quite good. But it routinely went out at midnight.

We had another supper later in the evening, before we went to bed. All of us were quite comfortable in this hotel after three days of rather strenuous journey. Shigatse is very near the bank of the river Yalu Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) and is considerably lower than the place in which we spent the previous night. Therefore we had only very slight headaches.

At the suggestion of Mr. Wang, I received about twenty-five Nepalis from the town. Three of them were from Nepal—two from Solukhumbu and one from Kathmandu itself — and the others were born in Tibet of mixed parentage. Some of them had had problems. Three of them had been interned for their misdeeds, for which they had repented and apologized and asked to be pardoned and had been released. On the whole the prospect for Nepalis in Shigatse did not seem to be very promising. But I did not yet know how to judge. I told them that I had not yet reported at my office and did not understand fully much of the things they were saying. I promised that I would look into these matters once I was settled. Subsequently, I sent my deputy, Consul Gopi Nath Dawadi in July 1973 to Shigatse, Yatung and Giantze to visit the Nepalis and deal with their problems. Most of the problems of the Shigatse Nepalis were solved with the cooperation of the Chinese authorities. Those who had been detained until then were allowed to return to Nepal. By the time I ended my stay at Lhasa in February 1975, there were fewer Nepalis in Shigatse than at the time of my arrival in July 1972.

WE REACH OUR DESTINATION

On July 25th, the fourth day of our journey, we paid the hotel charge (three yuan – U. S. \$ 1.50) per person for the night and left the Shigatse Hotel at half past seven in the morning. Mr. Wang Yung-chang was there to see us off. He wished us a good journey and gave us a parcel of hot cakes for our use on the way. The day was grim and overcast.

We had already passed the rainless zone of southern Tibet which was in the rainshadow of the Himalayas. The Yalu Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) valley received a lot of rain. Later on we found out that the tributary valley of the Lhasa River was also quite wet during summer.

Soon after our departure it began to rain. It was not very heavy, but it was enough to make the road wet and the weather chilly. Our feet were freezing. We passed heavier traffic on this part of the road. There were transport trucks, jeeps, and horsecarts. For the first couple of hours, we drove through a wide flat plain with lots of green fields and a number of villages not far between. This was one of the heavily populated areas of Tibet. Shigatse, of course, is the largest town on the south of the Yalu Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) river and the second largest town after Lhasa in the entire Tibet Region. I passed through this valley twice more—once in November, when the people were busy with their harvest activity, and again in the first week of May 1973, when the people were ploughing and sowing their fields. The colour and activity I saw on my second and third visit made the whole valley far more interesting than it appeared on this first visit. The production teams of all the communes were out in the fields.

Each work team had a red flag hoisted on a stick posted on the ground, while men and women in colorful Tibetan clothes worked or moved about in the field. There were mostly ornamented dzopas, with red and white plumes stuck on their horns, harnessed to the plough. Occasionally yaks were used for ploughing too. When there were several pairs of bullocks with long red plumes over their horns ploughing in large plots, a very charming and colourful effect was produced. People looked very happy and gay on such occasions. The occasional sight of the roaring tractors did not look quite as gay as this.

In two hours time we reached Giantze, another important town on the south of the Yalu Tsangpo. The big white and red Chaitya and the fort recalled its old days. Our road joined the highway to Yatung, towards the Indian border with China. Here we turned left to continue on our road to Lhasa. We had a short stop while the jeep was being refuelled. It was not quite one hundred kilometers from Shigatse, but we had covered more than one quarter of our journey for the day.

The weather was gradually improving now. The sky became clearer and brighter. The traffic increased steadily. We passed one or two large public buses that plied between Shigatse and Lhasa.

Children stood on the wayside waving at us. In one village where we stopped for a few minutes, a group of them surrounded us and laughed at our strange faces and clothes. The girls giggled and the boys tried to hang on to the roof of our jeep. We also saw Tibetan militia men and women practising rifle drills. We saw caravans of yaks carrying loads on their backs. Sheep and goats grazed on the meadows by the roadside. They invariably crossed our way when we approached them.

The flocks of sheep and goats which grazed by the roadside were disturbed by the blowing of horns and din of the vehicles. For some unknown reason a few of them would cross the road, staying clear of the automobiles. The whole flock would

begin to follow and would not stop until the last one crossed the road (although the last few may have been grazing several hundred meters away from the road). The driver would have to wait until the last one passed.

A little later we passed some caravans of yaks, but they had an altogether different approach to the problem. They are not disturbed very much until the automobiles get quite close. In fact, they would begin jumping only when the vehicle drew parallel to them. If they were coming from the opposite direction, they would stop and stand still on the middle of the road staring at the strangely roaring unblinking eyes and four strange, round legs that do not jump off the ground but roll on it. Then finally and suddenly they begin to jump as if they had decided that the strange animal did not belong to the same herd or species, nor could they fight it, and therefore saw their safety only in running away from it.

The way the yaks ran away was not the same as the other animals did. They jumped around in all directions with the tuft of long bushy hair at the end of their tails upturned. It was a beautiful sight to see them jump around all over the slope, the stream, over the boulder or wherever they happened to be. If they were loaded they could not be stopped until they had thrown everything off their backs.

The foals also presented a beautiful sight when they ran. They looked as if they were competing with the automobile in a race although, in fact, they were trying to run away from it.

Quite contrary to my expectation, the musk-deer seemed tame and undisturbed when they happened to be near the highway in the wide stretches of wild pasture. I saw them on two occasions. Both times it was just before dark in the evening. The first time there was a flock of six which stopped grazing and stood still while we passed by them. They were only four to five hundred feet away from the highway just over the Nyalam (Kuti) pass. The second time there was a lonely buck, probably lost from the flock

grazing in the wide grassland halfway between Giantze and Yamdrok Tso lake. The buck looked confused and frightened. It came on the road about twenty feet in front of us. We had to slow down and stop until it moved aside and gave way to us.

The time when you feel really happy and thank God (in a land where He has largely been neutralised) for being safely locked inside your car is when a big mastiff happens to be off its chain and gives chase to your jeep. But our driver showed utmost patience and good manners on all of these occasions. Often children playing along the roadside would also cross our way. I did not once see the driver lose his cool.

After another hundred kilometers from Giantze, we arrived at the edge of the famous lake Yamdrok Tso. It looked more and more beautiful as we came closer to it. At first we saw only a tip of it. Then we saw that smooth green grassy mountain in the middle of it. We drove along its shore for about fifty kilometers until we left it to climb up a small hill and go down on the other side. We had seen only a fraction of the lake but the dark greenish-blue water with wild ducks floating on its surface was a remarkable scene. I had occasion to drive past this lake a few more times during my stay in Lhasa. I will mention this later on.

Once we left the lakeshore and rose to the top of the ridge, we had a better view of the lake before we began to climb down the other side of the mountain. No sooner had we lost sight of the lake than we were compensated by the more picturesque sight of the wide, spectacular Yalu Tsangpo river valley in front of us. The Yalu Tsangpo valley was considerably lower than the lake Yamdrok Tso we had just left behind. The river had a very wide sandy bed and there were many sand dunes created by strong sand storms in a number of places. But on either side of the river bed one could see wide stretches of cultivated green fields, villages, and scattered clumps of green trees. The trees always presented a contrast against the bare, dark, rocky mountains and grey sand beds on either side of the river.

Once we came down to the bottom of the valley, we drove along the right bank of the river for about a quarter of an hour before we finally crossed over a long, solid, double-lane bridge over Yalu Tsangpo.

After crossing this big river, we entered the valley of the tributary river that flows by Lhasa itself. Nepalis know this river mainly by the name Lhasa Khusi (or the Lhasa River) and in some places it is called Kyi-Chu. Now we were going upstream along the right bank of the Lhasa River and along the foot of the mountains on our left. The road was now zigzag, unlike the greater portion of the highway we had travelled. There were many blind corners. But we were quite close to Lhasa and the driver was taking it easy.

A few kilometers before Lhasa, we saw a large Buddha carved out of the rockface on the roadside. We did not see any wall on which was carved the Tibetan mystic phrase, 'Om Mani Pudme Hum'. Instead we saw many walls along the road inscribed with the teachings of Chairman Mao. During the Cultural revolution, the *People's Daily*, Peking, November 19, 1968, stated the situation clearly. "In Tibet," it said "in the past, every household had its clay Bodhisattva, while now every house has a portrait of Chairman Mao. In the past, there were statues of gods and ghosts in every village and by the roadside now glittering pagodas, pavilions and bill boards decked with Chairman Mao's quotations can be seen everywhere. In the past everyone carried talismans to seek the blessing of the Buddha but now everyone carried the precious red book of Quotations from Chairman Mao; in the past whenever people met they wished each other 'good fortune' but now the first thing they do is to wish Chairman Mao a long, long life and exchange quotations from Chairman Mao. In the past, the masses used to burn incense and recite lamaist scriptures every day in worship of the Buddha but now they seek advice from Chairman Mao every morning and make a report to him every evening; every day, they sing 'The East is Red...'"

Lord Buddha was born in Nepal more than two thousand

five hundred years ago and had preached a way of life that would bring emancipation for troubled souls. The Mahayana or the "Great Vehicle" form of Buddhism was introduced into Tibet during the seventh century, A. D. This was at about the same time that Tibet was adopting an important role in Asian history. In a way, it was the beginning of civilization for the area. This Buddhist religion, with many local modifications and adaptations became the basic foundation of the social structure of the Tibetan society, In the course of time it became esoteric, ritualistic and, with all the pomp and pageantry added to it, became very powerful and prestigious. Buddhism became not only the state religion but became almost the government itself. Therefore, even though there had been some efforts to reform it, Lamaism, the form of Buddhism practised in Tibet, refused to change, because reform or change in religion would mean change in the power structure and government itself. Today, with the change of the social-economic system in the land, the religion is dying, even though it is said that the people are allowed to believe in religion if they want.

The gaint size icon of the Buddha, carved against the rock-face along the roadside, must have supervised the safety of the travellers along the road in the past. Now it is the expertise and imagination of the road engineers and the patience and skill of the drivers that ensures the safety of the travellers. The Buddha, nevertheless, is there as a witness to history.

Gradually the Lhasa River Valley widened to another small tributary valley on our left. It was green with rape mustard, peas, broad beans, and wheat. We saw new buildings from the distance, then the valley opened to our right, and finally into our view burst the famous Potala, the residence of the Dalai Lama.

We were there at last.

The valley was greener than all the places we had passed.

About four kilometers outside of Lhasa proper, we were

stopped by a group of people who had come to welcome us. Mr. Wang Chih-liang, the Deputy Director of the Foreign Bureau in Lhasa, and his Nepali interpreter, Mr. Chu Tzu-yuan, were there to receive us. We got out of our car and were conducted inside a hall where we sat and talked with Mr. Wang. All officials from our consulate and their families were there too. After a short formal chat we proceeded to our consulate, where there were about sixty Nepali adults and an equal number of school children waiting. I chatted with them all for a few minutes before we relaxed into our new home.

Thus ended the long and exhausting journey, and I was about to begin my assignment.

Lhasa is not much farther than our own western border is from Kathmandu. Yet with the difficult terrain and travelling conditions it was considered a really far away place in the old days. For most of the Kathmandu valley people, the north Indian cities became closer and easier to reach from the beginning of the present century. It was only the adventurous Newars of Kathmandu valley who continued to brave the rigorous conditions of Tibet rather than the sweltering heat of Bihar or West Bengal.

It must have been quite different when it took ten to twelve weeks to get to Lhasa and about six months to go to Peking from Kathmandu. It is remarkable that even when the journey was so difficult, long, and hazardous, the two countries maintained intercourse all along. It was only during the latter part of the nineteenth century when the situation was not very propitious (not only for Nepal-China relations but also for most Asian countries) that the relations between them slowed down. Now it is different again. So also was my performance in Lhasa destined to be different from those of my immediate predecessors. However I was not so much worried at that time whether or not I would be able to do my job well as I was very much excited just to be there and to have this new experience.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF LHASA

The first few days in Lhasa were strange. The city is at about the same latitude as Cairo in Egypt, Florida of the United States of America, Humla of Nepal and Hangchow on the eastern coast of China. And yet because of its altitude (3,713 meters above sea level), its thin air and the look of the traditional Tibetan heavy clothes, people often have the impression of Lhasa being an extremely cold place. Certainly it has the severe cold months of January-February.* But at the time we arrived (the last week of July 1972) the climate was very pleasant with twenty-two degrees centigrade above zero in the shade in the afternoon and about fifteen degrees in the early morning.

Lhasa and the surrounding area have four seasons in a year. It has a dry and cold winter with a temperature sometimes down to sixteen degrees centigrade below zero at night. The surroundings look absolutely barren and public life slows down considerably. Then the spring sets in with strong dust-storms. The early part of spring is dry, cold and grey. The later part of it becomes increasingly stormy, although the weather becomes warmer and the landscape greener and much more pleasant than in winter. This is followed by summer which has some rain and pleasant weather with a maximum temperature of about twenty-six degrees centigrade in the afternoon. One official Chinese report, however showed only three seasons in most parts of the Tibet region. The *China Pictorial* of July 1973 has a map showing this region with

¹ The minimum temperature in the open reached thirteen degree centigrade below zero during February 1973 ten below zero in January 1974, and seven below zero in February 1975.

“prolonged winter, no summer, autumn following spring”. But while we were there, we experienced quite a bit of rain and warm weather. On certain days in June-July the temperature reached 25 or 26 degrees centigrade until the rain cooled it down. The rain made some parts of the city muddy. Although Lhasa itself did not receive as much rain, there were occasional spells of heavy downpour in the Linchih (Kongpor) area which is to the east of Lhasa.²

Our first autumn in Lhasa was beautiful, and towards its close, it became rich with flowers. The houses in the city have flower pots of geraniums, carnations, dwarf dahlias, chrysanthemums, asters, and marigolds; a few have roses displayed on the south-facing window boxes. Lots of hollyhocks were seen in open gardens. Apples, peaches, tomatoes, cucumbers and green leafy vegetables attracted crowds in the market places. Even water melon were grown in green houses. These green houses produced a limited number of tomatoes, cucumbers and other vegetables the following spring.

The mountains on all sides gave Lhasa a look somewhat like the Kathmandu valley, although it is much smaller than the latter in area. Another difference was the barrenness of the surrounding mountains, unlike those of Kathmandu which are covered with green forests and cultivated terraced slopes. But there were lots of trees in the flat part around the city. The surface of the Lhasa valley was much flatter than Kathmandu and the river flowed almost at the same level as the city.

Two or three days after our arrival, we took a long walk around the city. The street that passed by our consulate was narrow and unpaved. The houses on either side of the street were mostly

² In the middle of June 1973, for example, one hundred and thirty millimeters of rain was recorded in Linchih on a single day. The same day Shigatse recorded twenty-eight millimeters and Lhasa, only eighteen. The annual average rainfall in Lhasa is between three hundred and fifty to sixty millimeters, Linchih area receives over five hundred millimeters in an average year.

former mansions of the Lhasa nobility. But soon we emerged into anew and wide street. The large former mansions were built of stone while many of the smaller houses were of mud brick. The bigger buildings had wide spacious courtyards in front of them and on the other three sides stood the dwellings reserved presumably for servants, or serfs. Our consulate is housed in such a building, but all other former mansions were at present being used either as offices or apartment buildings. There was thus a considerable amount of life and activity in the old sections although the traffic of automobiles was not as heavy as the new streets which surround the old city. The old part of the city with the Lhasa Chapel, (the temple built during the seventh century) Jho-Khang or "Jug-la-Khang" as it is popularly pronounced, in the center, reminded me of our Lo-Manthang in the district of Mustang. Old Lhasa is of course much bigger and much more prosperous than our tiny Lo-Manthang, but in culture, topography, architecture styles and climate, Lo-Manthang in appearance was the nearest town to Lhasa. But the present, expanded, Lhasa has added to it thousands of new groundfloor apartments, shops, and factories, some with tin roofs and others with tile roofs. There are a few two or three storey buildings with flat roofs.

For present day Lhasa the descriptions of beggars, people in rags, filth, and squalor, that one reads in books of the old days are stories of the past. The people of the city looked clean, well fed and prosperous. The traffic of trucks, jeeps, sedans and men and women on bicycles, gave the appearance of great activity in the town. The total population of the city was slightly over twenty thousand.

On one of the crossroads right in front of the Potala we saw a big department store with attractive displays in the window. We entered into it still followed by children who had collected around us as we walked long. The colourful saris of our women had attracted the curious youngsters more than any other thing. The shops were full of cotton, woollen, and silk fabrics, garments, cosmetics, toys, pots, pans, sports, equipment, food and drinks. We bought some tinned fruit, fish, and cigarettes which were cheaper than in Kathmandu. When we came out of the store at the

other end of it we were on a different street that passes by the Potala on its eastern side. As we walked along it, we passed by a photo studio, a bank, post and telgraph office, bus terminal and airline booking office.

On another afternoon we took a walk along the bank of the Lhasa River. It was a quiet and beautiful place. There was a big enclosure with groves of green trees just beside it at one place and a stadium at another between the river bank and the main settlement of the town. There was an impressive stone embankment which stopped the river from running over into the city or from eroding the river bank. There were a few youngsters fishing with rod and line. The massive dykes reminded me of a very old anecdote I had read about the Tibetan attitude to floods on this river. The presence of the Capuchin mission was blamed for the flood of the river in the year 1725. The following paragraph, taken from John Mac Gregor's "*Tibet, A Chronicle of Exploration*,"³ will illustrate the incident.

"The Kyi Chu River, swollen by unusually heavy rain in August 1725, overflowed its banks to flood a large part of Lhasa. The highly superstitious Tantric Lamas blamed this Catastrophe on the foreign intruders who, they believed, had enraged Tibetan gods of the earth. Incited by the Lamas, a Tibetan mob of townsfolk, who had lost their property in the flood besieged the Christian Mission. The beleaguered priests narrowly escaped death during this incident but were thereafter forced to suffer frequent indignities. Finally it took an official proclamation blaming the flood on the sins of the Tibetans themselves to save the Capuchins from further torment, or perhaps even violent death."

Much later, Heinrich Harrer, who was in Lhasa until 1950 was faced with the job of building a dyke to protect the grounds of the summer palace of Norbulinkha against a threatening flood. "When I arrived on the scene," says the author of *Seven years in Tibet*,"⁴

³ John MacGregor, *Tibet, A Chronicle of Exploration*, London 1970

⁴ Heinrich Harrer, *Seven years in Tibet*; Rupert Hart Davis, London 1966

“I found the old embankment on the point of giving way. In pouring rain and by the faint light of lanterns, the body guard under my directions set to work to build a new dyke. We managed to strengthen the old dyke sufficiently to keep it unbreached for the moment, and next day I bought up all the jute sacks that were to be had in the bazaar and had them filled with clay and sods of turf. Five hundred soldiers and coolies worked at high pressure and we were able to erect new defence before the old dam burst”. “At the same time the weather oracle was summoned from Gadong”, Harrer continues, “Just as we were throwing the last spadefuls of earth on the dam, the Oracle tottered on to the bank and went through his dance...and we both received the commendation of the Dalai Lama.”

We walked for about one kilometer along the bank upstream before we left it to turn towards the town to the east. More and more people gathered around us as we walked into the town. This time, unlike our first day, there were in this crowd some adults too, including some giggling women and staring men, as well as noisy children. Maybe it was because of the increased size of our group. There were more sari clad women, for all the wives of our staff had joined the company. It was also remarkable that there were no Han Chinese individuals in the crowd. On our way we passed by two crowded cinema halls. The first cinema which was called the “people’s cultural palace” was the building we saw in front of the Potala on our first day of excursion. Just before we turned to the street leading to our consulate we entered into Bhakor, the ring street around Jug-la-Khang temple. This used to be the busiest and the most attractive street in the old days. I had also heard and read about the stores and shops of the Nepali traders on this street. I was curious to see how the Nepalis here were getting along in their trade under the new government. We passed by a dozen of them. Half of them did not appear to be very busy, they did not look badly off. They were all exceptionally courteous and polite

We saw some posters and cartoon paintings left over from

the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” as we walked along, and we heard the broadcasts of Radio Peking or Lhasa Radio through loudspeakers placed at some street crossings. Chinese music was entirely new to me. It was the first time I had ever listened to it. The occasional roaring and loud noisy horn of the gaint transport trucks passing by us disturbed the atmosphere of cool breeze, clear landscape, and good music.

Once we returned to the consulate, I climbed up on the roof which is on the fourth storey of the Consul General’s residence. There was the expanse of flat roofed, grey walled buildings of old Lhasa in the middle of the valley and the new streets and buildings around it. But of all the sights, the most striking was the Potala, the winter palace of the Dalai Lama. This palace, which stands on a hill on the western outskirts of the old town, has been famous ever since it was built. Outsiders visiting Lhasa have always made comments about it. It is one of the most unusual structures ever built by man. It never ceases to attract people’s attention and imagination. I got into the habit afterwards of climbing up to the roof of our house to look at it several times a day—morning and evening. I marvelled at it and secretly wished that I were a poet. I would portray in words the picture of the Potala under a sky, grey or blue at sunrise or sunset and even catch the changing moods of the Potala at different times when it seemed to become alive. The American journalist Anna Louise Strong⁵ who visited Lhasa in 1959 described it thus: “The circle of mountains behind it becomes a natural setting and the Po-tala seems a jewel set in a great ring. . . . with the deep blue sky above it, and the barley fields below, and the circle of mountains around it, the word magic is not inappropriate for the effect produced by the Potala.”

Heinrich Harrer,⁶ who had travelled with his companion Peter Auffshchniter for seventy days during 1945–46, “full of hardship and unceasing struggle against cold, hunger and danger”, forgot everything as he came within six miles and “gazed at the golden pinnacles” of the Potala, “the most famous landmark of

⁵ Anna Louise Stong, *When Serfs Stood up in Tibet*, Peking 1966.

⁶ Heinrich Harrer, *op cit*.

Lhasa". He admits that he felt inclined to go down on his knees like the pilgrims and touch the ground with his forehead.

Sir Charles Bell,⁷ who headed the British Diplomatic Mission in Lhasa in 1920, declared that it was "one of the most impressive buildings in the world" when he saw it "lit up by the afternoon sun in the clear Tibetan air, backed by the soft purple of the eastern hills". What I liked most was when it looked clear and sharply focussed coming out in the midst of clouds with its distinct colours.

The Potala has been declared a national historic monument and is maintained at an annual cost of thirty to forty thousand yuan.

The other important building of the town that I could see from our rooftop was the Temple of (Jho-Khang) Jug-la-Khang. It was very close to our consulate, just across the street on the northern side. But since it was surrounded by tall buildings on all sides, it did not look very impressive or imposing. The golden roofs and pinnacles rose only slightly higher than the city skyline.

Standing beside the parapet of the roof top I watched the sky grow darker. My mind began to wander over a wide range of subjects— the land, its history — both recent and distant past, my forthcoming work, personal and national problems. I was both excited and melancholy at being in Lhasa. I stayed on the rooftop until I could see nothing but the silhouetted mountain tops on the western horizon, beyond the Potala and Chokpori (The Iron Hill, the former College of Medicine). Then I came down slowly to my room, or rather my home for two years and seven months.

⁷ Sir Charles Bell, *The Religion of Tibet*, Oxford, Lithographically produced. 1968. page – 131

FIRST MEETING WITH THE OFFICIALS

Two days after our arrival in Lhasa, I paid a formal courtesy call on Mr. Niu Chien, the Acting Director of the Foreign Bureau under the Revolutionary Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region. Two days later I paid the same type of visit to Mr. Kuo Hsi-lan, one of the Vice Chairmen of the Revolutionary Committee. On both days the meetings were held at the office of the Foreign Bureau.

To go to the Foreign Bureau we had to drive half way round the old city. It was a new single storey building which had a large hall used for a cinema, a spacious visiting room, and one or two other smaller rooms adjacent to it. The new structure was built in the same compound as an old Tibetan style two storey residence. The visiting room had a large rug on the floor, a few sets of velvet covered sofas arranged in an arc and a few tables in front of them. The room had tall, glass windows and the opening on the side of the big hall had velvet draperies.

We were received by Mr. Niu Chien and other officials of the department. After an exchange of greetings and formalities, Mr. Niu recalled the treaty signed between the two countries based on the five principles of peaceful co-existence. He stated that the two countries have had friendly relations all along and had cooperated with each other. He made it a point to express his appreciation for the help Nepal gave in the restoration of the membership of the United Nations and of the Security Council seat for his country.

I made a suitable reply and expressed the hope that I would

receive cooperation and understanding from them. He assured me of his cooperation and I must say that throughout the term of my assignment I found him and others fully cooperative.

Mr. Niu explained that China was a developing country. It was only just beginning to improve the living conditions of its people and industrialize its economy. It was a semi-colonial and feudal country until 1949. It was badly exploited both by foreigners and by the native war lords. Under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Chinese Communist Party, conditions had greatly improved since the liberation. Yet they had a long way to go. The Tibet Region was just beginning to change from its old state of backwardness. Life in Lhasa would be hard for me and my family. Living conditions in Lhasa, he said, were the least developed in China. He apologized for them. He warned me that I would have to adjust both to the extreme climatic conditions and to meager resources, and the lack of amenities of life to which I might have been accustomed. I said that Nepal is a small country which has yet to develop its own economy. "Not many of us lived in comfort and luxury, whereas China is a big country with a very ancient civilization," I continued. But Mr. Niu would not even let me finish my statement. He said that Chairman Mao teaches the people not to make distinctions between countries big or small. All countries are equal and we should always have mutual respect for each other. As a friendly neighbour, the Chinese government and people regard Nepal and the Nepali people with much respect. Besides, Nepal is a country with an ancient civilization, too, and there are many things that China could learn from Nepal.

In the very beginning Mr. Niu had repeatedly told me to let him know without any hesitation whenever I needed anything or wanted to do anything specific. At this, I asked if my children could visit some places of interest such as museums and factories. Accordingly our children and all the rest of the Nepali staff and their families were invited to see the places around Lhasa including the Potala.

On the next day we were invited by Mr. Niu to a (reception) dinner to introduce us to Lhasa officials. We had our first major Chinese dinner on this day. The dinner was followed by a showing of a color film of a Peking Opera entitled "Song of the Dragon River". Throughout the film, Mr. Chang Tsu-Chi, the Section Chief of the Foreign Bureau, sat beside me and gave a simultaneous translation in English, while Mr. Chow Tsu-yuan gave a Nepali translation to my wife and children.

In spite of all the efforts, generous hospitality and assurances of our hosts we had not yet stopped feeling strange. It does take a while for anyone coming from outside to get used to this city. Even most of the Han-Chinese find it difficult to get used to the altitude and climate. Of all the Hans working in the Tibet Autonomous Region, a great majority were from Szechuan, the adjacent province. Many of them had been working there for more than twenty years and except for one or two I never met people who had been there for less than fifteen years. Because it is difficult to live in these rigorous conditions, I got the impression that only dedicated and hardy types volunteer to come to this region. All of those people I met were down-to-earth serious and very hard working. Not many of them seemed to be much involved in politics.

A few months later Mr. Jen Jung, the political Commissar and the acting Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region, accepted our invitation for a dinner party when we discussed matters of common interests between our two countries. At another time, during one of their social occasions, Chairman Jen Jung introduced me to a number of Tibetan officials. One of them was the Chairman of the Political Consultative Conference, Phagpa La, the former Phagpa-rinpoche of Kham. He was a handsome man in his mid-thirties. "He used to be a re-incarnate Lama, you know" Mr. Jen Jung said and added, "He is now happily married and lives with his wife and children." At this point someone got up from our table and returned with an attractive lady who was sitting in another table at the far end of the hall. She was introduced as Mrs. Phagpa La. On the same day I met another dignified looking man who must have been in his

sixties. He was heavily built, but not very tall. He was introduced to me as a former important noble. His wife was a much younger looking Tibetan woman who was described as having come from a very poor family. Then I met a handsome tall and slim youth who was the son of Ngape Ngawang Jigme, the Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. But the young Ngape was a worker in a factory.

One other Tibetan dignitary I used to meet occasionally was Pasang, one of the Vice Chairpersons of the Revolutionary Committee. She told me that she had come from a very humble background.

THE PEOPLE'S PARK

About a week after our arrival, we were invited by the Foreign Bureau to participate in the celebration of the forty-fifth anniversary of the People's Liberation Army in Norbulinkha (the Jewel Park). Since ours was the only foreign mission in Lhasa, the invitation was extended to every Nepali in the consulate. The consulate had only one car. So, it was very thoughtful of the Foreign Bureau to send two cars to the Consulate in the morning of August the 1st. Since there were no taxis to be hired, there was no alternative for us but to accept the generous hospitality of our hosts. I enjoyed the walk tremendously, going through the narrow streets where children played and neighbours gossiped with each other. The open market of old Lhasa and a few repair shops, smithies and tailoring shops were located along these old lanes.

We were driven in their cars into the Norbulinkha, the People's Park. It was about one kilometer west of the Potala where there was a large garden enclosed by high walls. We drove through a richly painted ornamental gate which had two big figures of lions, one on either side of the entrance. The place was filled with several thousand people. We drove through the crowd and passed through another entrance which led directly into the courtyard of the glittering summer palace with its golden roofs. There were other buildings in the garden. This particular palace, as were told by our hosts, was not the original summer residence of the Dalai Lamas. This one was built during the year 1953 to 1956 and was named 'Ta Dan Minchu Potan' (permanent Regime) by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama who fled from Lhasa in 1959. The

interior of the palace was painted with rich bright colours. There was a living room on the ground floor (where the fourteenth Dalai Lama gave audience to the most privileged), a chapel, a sitting room, a bed room with attached bath, and toilet and lavatory combined, all used by his mother. In another section of the palace was the throne room where there was a magnificent golden throne. It was fitted with a gold ladder on one side since it was raised more than five feet above the floor. There was also a high table covered with gold filigree and studded with jewels. We learned that this throne was presented by a reactionary organization called the organization of the "four seas and four ridges". Attached to this room was a study on one side and a series of inter-connected bedrooms, bathrooms, a meditation room, and a small, compact room for the study of *tantrism*. This last room had interesting mural paintings and a collection of equally unusual idols. There were rooms with Indian and Nepali style paintings and mantras inscribed in old Nepali (Ranjana) script. The palace was rich, and had bright coloured paintings on all the walls of these rooms. One of the walls of the chapel room had paintings depicting the story of the construction of Jug-la-Khang or Jho Khang, as it is sometimes called.

This room also had golden statues of Buddha. Adjacent to it was a small living room. On one side of it there was a large radiogram and a small record player set against one of the beautifully painted walls. These modern objects looked rather incongruous against the background colour in the room.

One of the small bedrooms of the Dalai Lama had some personal belongings and a bed with wrinkled linen and a quilt lying over only half the bed. This was, we were told, the bed used by the fourteenth Dalai Lama until the last night before he left the country in March 1959.

By the time we came out of the palace, the garden was already crowded with men and women of all ages, and a large number of PLAs in olive green uniforms intermingled with other citizens. We were then led by Mr. Niu and other friends from the Foreign Bureau into a hall and were introduced to other dignitaries. Then

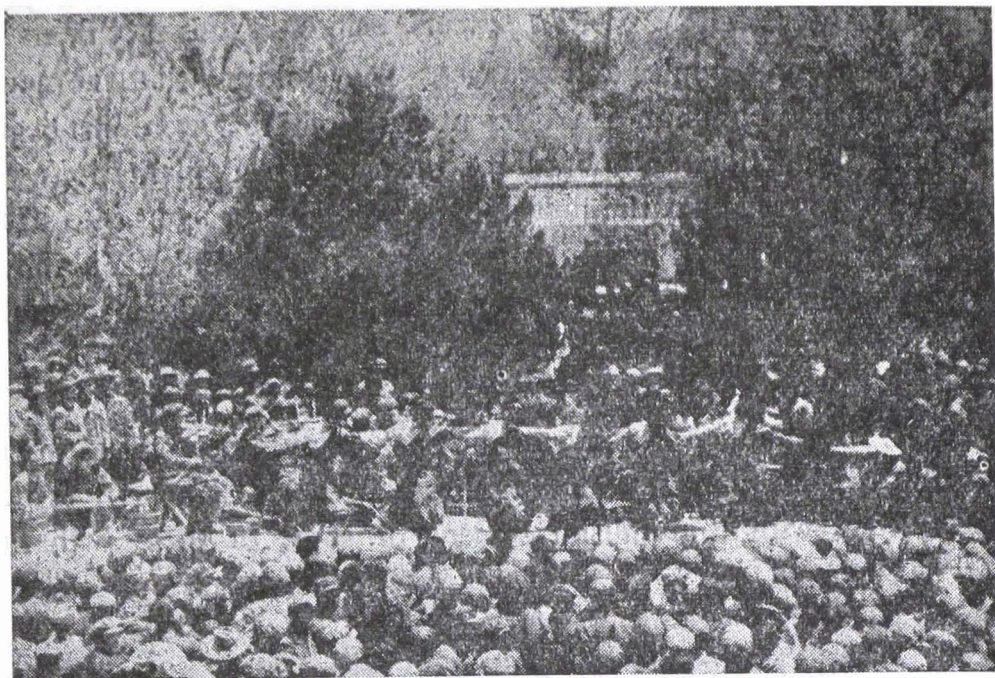
we were invited into another large hall that stood behind the palace. Tables were full of pastries, sweets, cigarettes and first fruits of the season — apples and peaches. They told us that the newly established communes in different parts of Tibet were just beginning to function, and not all of them had fruit plantations yet. We were told that the first apple seeds were brought into Tibet by the then Vice-Premier of the State Council, Ch'en Yi, almost seventeen years before, in March 1956. They had since multiplied a million fold, and new apple trees grew all over Tibet.

In the open grounds of the park many Tibetans had settled for a picnic lunch. Some families had enclosed themselves into privacy with thin muslin screens or some of them with fine nettings.

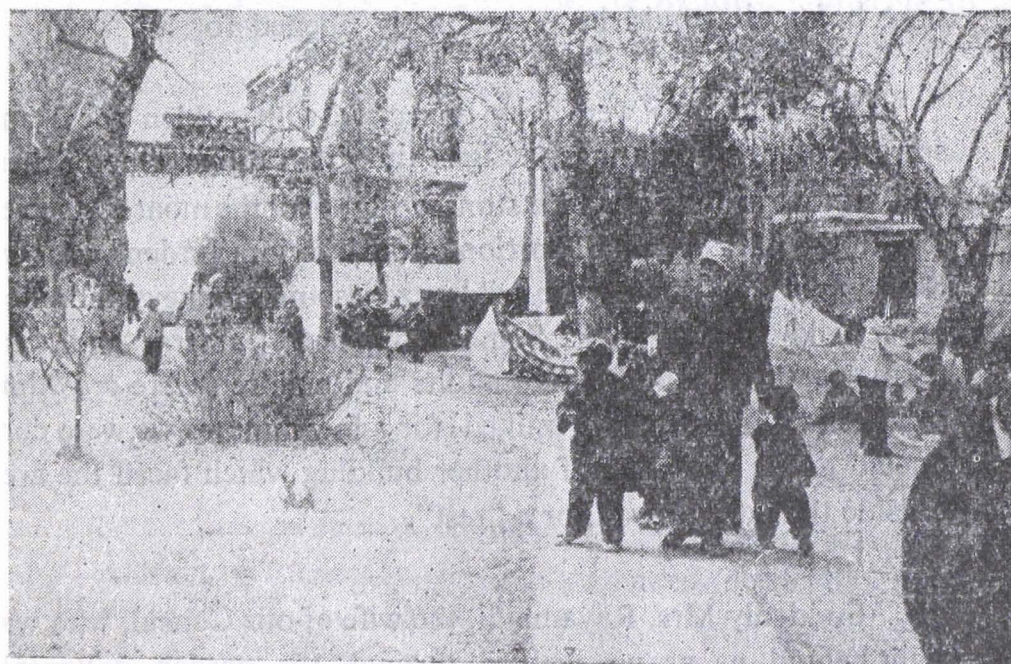
Mr. Niu explained, while we were strolling, that this place had been absolutely forbidden to anyone except the Dalai Lama: and only with his special permission, a few high officials were admitted in the old days. Now it was open to everyone. Anyone could come for a picnic and enjoy a holiday. Therefore they called it "People's Park", They were planning to open it for all time, but it required a certain amount of restoration work and landscaping before it would be permanently opened for all.

The buildings were very attractive with golden roofs and spires, colourful paintings, designs and decorations. One of them had a moat around it, and a stone bridge over the moat connected it with the park. A small portion of the interior garden was enclosed as a zoo. There were wild gazelles and monkeys and a few other wild animals in it. Some people had cameras and were taking pictures. Hundreds of adults and children were crowding to watch them. After we walked for a few minutes we were conducted to the verandah of another building which faced the area outside the interior wall for a "rest".

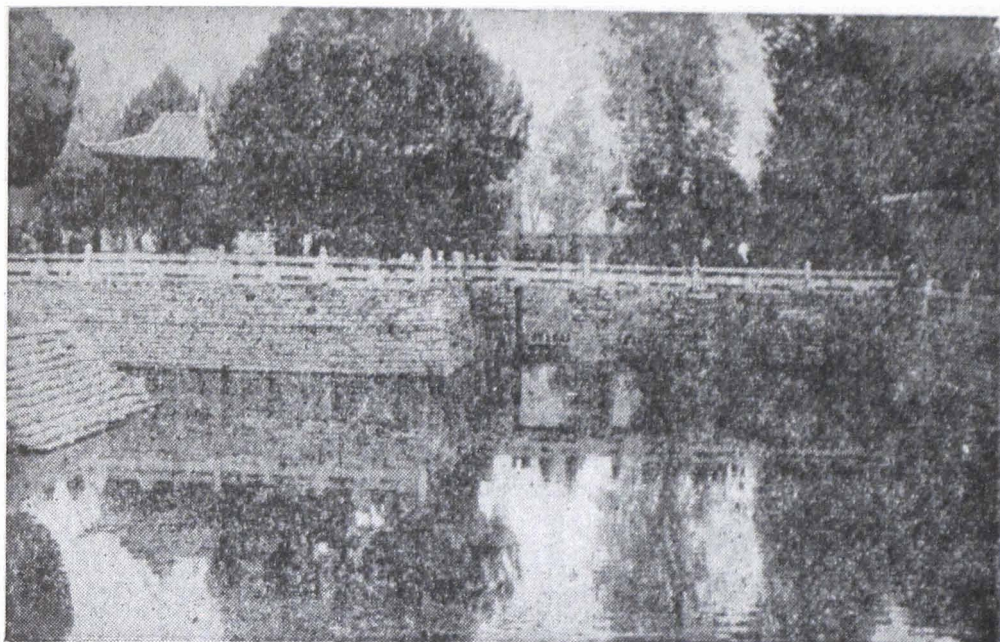
Suddenly Mrs. Rayamajhi, the wife of our Consul, who was right behind us as we walked through the garden, collapsed. We were all concerned. Our hosts took her back to the hall



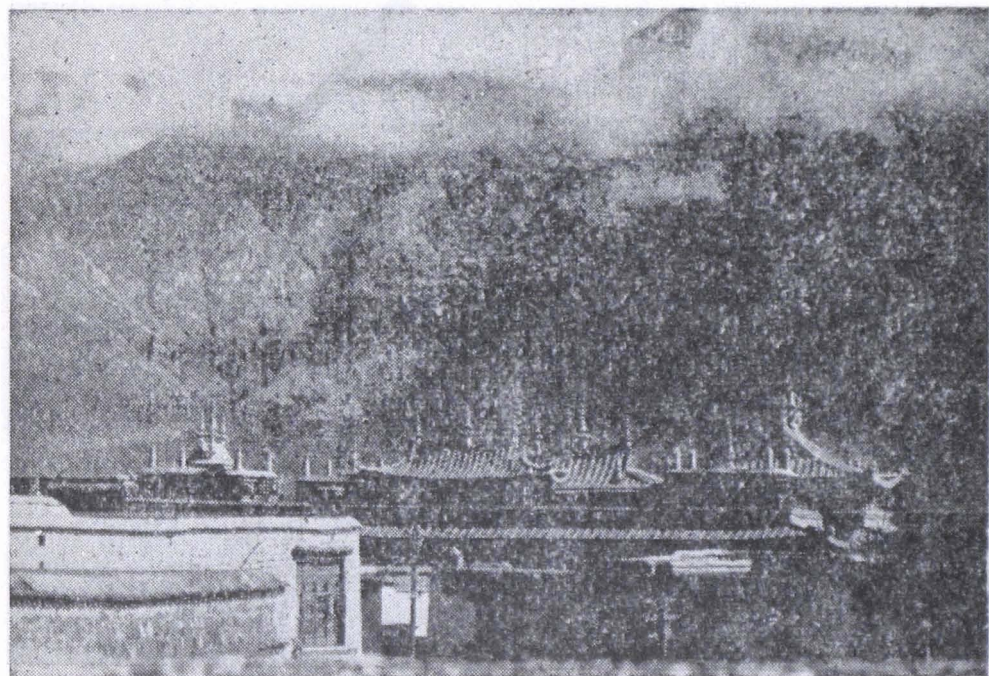
Open air performance at People's Park (Norbu Linkha)



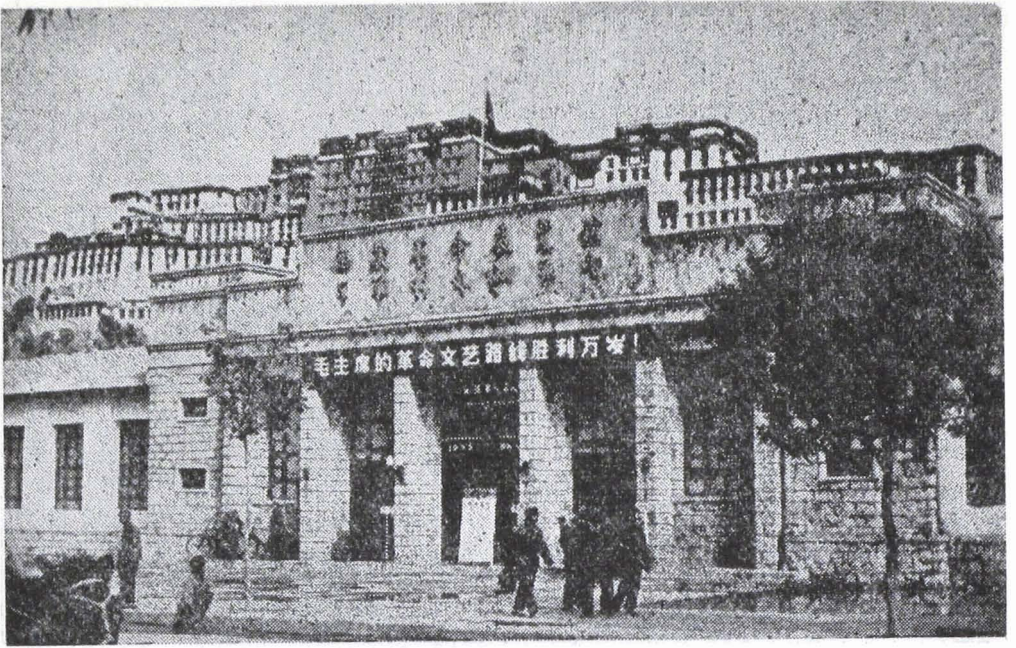
People enjoying picnic at People's Park (Norbu Linkha)



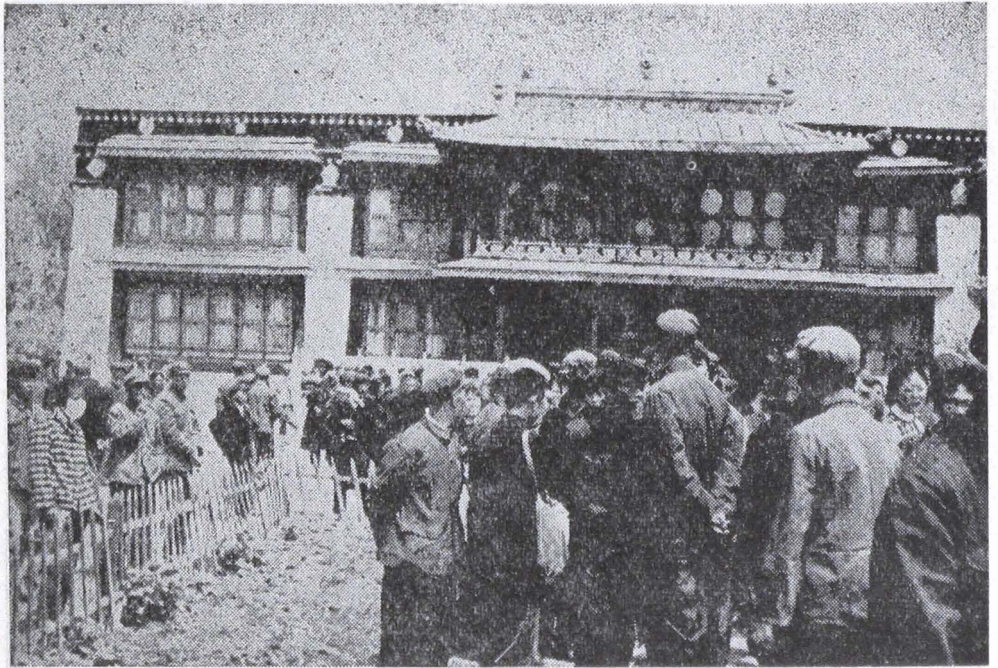
The moat and the Stone-bridge at People's Park



The 7th Century temple Jho khang



The Revolutionary Museum of Lhasa
with Potala in the background



The Norbu Linkha palace

where we had sat before and placed her on a sofa. Within minutes they brought a physician who gave her some medicine and fixed an oxygen mask over her mouth. He let her breathe through it. The heat of the sun and the presence of the crowd had affected her. She was all right after a couple of hours' rest. Leaving her to rest and recuperate under her husband's care, the rest of our group returned to the verandah where we had been invited before. While we sat watching the crowd of people moving in all directions. Mr. Niu and I conversed through the help of Mr. Wang, a member of the Foreign Trade Bureau, who spoke Nepali.

There was a raised platform, a sort of stage for open air performances, in front of us where the school children of Lhasa staged a cultural program. Mr. Niu told me during our conversation that this place was the traditional stage for dramas and dances in the old days, except that the verandah where we sat was screened heavily because commoners could not look at the Dalai Lama while he watched a performance outside. The exterior part of the garden was open on certain days for the public even in the old days, during the summer sojourn of the Dalai Lama.

Later on we were also conducted into a richly carpeted room with painted walls and a set of old sofas, some chairs and beautiful old rug covered divans. This was the very room and seat from which the Dalai Lama used to watch the carnivals.

The latter part of the programme was staged by professional celebrities. Of all the items, the most popular were the songs by Miss Chaidan Droma, the most celebrated of Tibetan singers. The other two popular ones were Mi Jo-Ju and Chang Liu-chu. The whole crowd would applaud and swing around the moment the names of these three — specially Chaidan Droma — were announced. The crowd applauded more and became alive whenever there were Tibetan songs. One could feel the predominance of the Tibetan spirit and mood even though the numerical presence of the Han people in the crowd was considerable.

Mr. Niu our host was acting as a director only for a couple of months at this time when the Director, Mr. Chiao, was away from Lhasa. The following year in May 1973 Mr. Chiao was promoted to the position of Deputy General Secretary of the Revolutionary Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region, and Mr. Chen Chin-po was appointed as the Director of the Foreign Bureau in his place. Niu-Chien was the Deputy Chief of staff for the Tibet Military area command when I left Lhasa in 1975.

“There have been great changes in China”. Mr. Niu continued while sipping tea. “Even a few years ago there was a conflict between the two ideologies.” He was giving reference to the Cultural Revolution. He explained that Liu Shao-Chih wanted the intellectuals to be the bosses and to have special privileged positions while Chairman Mao maintained that the intellectuals should work for and with the peasants and workers at the same level. I had read that Chairman Mao pointed out as early as 1939 that “the dividing line between revolutionary intellectuals and non-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary intellectuals is whether or not they are willing to integrate themselves with the workers and peasants and actually do so.” Chairman Mao had further said, “The intellectuals will accomplish nothing if they fail to integrate themselves with the workers and peasants.”

In 1968 during the Cultural Revolution, Chairman Mao had repeated these instructions. “It is highly necessary for young people with education to go to the countryside to be re-educated by the poor and lower-middle peasants.” . .

In the open air platform in front of us, the artists were staging a dance scene enacting mutual help between the villagers and the PLA. The village girls wanted to wash clothes for a PLA boy. But since the boy would not consent to let the girls have his clothes for washing, they had to take them away by stealth. One of the girls pretended that she had sprained her ankle and wailed for help. This caused great laughter in the crowd. But Mr. Niu and I were still engaged in the conversation and discussion of problems. I raised the questions of improving the traditional trade

relations between the two countries. I told him that there used to be a considerable amount of trade across the Himalayan border in the old days. It had come down to very little during the past few years. I admitted that our agencies and individuals were also to blame for the decline of trade, but I assured him of proper attention to the situation from all levels concerned from our side and requested the same kind of cooperation from their side. Mr. Wang, the young representative of the Foreign Trade Bureau, grew almost impatient and butted in to say that they had always cooperated with Nepal, but the concerned departments of His Majesty's Government of Nepal, as he had seen so far, seemed to be very reluctant to issue export and import licences to the Nepali traders. What then, he asked me, was the point in discussing the improvement in trade? I thought from what I had heard about Chinese manners and ideas of protocol, that this outburst of Mr. Wang was most unusual and uncharacteristic of Chinese junior officials. My experience of later years confirmed this feeling. I explained patiently that this was not the reluctance of the department concerned, but it was the procedural weaknesses which were being removed for the smooth flow of trade from our side. Mr. Niu showed a positive reaction to my suggestion and promised their best cooperation. The following year we recorded an increase in the volume of trade⁸

In 1974, we also had two more trade routes through Yari in Humla and through Rasuwa Garhi in Rasuwa, officially opened in addition to the already existing Kodari road.

After about three hours the program was over. We took leave of our hosts and drove back to the consulate through the crowded streets.

⁸ The total volume of trade, both export and import included was worth:

Rs. 1,23,17,735/— in the year 1971/72

Rs. 67,26,517/— in the year 1972/73

Rs. 1,08,27,150/— in the year 1973/74

Rs. 1,79,01,462/— in the year 1974/75

THE HIGHEST PINNACLES ON EARTH

Occasional rain during the second week after our arrival in Lhasa brought the temperature down to twenty degree centigrade, making the weather very pleasant. I was encouraged to go out on evening walks and also to go up to the rooftop of our house more frequently than before. To me the sight of the Potala framed by pure white clouds in the morning was one of the most beautiful scenes I had ever enjoyed. But Hikmat and Asha were not getting quite the same amount of satisfaction in only looking at it from the outside. They wanted very much to be allowed to visit the interior. They were getting impatient as their vacation was running out fast. In fact all of us were wondering whether we would ever get the opportunity to see the interior of the Potala. So I was also speculating about it along with my children. Then came the invitation for all of us in the consulate to see it on the seventh of August.

We had been warned beforehand that there would be a lot of walking and were advised to wear shoes with rubber or crepe soles for our safety. The many steep ladders and the flag stone steps down the ramparts of the Potala were not the easiest things to walk on.

At ten O'clock in the morning, we were driven right up to the western back entrance of the palace to where the Dalai Lama used to have his own car taken. It needed a good deal of courage and maneuvering skill for the drivers to go up the last part of the drive. We were joined from the bottom of the hill by two other jeeps full of people, including Mr. Niu, the Acting Chief of the Foreign Bureau. There were guides, interpreters and

two medical doctors — one male and another female to look after and take care of us in case of emergency. One person carried a big rubber tube full of oxygen in case we needed it.

The guides, with electric torches in their hands, explained to us the two rules that visitors were expected to abide by before we entered the large entrance to the palace. The first rule was that no one should touch anything with his hands, and the second, that no one should smoke while walking and going round the palace. However, we were told that there would be a short rest in a hall before the tour started and also a tea break in the middle for a few minutes as the entire tour would take about three hours. During the rest periods visitors could smoke as much as they liked. With this short prelude we were led through the immense doorway into a small courtyard and then on to the main building and up a few ladders past another opening and into a large and beautiful hall at the center of the palace. There we were given a brief introduction to the history of the palace. We were also told that our guide was very knowledgeable about the palace and would answer any questions with pleasure.

The first palace, according to the guide, was built by King Srong Tsen-Gampo during the seventh century A. D. during the period of the Tang Dyansty. This original palace had nine hundred ninety-nine rooms and on top of it another room was built later on to make a total of one thousand. But because of wars, disturbances and resulting confusion over the centuries, nothing was done to maintain the palace. Gradually it began to fall into disrepair until finally it was completely ruined. There is nothing left of the old palace except one room carved out of rock.

The name Potala was derived from the name of the hill itself over which it was built.

The present Potala palace, as it stands today, was built only during the seventeenth century by the fifth Dalai Lama. The fifth Dalai, after having consolidated his kingdom known as Ganden-potang in 1642, began the reconstruction of the palace

in 1645. Some of the rooms were ready by 1653. But it was not completed until the turn of the century. The fifth Dalai worked at it for fifty years but could not finish it. It was completed only after his death.

At this point Mr. Chu Tzu-yuan from the Foreign Bureau told us in Nepali that it took almost sixty years to build the major part of this edifice with seven thousand labourers working every day. They had to bring large stones from the mountains miles away, and every piece of wood was brought from the southeast 200 kilometers away from Lhasa. Some of the larger beams and pillars required forty people each to haul them.

The palace today has two sections, the east court and the west court. The west court is also called the Palace of the West Rays of the Sun. This was where all the ministers and courtiers came to pay respect and bow down and listen to the religious sermons of the Dalai Lama. The palace area covers 300 meters east to west and 100 meters north to south. It has 13 stories in the middle with a total height of 187 meters from the street level. The top roof of the palace measures 3,900 meters above sea level. A total area of 30,000 sq. meters is covered by the palace.

The seventh Dalai Lama built the Norbu Linkha as his summer residence. Ever since the Potala has been only the winter residence for the Dalais.

We were told that the first man who received his title as the "Tale" (Dalai Lama) about four hundred years ago was Sonam Gyatso. But he conferred the title on two of his predecessors. They were Gedun Truppa, the disciple of Je Tsong Khapa, the great reformer and founder of the Yellow Hat Gelugpa Sect, and Gedun Gyatso, the later reincarnation of Gedun Truppa himself. Gedun Truppa was the one who had built the famous Tashi Lunpo monastery near Shigatse. Some historical records suggest that at the time of the visit to Mongolia by Sonam Gyatso (the reincarnation of Gedun Truppa) the title of 'Tale' (Dalai) was conferred upon him by the Mongol Chief Altan Khan in

1578. Although he was the first to receive the title of 'Tale' (Dalai) he was known as the Third Dalai by his own choice.

We were told by our guide that the first four Dalai Lamas were only religious leaders, and it was only with the fifth that the roles of both secular administration and religious leadership were combined into one. It was in 1270 when the Emperor Kublai Khan installed a Lamaist monk on the throne of Tibet, which began a succession of priest kings.

But the real power was not personally wielded by these kings until the late seventeenth century, when Lob-sang Gyatso, the fifth Dalai, consolidated both the prestige and authority of the office into one person. And he was also the one who began building the Potala.

Historical records suggest that the Emperor Kublai Khan in 1270 and the Mongol Chief Altan Khan in 1578, had favoured the Tibetan Chief with the throne and the title respectively. Another Oelot Mongol, Gushi Khan, (GushiTenzing) seized power in Tibet in 1636, and took all religious authority from the Red Hat Sect of Lamaism and gave it to the Yellow Hat Sect. Then the fifth Dalai Lama established his Kingdom of Ganden Potang in 1642. However it was only after Gushi Khan's death in 1655, that the fifth Dalai held all real power in his own hands.

After this introduction we began the tour of the Palace. We went down the stairs into a very dark cave room. This was the only surviving room of the old rock palace carved by King Srong Tsen Gampo. The room was about 15 feet square and about 13 feet in height. There is enough room only for about six people for it is filled with large statues. Our guide advised us to divide the group into two. There was a large golden statue of Tsamba (Maitreya), the future Buddha, on the left just as we entered the cave. Then there was the larger than life size statue of King Srong Tsen-Gampo himself. On our right were two similar sized statues of the two princesses — Pemusa (the respectable Nepali lady) known by the name Bhrikuti in Nepal, and Gyasa (the respectable Chinese lady) Tang-princess, Wen

Cheng of China, the two queens of Srong Tsen Gampo. They were separated from the statue of King Srong Tsen-Gampo by a statue of a Lama. Our guide explained that the three statues used to be in a line close to each other. But the fifth Dalai had the statue of Srong Tsen-Gampo removed from the raised seat, and used this for another statue which stands there today. When we turned round to leave the room we were shown a huge stone slab on our left near the door, which our guide described as the bed on which Srong-Tsen-Gampo slept.

In another section there were seven large golden chortens-stupas containing the dead bodies and other precious relics of the former Dalai Lamas. These chortens were covered with thick gold sheets decorated with precious stones. Turquoise predominated. Large pieces of corals rubies, emeralds, and a few diamonds were seen from the open side of these chortens as one could not go round them. These seven shortens contain the dead bodies of the 5th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Dalai Lamas. The one containing the dead body of the Thirteenth Dalai was the biggest and was housed in a separate room. This one shot up three stories high, a total height of sixteen meters. The square base had sides about fourteen to fifteen meters each. The collection of wealth was absolutely incredible. Long strings of pearls were hung over the dome. This Chorten alone had used more than three thousand kilograms of gold. There were also large silver vessels on stands used as butter lamps. The altar held rows of huge silver bowls filled with water offerings. Another chorten, the one of the fifth Dalai Lama, was thirteen meters in height and had a circumference of more than six meters at the base. This one was covered with only slightly fewer gold sheets. The chorten of the ninth Dalai Lama was eight meters high and was about four meters wide on all four sides. The remaining five chortens were slightly smaller than that of the ninth Dalai. They had used 3,731 kilograms of gold in all. The chorten of the first is in Tashi Lungpo monastery in Shigatse and the chortens of three Dalais preceding the fifth are in Drepung monastery. We were told that the sixth Dalai did not have a chorten built for himself. He was chosen and installed by the Tibetans but was not approved of by the emperor when he was invited to visit the Imperial Court in Peking. He

died before he returned to Tibet, and was buried in Uthai Mountain near Batang. His remains were not brought to Lhasa.

An Italian Jesuit missionary who reached Lhasa in 1716, described the sixth Dalai Lama Tsang Yang Gyatso, as the one who drank and gambled. No good-looking person of either sex was safe from his unbridled licentiousness. Once I heard an interesting story about him while I was in Lhasa. This sixth Dalai Lama had a mistress in the town whom he visited frequently. But after a while the townsfolk began to resent the behaviour of their god-king very much as he was not supposed to keep a mistress or lead an amorous life. When he learned of this, he summoned the townspeople with many of the nobles and courtiers to stand in front of the Potala palace while he himself went to the top of the roof and urinated down towards the ground in front of everybody. As he urinated from a height of several hundred feet and as a strong wind was blowing not a drop fell on the ground. Having performed this feat he explained to everybody. "Because I am a god this never falls on the ground. Now you can compare the situation when I associate with a woman. You see, you do not have to worry." Convinced by this practical analogical demonstration the townsfolk approved of his coming to the town to see his mistress and even went further and painted the house with saffron colour to distinguish this residence from others.

Tibetans also know Tsang Yang Gyatso as a great, talented poet. Many of his compositions are popular among the Tibetan speaking people of the northern border areas of Nepal. One gets a picture of him from some of these compositions rendered into English by Sir Charles Bell: 9

I dwell apart in Potala
a god on earth am I;
But in the town, the chief of rogues
and boisterous revelry.

* * * *

9 Sir Charles Bell, *Tibet Past and Present*, Oxford 1968, pp. 38-49
Reprinted Lithographically.

My heart is far off: the nights pass by
In sleeplessness and strife;
E'en day brings not my hearts' desire,
For lifeless is my life.

* * * *

Dear love, to whom my heart goes out,
If we could but be wed,
Then had I gained the choicest gem
from ocean's deepest bed.

* * * *

To get back to our chortens, the biggest and latest one which belonged to the thirteenth Dalai had a wide balcony around the top dome on the third floor level. Going round the wide balcony one sees the beautiful fresco which depicts the travels of the thirteenth Dalai. It also shows him in Peking. In one of the scenes, the Dalai Lama bends down on his knee and, with his head lowered, raises both cupped hands holding a small statue of Buddha towards the Empress Dowagar, Tzu Hsi. She is painted sitting on a high seat in front of the Dalai. In the next scene the Dalai standing this time, but well below the high seat of the Empress's adopted son, prince P'u Yi, offers another statue of the Buddha in a similar manner. There are also other scenes showing the Dalai Lama in the court of the Empress.

This chorten with its gallery and beautiful mural paintings was begun in 1936, and was finished in two years of careful work. Further on, there is a scene where the Dalai Lama returns from Peking with great pomp and ceremony. In another place one can see the Nepali chief of the mission of the time, painted with his official costume and a golden hat with plumes, which has been long out of style in Nepal.

There were other spacious rooms full of large golden statues of gods and lamas. After this we walked up to the rooftop where one can see the golden roofs and the highest golden pinnacles on earth over those chortens we had just seen from close quarters below. The golden roofs and pinnacles were not there just to add

to the glitter of the palace. They were in fact fulfilling a very pious function of covering the gold covered chortens containing the precious remains of these god-kings. Because of these, the visitors on the roof could walk above every thing and every room except the place covered by these golden gable roofs. The panorama of Lhasa town and that of the entire valley was a most memorable sight. The green lines of trees, the new boulevards and the tidy modern buildings stood in contrast to the medieval look of old Lhasa. The golden roofs of the Jhokhang temple in the town shone in celestial beauty under the brilliant sun and the turquoise blue sky.

From the roof we descended by different ladders into the eastern section of the palace, where we went through many other large rooms full of books and golden idols. All of these rooms had high seats used by the former Dalai Lamas. In one used by the seventh Dalai Lama there was a glass closet, inside of which stood a golden tablet with Han, Tibetan, Manchu, and Mongol characters. As translated by our guide the characters stood for the equivalent of "Victory to the Celestial Emperor". Directly above it was the painted figure of Emperor Ch'ien Lung of the Chin Dynasty. "The Dalai Lamas used to kneel down in front of it and bow to it when this was taken out during the Spring festival which more or less coincided with the Tibetan new year's festival", said the guide.

Gradually we moved on towards the east along narrow corridors, stepping over precious old rugs. On the walls were hung Chinese tapestries and Tibetan thankas. After many official and prayer rooms, we entered a small but most beautifully decorated room. This was used by the thirteenth and the fourteenth Dalai Lamas. In it there were the rarest collection of Chinese antiques, dolls, and golden idols. Adjacent to this was a room in which court used to be held. In one corner there was a small room used as a rest room by the Dalai Lama. There was no plumbing of any sort, no opening or any water tap. Our guide smiled and said "Oh no ! The Dalai Lama's refuse was never wasted. He always eased himself in a pan and the stuff was sold by the nobles to the people for large amounts of gold". Looking at my incredulous

face he repeated, "The rich and religious people of the town competed with each other to buy it as this was used for religious and medicinal purposes."

I was able to confirm this later with our Ambassador, Mr. Ranadhir Subba, during my visit to Peking. Mr. Subba knew from Darjeeling that the Dalai Lama's excreta was sometimes taken across the Tibetan border into Sikkim and India by the faithful believers.¹⁰

Before we were led into the room that lies on the top southeast corner of the main building, we looked out of the overhanging balcony covered with glass panelled window. This is where the Dalais used to sit and watch religious performances in the courtyard below. From here we entered a room at the south east corner of the palace. This one was the most splendid. It was literally stuffed with statues of gold. There was a large lotus flower of solid gold, the leaves of which were carved with religious images and flowers. There was also a seat of the fourteenth Dalai Lama on one side. "In this room" the Chinese officials explained, "the Dalai Lama sat with his most trusted minister during 1959, when he was cooking up a rebellion against the central authority". This room had double glass windows. "So they thought it was the safest-bulletproof and soundproof as well", Mr. Chou Tzu-Yuan explained.

While in this room, the golden statues of the fierce deities of the Lamaistic pantheon, locked inside a glass panelled closet, led our conversation to religion. Our host, Mr. Niu, casually asked whether I had any religion. I told him that I was born in to a Hindu family, but like most young people of the day, I did not practise religion any longer, nor did I observe any caste

¹⁰ In fact this has been recorded in earlier works on Tibet. John MacGregor, commenting upon the German Jesuit, John Grueber, who visited Tibet along with his Belgian companion, Albert d'Oeville, in 1661 writes, "He (Grueber) was also the fist of several horrified foreign observers to discover that a rare and much sought after "curative" pill was, in fact, made from the Dalai Lama's excrement.

rules, although I was not an atheist. Mr. Niu then went on to say that as a child he was frightened by fierce idols like the one in front of us in the room. But as he grew up, studied, and came to understand that modern science could explain all natural phenomena such as lightning, rain, storms, thunder, epidemics, and natural calamities, he found it difficult to remain superstitious and believe in god and religion. All religion is superstition. That is how, he said, the poor peasants and common people are exploited in the name of religion.

As we rose to leave the room, we saw a wooden bowl with a little Tsampa (parched barley flour) left over and a silver spoon dipped into it. It had belonged to the fourteenth Dalai Lama. I made a remark that the place was so well preserved that it must be a lot of work to maintain. Our hosts said nothing at the time, but later I learned that maintenance alone costs thirty to forty thousand Yuan a year – approximately fifteen to twenty thousand U. S. dollars. At the end of our tour of the palace, we came down through the front courtyard and out into the stone stairs from the eastern most entrance, the opposite end from where we had entered. The lower cellars we saw at the end were used as storehouses for grain, butter, and other supplies in the older days. Then only did we realize that we had entered through the back entrance and had walked down the front. Going up the steps through the front would have been very hard for the old people in our group. It was a total of four hours when we finished our tour at the bottom of the hill.

As the days were slipping by amidst sight-seeing tours, dinner parties, and lavish hospitality, we gradually got used to the city of Lhasa, its unusual atmosphere and altitude. The rarefied atmosphere and the occasional dust storms did not bother us much any longer.

THE BIGGEST MONASTERY OF THE WORLD

It was not until April 1974 that I had the first opportunity to make a tour of Dre-pung Monastery. When you drive into Lhasa from the west or from the south, you have to pass this famous place which lies off the highway on the slope to your left about 6 kilometers from the center of the old city. When you see the monastery from the road, its elegant, whitewashed, and immaculately terraced buildings give the impression of a small fairy town.

Leaving the main road we drove up the slope for about half of a kilometer before we arrived at the base of the monastery. Here we got out of our cars in a flat space which looked like a car park. There were about thirty Lamas in their maroon, saffron, yellow and gold coloured robes waiting in a line. We shook hands with all of them. The chairman of the organizing committee, Tenzing-Gyalzen, then led us up the narrow cobbled lanes lined with the residences of the monks. No wonder that it looks like a compact town. When you add the ten thousand residences to the five big temples, a number of smaller chapels, assembly halls etc. you indeed wind up with a small town. What makes it unique is the site, the surrounding landscape, and its history.

After a few minutes of walking up along the steep stone steps we came out into a big, paved, open courtyard. On the south side there was a parapet about one meter in height. One had a wide view of the Lhasa River valley from there. On the north was an old impressive temple with golden steeples and painted wooden

pillars. The building itself stood on a high platform which was reached by several layers of uniformly carved stone steps on its southern side. The wide verandah in front of the main gate led to the altar inside. The temple also had a staircase leading to the upper floor on one side of it. After we spent a few minutes walking around (some of us in catching our breath) we were conducted into a very richly decorated, furnished room on the upper floor of the building.

Until 1959, Drepung monastery had four colleges with four chapels attached to each one of them. The room we were in was part of the oldest one of those four. All the walls were lined with low settees covered with old rugs. The ceiling was covered with old brocade and satin. One of the walls had painted shelves stacked with idols. Soon after we were seated, the Lamas served us butter tea. The low "chyokchee" tables were full of pastries and sweets. Tenzing Gyalzen gave a short introduction to the history and present condition of the monastery.

Chairman Tenzing was an ex-lama of the same place. He had disavowed his celibacy in 1960 and had married afterwards. He now has five children — three sons and two daughters. The oldest was already thirteen years old. This ex-Lama was very knowledgeable about the place. He was at present the chairman of the management committee of the monastery. This monastery, according to him, was begun in 1416 by Jhayan Tsuchi, a disciple of the great reformer Je Tsong Khapa. Je Tsong Khapa had eight of his disciples come to the site of Drepung where they began building the monastery and recruiting disciples. When Jhayan Tsuchi began his meditation beside a big boulder, now in the centre of the complex, he was given the inspiration and advice necessary by a deity, no less than God Jambe-Yang (Manjushri) himself. Then Jhayan Tsuchi had a small chapel, about 40 square feet in size, built on one side of the boulder and had a bas relief of Jambe Yang carved on the side of the boulder itself forming one of the four walls for the chapel. This is known as Jhayan Lhakang (Jhayan Chapel). The eight disciples of Je Tsong Khapa used this

very chapel as their first residence as well. Soon one of them died, “probably of overcrowding” said our guide. But soon after this the surviving seven began the construction work for the seven colleges (tachang).

They also began recruiting eleven hundred disciples for each of the seven colleges which were to be formed, one under each Lama. These seven Lamas, known by the title of ‘Khempos’ formed the first administrative council to run the monastery. Although in later years the number of colleges was reduced to four by merging three colleges with one of the remaining four, the council continued to have an effective membership of seven. In time the council came to be considered separate from and superior to the heads of the colleges. The council assumed more and more power in the administration of the monastery and also in the formation of monastic policy. As the monastery grew in influence, the council began to assume power to form state policies as well. The original target of 7,700 monks was far exceeded, and the monastery eventually housed more than 10,000 monks in all.

The council of the Khempos formulated many rules, including the 150 religious laws under which they could expel or imprison any member of the monastery. From the time of the reign of the 5th Dalai Lama, the monastery wielded authority over state matters as well and the council membership was increased from seven to eleven. It was also from that time that they began to use forced labour, Mr. Tsering told us.

After this introduction, we began the tour. The first college we entered was a mammoth structure called “Lo She Ling-Tachang” (Golden thought temple-college). As each one of the four colleges is also attached to a chapel, they are both temple and college at the same time. Its enormous space inside, the walls with religious paintings and books, worn out floors in between the rows of seats used by the monks through centuries, the exquisitely embroidered banners and beautiful thankas, rows of large statues

of deities and Lamas, and the silver chortens with the most precious stones on all sides were all too overwhelming to be taken in at a glance and during a few minutes' whirlwind tour. The main statue in the temple was that of Tsamba (Maitreya), Future Buddha.

The second college was equally spacious. In it could gather, as our guide explained, all ten thousand monks. The interior was furnished and decorated in the same manner as the first one. The central figures were those of Jambeyang (Manjushri) and Tsamba (Maitreya). Inside there were the two Chortens (Chaitya) containing the relics of the third and the fourth Dalai Lamas. On the same level and of similar size and design as those of the Dalai Lamas, was the Chorten of Sange Gyatso, who had ruled over Tibet for sometime, after the death of the fifth Dalai Lama.

The third temple we entered was called Minwong Lhakang. This one was not very big and had no college attached to it. There was the chorten containing the relic of the second Dalai Lama. There were statues of Dalai Lamas in a row. Close beside these was another small chapel with a golden statue of Jhamba Thondup. The lower half of the body was below the surface stretching down to the lower floor.

After this we entered a room which had rows of more than a dozen silver Chaityas. We also saw a room which had one of its walls fitted with carved wooden niches containing small statues of deities and lamas.

Another temple was known as Ghoma Tachang (College). The main figure in this one was Gyawa Mindukpa. This one also had a large hall attached to the Chapel. One other College we saw was known as Ngakpa Tachang. The main deity in it was Jhikchi, who had a huge yak's head painted black.

One of the smaller rooms on the top floor contained eighteen statues of the former Kings and Lamas. On the lower floor there was a small room for the display of precious books written in

gold. There were also figures of Dölma with a few other statues of deities.

By the time we had completed the tour of the monastery, we were all quite comfortably exhausted. Then we were invited to rest for a while and chat over snacks and tea.

There were about three hundred monks left where there had been more than ten thousand in the past. It is understandable that these monks have to work hard to maintain the place, but they seemed quite happy to stay in the monastery and do the job. It is not only the upkeep of the monastery for which they are responsible, but they have also planted apple and peach orchards where they work regularly. There are more than fifteen hundred fruit trees planted on the terraced slopes below the monastery overlooking the wide flat stretch of the Lhasa River valley. The Lamas had built three permanent reservoirs with sluice gates to irrigate the orchard. Three flour mills and a poultry farm, in addition to the harvests of the orchard, subsidized the living costs for the Lamas. But the Lamas also receive adequate government subsidy to augment their income. In fact the Deputy Director Wang Shi-Liang of the Foreign Bureau told us that the central government has already spent eleven hundred thousand yuan for the upkeep of this monastery. "In the old days" we were told, "the monastery owned two hundred landed estates and one hundred and eighty four pastures to support it. "With the land reform the monastery was shorn of all of its income, leaving it a responsibility for the government to maintain and preserve."

The second time I visited the place was in August 1974. The older Lamas, as on the previous occasion, received us when we arrived. The buttered Tibetan tea and the fresh fruits of their own orchard were good refreshments.

The Lamas moved about in the beautifully furnished reception rooms in the most graceful and elegant manner. They were very cordial and warm in their behaviour and conversation. But

one could imagine that they probably feel lost in this big place which must have been crowded and full of activity in the past. "Our problem is" said the Deputy Director, Wang Shi-Liang, during the conversation, "that there are no applicants who would want to enter the monastery even though we have left it open."

The Chinese government regulation allows freedom for individuals to believe or not to believe in religion. So, theoretically at least, people can enter the monastery if they like. But with the practical realities of the situation, the monastery shorn of all of its traditional privilege and prestige has no attraction for anyone. It is meaningless to become a monk or a Lama any more. So it seems that the present group of monks will probably be the last traditional inmates of this beautiful, impressive, vast, and at one time one of the most powerful monasteries on earth.

THE CHANGING FACE OF TIBET

During my stay, I got the impression that the Tibet Autonomous Region has received a tremendous push in development and modernization, and much has been done to raise the standard of living for its people during the past few years. Once the network of highways from Lhasa to Szechwan, to the Chinghai, and to Nyalam, (a county bordering Nepal) were built, it seems to have spurred a number of activities in the region. The entire 1,200,000 square kilometer region including Changthang has been brought under an efficient modern administration. Goods and people move into all parts of Tibet with relative ease and security. The modern paved airport of Lokah in Yalu Tsangpo valley connects Lhasa with other parts of China by regular commercial flights. Lhasa Radio keeps the people informed about weather conditions, important world events, and the encouraging progress made by the efforts of the various people of China, including Tibetans. Educational facilities have expanded very rapidly. The latest official figure, towards the close of the year 1972, was ninety thousand children in two thousand five hundred primary schools for the total population of 1.5 million. Mobile tent primary schools have been organized for the nomads of Central Tibet as they have already done in many areas of Inner Mongolia. Lhasa Normal School had been training three to four hundred primary school teachers a year.

The emphasis in China today is on making every province as self-sufficient as possible in order to lessen the burden of transport. In keeping with this policy, basic industries such as

cement, wool, paper, hats, shoes, matches, glass, coal mining, agriculture tools, motor repair workshops and many small scale workshops have been established in Tibet.

But the main emphasis is on the improvement of agriculture and animal husbandry. The Director of Industry under the Revolutionary Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region once stated that they were pushing harder for increased agricultural production and improvement of livestock, for they believe this will be the main economic resource of Tibet for some time to come. Other industries cannot develop as fast without considerable improvement of transport facilities. The Tibetan authorities feel that there are strong limitations on transport despite the fact that more than 16,000 kilometers of highways have already been built there.

People often talk about possible railway connections from Lhasa to other major cities of the eastern part of China with a great deal of enthusiasm. But the responsible authorities I met and talked with during my visit to Peking did not think that it would come that easily. It is not only the distance from Lhasa to other major cities as well as other technical problems, but also the question of priority which must be considered. I was told at one stage that the railroad, when built, would connect Lhasa with Lanchow. The possibility of Lhasa Chentu had been given up for all practical purposes. But then it is very difficult to assess their projected developments until it is actually achieved. The authorities repeat their typical phrases like "China is a developing country", "we have to learn from each other" and — "please criticise us and give us suggestions as we know we must have made many mistakes" even when they have some very impressive successes to their credit. They are capable of doing things on a scale and speed never known before and make little noise about it until it is actually achieved.

There had been some reports in the past about the richness of mineral resources under the rugged and barren surface of the

Tibetan Plateau. But the latest findings do not seem to be as exciting as the earlier reports. However, the discoveries of oil deposits in the adjacent areas of the northwest must make the development of Tibet Region a relatively easier affair. With or without the mineral resources, the face of Tibet is changing very rapidly.

The Tibetans are no longer the exotics of the world. They are coming up very fast along with other developing societies. Some people may wonder about the state of Tibetan traditional civilization. They often ask whether the traditional Tibetan culture will survive at all. As far as I can see, the Tibetans are changing as much as any traditional, underdeveloped society changes in the process of industrialization and modernization, and at the same time they seem to be retaining those traits and specialities which are viable and do not come directly in the way of development.

Tibetan society and its way of life could not have remained in its original form once it began to modernize. No country in the world today can escape the influence of modern thinking, culture and civilization, which are, in the main, products of the West. Since Tibet could not have remained in isolation forever, the Tibetan people would have rebelled against poverty, backwardness, feudalism and theocratic domination sooner or later. The fourteenth Dalai Lama himself had gone on record more than once for saying that Tibetan feudalism needed change and reform. He also willingly admits in his autobiography that his attitude and realization of the need to reform was an outcome of his humble birth where he had understood the misery of serfdom. By implication then, he suggests that the tyranny of the monasteries and of the nobility would not have always been tolerated by the Tibetans. They needed change. This is what the Tibetans are undergoing presently with a markedly visible influence of Chinese culture and civilization.

The Peking Government has claimed Tibet and treated it as part of Chinese territory for several hundred years, no matter

what type of government came into power in China. The Tibetan government at times accepted this, and at other times, when it lent itself to influences from the south, it adopted an ambivalent attitude and tried to become independent of Peking. But the mainstream of Tibetan lifestyle has always been closer to the Chinese style than to any other. Naturally, therefore, Tibetan culture was gradually being absorbed by the Chinese civilization. The process was slower before than it is now for obvious reasons.

At the same time the Tibetan language and customs are being publicised more extensively than ever before through various media. The Tibetan language is used in radio broadcasts, news papers and in translation of Chairman Mao's work and some important communist literature. Primary school children have text books in both the Tibetan and Han Languages. The private practice of religion is allowed, even though one does not see the Tibetans conducting religious practice with alacrity. It is also true that there are more non-believers among the educated young Tibetans today than ever before. There is a constant effort to educate the people in the class struggle.

The majority of the urban and industrial workers wear Chinese style work clothes rather than the traditional Tibetan clothes. As more and more educated Tibetans are being promoted to higher positions in administration and in the Chinese Communist party, they are more influenced by their Han counterparts, colleagues and supervisors. They speak the Han language, wear Chinese clothes, eat Chinese food and adopt Chinese mannerisms.

Thus there is the process of sinicization of Tibetans. There are Tibetan women, for example, seen working with machines, driving automobiles, wearing work clothes and speaking the Han language. They also sing songs of praise for Chairman Mao both in Han and in Tibetan. As massive resources—money, material, and technical expertise — are pumped into the region by the central government, the influence on all aspects of life is increasing. There are different factors at play, all helping to change the Tibetan society and draw it nearer to the Han way of life.

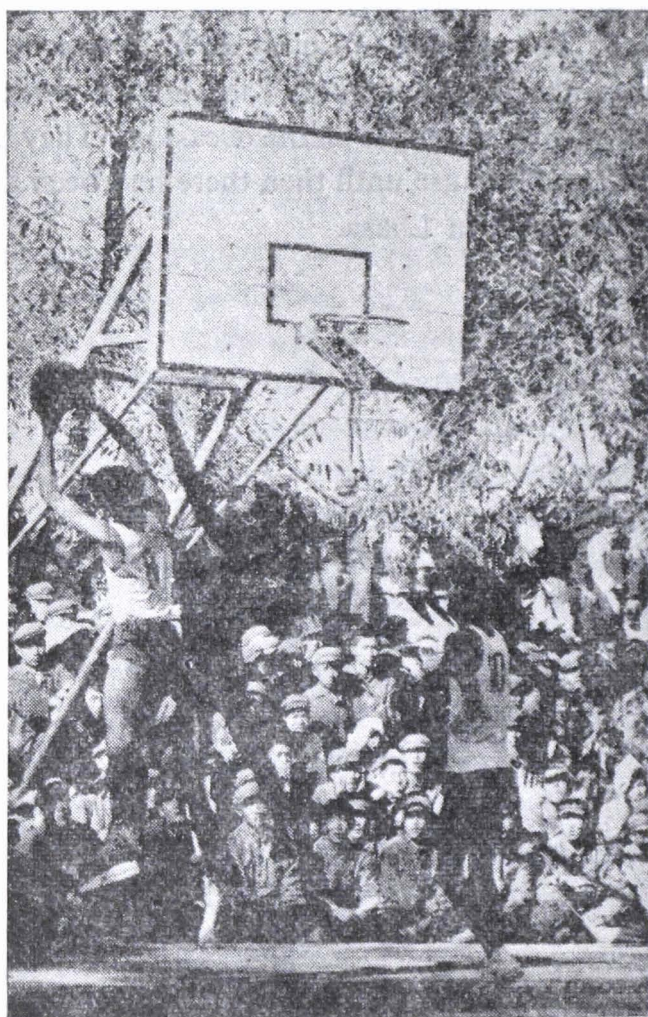
However, it would be naive to assume that Tibetan society will ever lose all its traditional characteristics. No society with as complex way of life as that of the Tibetans will ever lose its characteristics and identity completely. In fact the Chinese Government has a professed policy to maintain and promote all the minority nationalities' language, culture and dress. "They may", the policy states, "in accordance with the political, economic and cultural characteristics of the nationalities in their locality, make regulations on the exercise of autonomy as well as specific regulations". It further states "In performing their function, organs of self government of autonomous areas employ spoken and writing language...commonly employed by the nationality."¹¹

The vast majority of Tibetans, though, are much better off than ever before. One could not, however, assume that there would be no problem of dissension among the Tibetans in Tibet. In any country and under any system in the world there would always be some people who are unhappy, dissatisfied and at odds with the status quo. All known governments in the world up to this day have had police establishments, courts and prisons. And by looking at human nature anywhere it does not look likely that we would ever get a world of that utopia without any of these problems. So in the Tibet Region, as in the rest of China, for that matter, there are individuals or groups of individuals who are not quite happy with their situation. The existence of the internal struggles of the radicals and the moderates within the Communist Party itself is an indication of this. I was told that during the cultural revolution, individuals or groups were allowed to put pamphlets and posters up on the walls if they wanted to criticise individuals, policies or policy makers. I noticed in 1974 some of this criticism of individuals and policies through the posters put up during the movement to "criticize Lin Piao and Confucious and to rectify the style of work". The walls of the main busy streets of Lhasa were always full of posters and cartoons, most

¹¹ "Some basic facts about China", China Reconstructs Supplement, Jan-1974.



The procession in a street



Tibetans playing basket ball

of the time criticizing Lin Piao and Confucious, but occasionally also criticizing the authorities in Tibet. Some of the groups which were divided into establishment supporters and opponents during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had still survived during 1974, and they expressed their differences or grievances through the posters. But no serious difficulty developed as a result inspite of the rumour that it would. The fourth National People's Congress held in January 1975 after a long ten-year period, was very well masterminded by its leaders where the differences within the party seemed to have been largely worked out. The jubilation and the rejoicing of the people in Lhasa indicated the mood of the situation. All the different groups of people in Lhasa came out in procession with torches, beating drums and cymbals while children went almost mad with firecrackers into late evening, when the successful completion of the congress was announced. The next morning people gathered in the local stadium and held an impressive meeting while they explained the successes of the fourth congress. The children of Lhasa were allowed to explode an incredible number of firecrackers for about a week, almost twenty-four hours-day and night on the occasion. They had good reason to be jubilant because until then there had been an under-current of tension even in Lhasa.

THE EXPERIMENTAL FARM

A few miles west of Lhasa city on the highway beside the river is the Agriculture Research Institute and the "July 1st Experimental Farm". This farm, along with its two substations, has been working to improve agricultural techniques, introduce hybrid seeds and popularize fruit and vegetable growing. It has improved the health and breed of livestock in the entire autonomous region, we were told. All our consulate staff and their families were invited to visit this farm one morning in August 1972. The farm authorities guided us through different sections of the Farm. The Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of the Farm, who was a Tibetan, told us that their farm consisted of land reclaimed after very hard work by the People's Liberation Army personnel. These people had built a 120 hectare (1800 mu) farm out of marshy land which was full of boulders and swamps. In fact, Anna Louise Strong,¹² who visited the land in 1959 when the farm was just being established, wrote that the land was. . . . "half flooded, the other half boulders and sand." It took 30,000 man-days of labour just to improve the soil, "digging ditches, dyking against the flood, blasting out rocks and carting in good earth". We were told that they began working with only two hectares of useful land in 1953.

Carrying cultivable earth to rocky land and growing crops on it has become a very common-place practice in China. At the time we saw it, the farm was lush, green, and prosperous. They had grown hundreds of different strains of hybrid wheat from amo-

¹² Anna Louise Strong, *op cit.*

ng which they had successfully developed and popularized eight high-yield, large grained, hardy strains resistant to cold. They had successfully popularized thirty different types of vegetables, including cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes and egg plants. Subsequently we relied largely upon this farm for our own supply of vegetables and fruits. Later on it was reported that the total production of vegetables of this farm in 1973 was 800 tons. They had even grown water melon in the green houses.

After having tried sixty different varieties of apple, thirty had proven successful, The farm was selling ten thousand seedlings to the people every year. Six different types of peaches had been developed, but they had not had much success with pears. They had grown some round leaf tobacco which was good for snuff, but was not suitable either for chewing or for cigarettes. Some sugar beets were grown which were twenty-four percent sugar. They had fat pigs, and healthy milch cows, which gave up to eight pounds of milk per day and raised chickens, suitable for the climate, which gave about 160 eggs in a year for four years running. On the farm there were five hundred hybrid sheep, the results of the cross between the rams of the northeren highland and the local ewes, that yielded long-staple, soft wool.

The fat pigs seem to be successful in Lokah area, which alone was the pig raising part of old traditional Tibet. There are pigs everywhere nowadays, but Lokah, probably because of its lower altitude and warmer humid climate, must have been more suitable. Dozens of large green-houses were built which maintained a temperature of 26 to 28 degrees centigrade during the day and came down to a minimum of 6 degrees centigrade at night. According to an official report published later, there were 350 solar heated hot houses enclosing 400 square meters of land each by July 1974.

We were told that the farm was presently being worked by eighty technicians and four hundred labourers. There was a primary school and a nursery for the children of the farm employee.

The two substations under this farm were in Shigatse and in Tungfeng (in Linchih). The last mentioned have specialised in tea growing whereas the former two have specialised in wheat.

Tibet had traditionally grown highland barley, wheat, some maize and peas in the Yalutsangpo. Nakiang, Lantsang and Chinsasha river valleys. But now the people grow highland barley and potatoes at 1,600 meters above sea level, maize at 1,000 to 1,600 meters, and rice below one thousand meters. Now-a-days in Darayab and Mugtho in South Tibet paddy fields predominate and groves of oranges, tangerines, and bananas dot the slopes. Wheat is grown in Shigatse and Tzethang while the Lokah area is known as "Tibet's granary."

We learned from the Hsinhua report of December 8, 1972, that winter wheat was sown for the first time on a large acreage in the Lokah area in the year 1972.

Located in the northern foothills of the Himalayas and along the middle and lower reaches of the Yalu Tsangpo river, the Lokah area has a mild climate. It is one of Tibet's major farming regions. With the exception of highland barley, which gives a meagre yield, and spring wheat, no other crops were grown here formerly.

The farm was also making a scientific study of different types of fertilizer such as oilcake, cowdung, and compost. Night soil also constitutes one of the primary sources of fertilizer throughout Tibet.

Tibet's total area under cultivation in former days was estimated to be about 500,000¹³ acres but with constant effort it had been expanded to 665,000 acres by the end of 1972. The total farm production, with improved methods of farming and with the additional reclamation of land, was double that of the year 1959, whereas it has increased only by twenty five percent, from 1,200,000 tons of the year 1960 to 1,500,000 tons, in 1972.

¹³ *Great Changes in Tibet*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking. 19.

The rate of production per hectare of land was raised from 0.75 tons of the former days to three tons in 1972. It is claimed that cultivated fields have been opened up on snow covered mountains 4,000 meters above sea level on the northern Tibetan Plateau, the area which had been inhabited by nomadic herdsmen until 1949. The water conservation works now irrigate over eighty percent of the total farmland. Even the extremely dry areas in western Tibet now have cultivated farms growing highland barley with the help of irrigation ditches. By spreading ashes of cowdung over the frozen ice, they cause it to thaw in the spring. They now grow barley, wheat and peas in parts of Purang county where no grain was grown before. In some places in the Ari plateau in western Tibet people have succeeded in growing highland barley at an altitude of 3,500 meters above sea level, which had not been common in Tibet (although in parts of northern Nepal the Himalayan people have always grown barley and potatoes in the irrigated fields at similar altitudes),

The PLA people have had a significant role in all of Tibet's development in agriculture. According to the Hsinhua News Bulletin of December 16, 1972, the production and construction unit of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in Tibet delivered 5,000 tons of grain to the state in 1972. The output of apples, pears and peaches was 70 percent over that of 1971. Output of tea, tobacco, peanuts and hemp also went up. Even the Sinkiang Honey Dew melon was planted for the first time. Army men in one land reclamation center harvested 3.75 tons of rice per hectare the same year despite drought. They cut a 7 kilometer canal across a hanging cliff to lead in water from distant snow-capped mountain to create large tracts of paddy fields.

Learning from the local Tibetan people and making scientific experiments, the PLA men on a farm 3,850 meters above sea level succeeded in reaping a good wheat harvest for the first time in that area. After years of effort, they nurtured a cold and drought-resistant winter wheat strain suitable for the high plateau, which has a short frost free period and a sharp drop in temperature at night.

Improved farm tools have been introduced throughout the Tibet Region where wooden and even stone ploughs were commonly used until 1959. Many areas now have tractors and farm tool repair workshops.

The development in the field of animal husbandry has been equally remarkable. The nomadic drokpas, who kept a majority of Tibet's livestock, are now gradually becoming more sedantary in their habits and have been trained to provide better care of their livestock. According to an official report, seventy out of seventy-one counties of Tibet have established branch veterinary stations in addition to the main veterinary stations of Lhasa and the other five administrative areas of Ari, Shigatse, Gianze, Chamdo and Nangtso. Centers for the prevention and cure of livestock diseases were set up in 145 districts under the counties. All the people's communes have bare foot veterinaries. There were three thousand veterinary workers in the entire region, according to recent reports. More than sixty per cent of these workers were of the Tibetan Veterinary Science Institute. They turned out 70 per cent of the total vaccine used by the entire region in 1972. The research workers of veterinary science often went to the grazing grounds to conduct experiments. They found many methods for curing common and recurrent animal diseases.

These services and measures to improve the pasture area have helped raise the number of livestock. The estimated figure of yaks cattle, sheep, horses, and goats was five and a half to seven million in 1960. The number in 1972, including pigs this time, was estimated to be double the 1960 number. The grazing area is estimated to be one million square kilometers, which is eighty per cent of the total area of Tibet. Under these circumstances their professed primary emphasis on improvement of agriculture and livestock is not at all unrealistic.

On the farm we were shown the wheat field and were told that 1,000 grains weighed 50 grams as against the 40 grams of the same number of grains of the traditional spring wheat. The apple orchard we saw yielded 3 million pounds of fruit in 1973.

During our visit to this orchard in August 1974 we also saw a bright red signboard beside the apple tree. This was brought by the late Vice Premier Chi'en-Yi in 1956 when he was in Tibet as the leader of the delegation at the time of the inauguration of Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet. This tree was the mother of all apple orchards throughout the Region. In August 1974, the 400 square meter hot houses produced six thousand *catties* (pounds) of vegetables and chillies through the year.

At the end of our tour, we returned to the same hall in the farm where we had sat before. The children of the farm primary school staged a cultural show of song and dances. We watched them while enjoying the fresh apples and big red tomatoes. We not only ate them there but received a car load of these fruits as the "gift from the farm" to take home.

The farm people lined up on either side of the driveways of the farm administrative area beating the big Chinese drums and cymbals when we left, as they had done at the time of our arrival.

THE INDUSTRIES IN AND AROUND LHASA

Another afternoon we were invited to see the Agricultural Tools Factory that had been built on the southern section of the old part of the town, on the old Linkhor Road. This road has been widened, improved and paved. The evolution and progress of this factory was very interesting and impressive as we learnt its history from the people who had worked there from the very beginning. After the usual request for criticism and suggestions, the members of the factory revolutionary committee gave us the background and the process of development it went through.

It employed more than a hundred Tibetan skilled workers among whom there were quite a few women. The factory started in 1959 with three carpenter-cum-blacksmiths and a few hand tools. They could produce only horse carts with wooden wheels, a few sickles and plough shares. In 1960 more people joined the group to form a cooperative workshop under the Lhasa Municipal Board. Then they introduced a few machine tools. By 1970 they had procured a few electric machines.

The foreman at the electric machine shop was a very optimistic and self-confident person. He said that Chairman Mao had called for mechanisation of agriculture before everything else. Inspired by his teaching, he and his colleagues worked constantly to move from the stage of hand tools to hand machines for increased production of improved agricultural tools. They had already passed even that stage and were presently using elec-

tric machines in their different sections. He hoped that in a few more year's time the factory technicians would be able to use fully automated machines. In about three years' time, he thought, they would be able to produce tractors for Tibet. This was a Tibetan saying these things with so much apparent enthusiasm and optimism. And indeed by the spring of 1974, when we revisited the factory they had added a number of automatic machines to the original few.

Those Tibetans who were ignorant of modern machines until very recently were now working confidently and skillfully on the electric machines. There were a few Tibetans who had been trained in Peking and a few more were reported to be studying for their degrees in engineering at Peking University.

The entire Tibet Region had only a small number of smiths making iron and copper articles in the past. Since 1959 the country has built dozens of modern industries, ranging from metallurgy, machine building, and coal mining to woolen textiles. There are reported to be more than 40,000 industrial workers among the Tibetans today.

It was a remarkable sight to watch Tibetan men and women handling the machines so adroitly.

The factory produced one hundred and fifty winnowing machines, fifty threshing machines, and fifty cattlefeed producers every month in addition to other hand tools. "The machine section", said the deputy chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of the factory, who was also a Tibetan, "had thirty six Han nationality mechanics working until a few years ago. But they have all been replaced by the Tibetans now." only the governing body of five had two Hans.

The workers in the factory were paid thirty six yuan per month until 1965. The factory with its increased production and income was presently paying sixty-five yuans or approximately

thirty-three American dollars per month. The ration supplies per individual costs about fifteen percent of that amount.

The factory was a very good example of what a developing society could and should effectively do to raise the standard of technical skill and organizational ability of the people within a short span of time.

Another impressive development throughout the Tibet Region has been that of hydro-electricity. Every little town and many villages have been provided with electricity. Small hydro-projects were seen in all places we visited and on our road to Lhasa.

Within two weeks of our arrival in Lhasa another hospitable and interesting morning began with our drive to the Lhasa Hydroproject site. This was the plant that provided electricity for the city of Lhasa. It is situated about sixteen kilometers to the east of the Lhasa river.

The plant was impressive, not necessarily in its appearance but in the spirit and dedication of the workers there. The tour program began with an introduction to the history of the project and a request for criticism and suggestions. Our hosts said they were underdeveloped and had to learn a great deal from others.

The plant generated 6,500 kilowatts of electricity with its six vertical shaft type turbines during normal times and went down to 3,500 k. w. during winter because of the shortage of water. The drop of water was only about ten meters. The carriage canal was simply built. From its lower end there continued a considerably raised, thick dyke of earth and rocks all the way to the project site. Siltation seemed to be a problem, however, for which they had a dredging boat that was constantly at work. The dredger had a capacity to flush eighty-five cubic meters of sand every hour. The plant, we were told, was built

in two years during 1958–60. They were also busy building two more microplants downstream with capacities to produce a total of 200 kilowatts of electricity. Before this, they told, us, there was only one plant of 600 k. w. capacity in the whole of Tibet. This one was built by the British in the old days. They had now repaired and maintained this old plant in addition to building many new ones. Forty-four per cent of the total employees of the plant were Tibetans and the remaining were of Han nationality.

During our conversation, the engineers told us that the working efficiency of the people had increased by fifty percent after the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. They also explained to us that they had not only supported the Cultural Revolution led by Chairman Mao, and had not only opposed the line of Liu Sao Chih, but had also “supported the just struggle of the people in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Pakistan.” The reason they had supported them was because in all of these countries there had been “foreign intervention”, and the Chinese people will always oppose “foreign intervention of any form anywhere”. They expressed their firm conviction that “a foreign aggression, no matter how powerful, can never succeed even against unarmed and militarily weak people. Because the people with legitimate struggles, even without military strength, have always won their cause against the burglar-like aggression of powerful military strength, as the aggressors are morally weak.”

Political discussions aside, the morale of the working people was very high in the plant. There were many Tibetan women in charge of different sections. In the following years we saw several new micro-hydro-electricity plants being built, both around Lhasa and along the highway leading to our border.

On other occasions we visited a carpet factory, and a hat and shoe factory in Lhasa. The carpets are exclusively made for export from Canton. They do not sell them locally, but we had special permission from the Lhasa Foreign Trade Bureau to buy a few.

The history of the development of the hat and shoe factory was also interesting. It was a handicraft cooperative workshop of five families in 1959. Gradually it was expanded to include 50 families by 1965, but it remained a low production factory until 1970. When it was turned into a state factory they received a number of machines and they could employ 190 workers of whom 95 percent were Tibetans and 5 percent Han. The monthly wages ranged from 48 yuan to 70 yuan according to skill. Most of the workers were trained in other parts of China.

Their main production were shoes, hats and tanned leather. The annual production was 40,000 hats, 160,000 pairs of shoes, 150,000 fur hats for winter, and 120,000 pieces of tanned leather. They also produced some bags and yokes for cart-horses.

The annual income from sales was 600,000 yuan with a net profit of 60,000 to 70,000 yuan at the time we visited in August 1974.

This factory is located right in Lhasa on one of the main streets on the eastern side of the town.

ALONG THE TIBET-SZECHUAN HIGHWAY

It was in August 1974 that we were invited to make a tour of the industrial area of Linchih (Kongpor). The area is famous for its forests, forest products, and the traditional dried cheese of Tibet. In recent years it has become known more for its modern industries, fruit orchards, and tea plantations.

Exactly at seven o'clock in the morning we departed from Lhasa in a convoy of three cars filled with six of us Nepalis and the same number of Chinese officials from the Bureau of Foreign Affairs, including its Deputy Director, Wang Shi-liang.

The first few hours' drive was upstream along the left bank of the Lhasa River, almost due east. The cool morning breeze was refreshing and the sunrise over the barren, grey, rocky mountains and over the wide flat river bed under the crystal clear sky was very pleasing. After about an hour and forty-five minutes, we stopped in a small place called Kesang, situated in a very pleasant and narrow valley bounded by green, soft, rolling hills and watered by a swift flowing, emerald green river. We had our breakfast here.

We then left Kesang and began to climb up a slightly steeper slope. Soon we left the bank of the Lhasa river, following a small tributary. We were delayed in a place at a river crossing where they were building a new bridge. Driving across this swift flowing mountain river was not easy. So it took us a long time to wriggle our way among big boulders. Gradually this river also

became smaller and finally dried up as we climbed. Finally we went over a pass called Mu La. From this pass onward, the highway was downhill all the way to Linchih. We followed the course of the Niyang River downstream which flowed faster and became bigger than the Lhasa River by the time we reached our destination.

We stopped for lunch at the settlement of Kongpor where we crossed a new reinforced concrete bridge and went over to the left bank of the river. Standing beside the new concrete bridge was an old wooden bridge which was falling into pieces. We were told that the old bridge was called Ngape bridge in the old days as this area was the family estate of the Ngapes, the ancestors of Ngape Ngawang Jigme, the Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress. This place was about three hundred and fifty kilometers from Lhasa. After our lunch, we were ready for the last part of our journey for the day. This area was lower than the Lhasa valley and received much more rain than the former. The valley was very green. The highway here was sheltered by pine and other evergreen trees on either side. At seven in the evening we arrived at the county headquarters of Linchih, four hundred and twenty kilometers from Lhasa on the two thousand four hundred kilometer long Lhasa-Chengtou highway.

This highway was built more or less along the same valley which was traditionally used for travel on foot in the old days. The only difference, we were told, was that in the old days it took about a month to reach this place from Lhasa. We were also told by the Chairman, Mr. Kao of the Revolutionary Committee for the county, that the famous Tibetan King Srong Tsen-Gampo had travelled from Lhasa along this valley up to the confluence of the next river to fetch his bride, the Tang Princess Wen Cheng during the seventh century.

The county headquarters was in a neat looking town with three thousand inhabitants. It was developed in an enclave, off the Niyang River Valley, during the past ten years. The Chairman,

Mr. Kao, said that he had been transferred here ten years before from Lhasa, where he had worked in the Bureau of Finance.

At Linchih we were also joined by our friends Mr. Li, and the driver, Wang, from the Lhasa Foreign Bureau, who had come here in advance to make arrangements for our visit and accommodations.

We did not have any program for the evening and were left to rest and relax. The climate at this altitude of 2,700 meters above sea level (about one thousand meters lower than Lhasa), was more pleasant. In fact it reminded me of many of the lower Himalayan valleys of the northern districts of Nepal. The place looked neat, tidy, and prosperous as compared with a few other hamlets in the valley. These were old, with either the traditional Tibetan style flat-roofed houses or with houses with wooden shingle roofs similar to those found in northern Nepal at similar altitudes.

While we sat down and chatted with Chairman Kao and the Vice Chairman, we were offered a taste of the locally grown tea which was introduced in the area only five years before. They told us that the tea was meant to be processed into Tibetan style brick tea, to be drunk with butter and salt. The Vice Chairman was a Tibetan. He had his training at the Institute of National Minorities in Peking and spoke the Han language quite well.

Next morning, after breakfast, we drove to the Woolen Mill which was located in the Niyang River valley along the highway about 20 kilometers away from the Linchih County Headquarters. It was the first Woolen mill of the Tibet Region, which is among the largest wool producing areas of the world. This mill, we were told, was a gift of Shanghai from where it was brought and installed here in 1966. The factory was modern and largely automatic. All of its parts were made in China. A few gadgets had been added locally to improve the factory's efficiency after the machinery had been installed and tried by the workers of the factory

themselves. One of the gadgets we saw which the workers of the factory had innovated was a dust chimney to improve the air of the room for the benefit of the health of the workers where the dirt was sifted from the impure wool. Another innovation was a long suction pipe which transferred the carded and mixed wool from one section of the factory to another where it was turned into fluff ready to be spun into thread and rolled into spindles.

Before we started the tour, the engineer of the factory, who had come here along with the machines from Shanghai in the very beginning and therefore knew its history and development, gave us a run down of the entire situation. This factory was called the Eight-One Woolen Mill or the August First Woolen Mill, indeed the whole industrial area was called the "August 1st Town" in honour of the founding day of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. It was the People's Army personnel who had built not only the Tibet-Szechuan Highway but even the new industries and new settlements along the river bank where almost no settlements had existed before. This woolen mill was fairly large and was very well maintained. Most of the workers were Tibetans who had come from different part of the Autonomous Region. But most of the trainers, engineers and experts were Han. The factory engineer told us that they had already trained a large number of Tibetans in skilled jobs and these Tibetans were gradually taking over jobs from Han experts. At the time of its installation, the factory employed only 400 people and with its expansion was now employing more than a thousand people. One third of them were Tibetans, one third were the experts from Shanghai, and the remaining workers were Hans from different parts of China.

At first we went into the section where the bundles of raw wool were loosened by hand, then through the spinning and several other sections, and finally into the room where a large variety of woven material was checked for faults, rolled into bundles of measured lengths, and weight ready to be marketed. All their products were distributed through the Commerce Department of the Region. There was a separate section for making knitting wool of various types and colours.

The people at the factory declared that the total production of this factory had increased by one hundred and forty-seven per cent since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The movement to criticize Confucius and Lin Piao, as we learnt from them, had also increased the political consciousness and the efficiency of the factory to a great extent.

The factory employed some manual workers and there were a few manually operated machines, but most of the machines were automatic.

At the end of our tour, the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and other responsible authorities lauded the growing friendship between Nepal and China. They said that both Nepal and China were developing countries. Therefore they should help each other and “move hand in hand”.

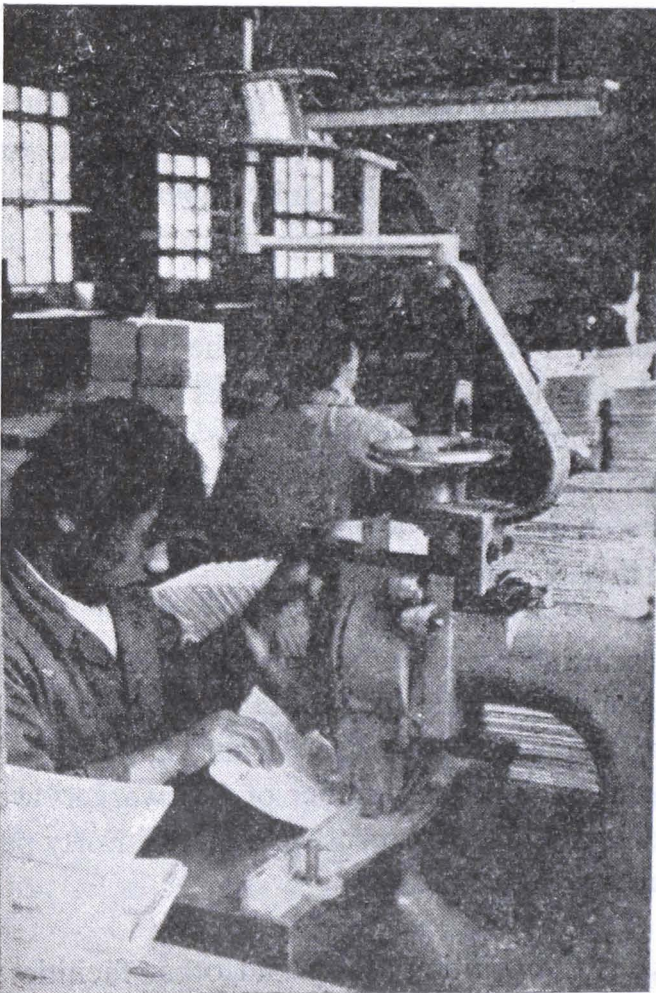
The same afternoon we were invited to visit fruit orchards which were spread over three hundred *mu* or twenty hectares of terraced land on the southern slope of a mountain, immediately above and adjacent to the main settlement of the county headquarters. The farm was full of trees laden with fruits. It also commanded a beautiful view of the valley of the Niyang river which flowed at the far end of it.

The Chief Horticulturist, Mr. Mu, told us that there were 7,000 trees in total, of which about eighty per cent were apple and the remainder were largely peach trees. There were a few pear trees. They calculated that about 32,000 kilograms of fruits would be harvested that year, although production had amounted to only 27,000 kilograms the previous year.

The history of fruit-growing in the area in any scale had begun in 1964, when they had brought the first plants and had prepared this farm. But it began to pick up, they said, only from 1966. The fertiliser they used was night soil and green legumes grown around the trunk of the fruit trees.



The view from the Linchi fruit orchard



A Tibetan girl at work at the printing shop

The farm employed ninety people permanently and a few more occasionally on a wage basis. They also ran training courses in fruit cultivation for the people in the area.

The main market for their produce was Lhasa where eighty percent of the total harvest was sold. The government had spent 500,000 yuan to establish the farm in the beginning. Now they expected about yuan 150,000 from this year's sales alone. They would have to submit one third of their income to the state and the remaining two thirds would be kept by the farm itself for their expenses, including the wages of the workers. The average earning of the farm workers was yuan 50 per month.

The Chairman of the farm committee explained that as friends from a neighbouring country, they would like us to feel at home while we were in their area. So the workers, after finishing their regular work in the farm went to the forest to cut bamboo and worked through the night to prepare baskets (which were heaped full with fresh fruits in front of us). These, we were told, were their gifts prepared with warm hearts and friendly feelings of hospitality. It was quite moving the way we were treated.

On the 18th of August we were scheduled to visit a printing shop which was located about 40 miles away from our camp. We departed soon after breakfast in the morning. When we arrived at the factory, we were greeted by the Han Manager and a female Tibetan assistant. Both of them were polite, soft spoken and warm in their hospitality.

The printing press was installed in 1970 and now the print shop was producing all the textbooks for school courses throughout the Tibet Region both in the Han and Tibetan languages. Sixty percent of the total number of 250 workers were Tibetan, and the remaining forty percent were Hans. Forty percent of the total number were women.

Besides the printing shop and other facilities, there were

the clean and well-kept residences for the workers. Most of the workers were youthful and unmarried so they lived in single apartments. But since they expected that the youngsters would begin to get married, they were building some new residences that would be suitable for married couples.

The manager told us that the workers grew vegetables, tended fruit trees and reared pigs and chickens during their off-hours. Thus they have not only enough of these supplies for their own needs, but they are also able to give their surplus to the people living in the surrounding areas.

After a short introduction, we were invited to take a tour of the place. The premises were clean and the people seemed very cheerful and friendly.

The cleanliness and tidiness in all the rooms where different sections of the press were installed was absolutely remarkable. The machines for printing, folding, cutting, sewing, and binding were all automatic, and made in China. They used both monotype and offset methods. They also had a small workshop where they made their own spare parts and repaired their own machines. Chinese leaders have preached the virtue of self reliance and laid emphasis on it in their directives. In rural areas and in mini-industries at the common level, self reliance was practiced seriously. This was apparent in this printing shop. Apart from improvisations of some machines and the making of spare parts in their own workshops, the factory hands and their families raised pigs and chickens and grew vegetables, thus making an appreciable contribution to the food supply of the factory.

From the site of the press, we drove another ten kilometers or so to a place where we were going to have our lunch and then visit the paper and match factories. It was in the middle of the forest area. This area also had a lumber center and a transport organization under the same management.

We were received by a tall, heavily built man called Wang.

Our host, Mr. Wang from Shantung, told us all about the factories as we walked. He said that he had been working there for eleven years.

The factories were established in 1967. Mr. Wang reported that the majority of the workers in his factories were Tibetans. We first went to see the paper factory. It seemed to produce a large quantity of paper. We were shown through the entire process, from the crushing of the big logs of cedar wood to the production of paper at the other end of the factory.

Next, we visited the match factory, which had some automatic machines but was largely run by a number of manually operated machines. It was very impressive to see some of the workers who were operating these manual machines at break-neck speed. We wondered how they managed to continue to work at that speed for hours.

They were also producing a special type of long burning, wind- and water-proof matches for the herdsmen of Changthang, in the northern part of Tibet, where people have to make fire in very windy conditions.

Mr. Wang told us that “they had not been able to do their job as well as expected of them”, so would we please comment and criticise. We smiled and complimented them. He smiled in return and seemed happy.

At the end our host — the hefty, strong built, Shantung Chinese Mr. Wang — shook hands warmly and expressed goodwill for the growing friendship between our two countries in a very emphatic manner.

Before we left our camp the following morning, I thanked the Chairman and the Vice Chairman for the well organized tour program, the good food, and the hospitality during the three days. He was quick to apologize and say that they had not been able to entertain us properly for lack of facilities and also that they had not been able to meet the state targets in their

production, as instructed by Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. He said that the conditions in the eastern part of China were much better, but the Tibet Autonomous Region was still far behind in so many things, and so conditions were not yet as good as they would like them to be.

PEOPLE'S COMMUNE

In August of 1973, we visited a people's commune in the suburbs of Lhasa. They had so far organized about two thousand people's communes in Tibet. These enjoyed varying degrees of success. Some were doing very well, but there were others which were rather slow in catching up with the spirit. The Liehmai People's Commune had already become the first to learn from Tachai¹⁴ in agriculture and was thereby becoming the pace-setter for Tibet. This commune is situated in Southern Tibet on the east of the Himlayas. But the one we were invited to visit was called Tyonkha and was situated in the western suburbs of Lhasa. It was one of the 34 peoples communes of Tuilung-teching county under the City Municipal Revolutionary Committee of Lhasa.

The visit to this commune was also organized by the Foreign Bureau. The Director, Mr. Chen, and other officials from the Bureau escorted us to this place. At about 10:30 in the morning we were led into the middle of an apple orchard, where the co-

¹⁴ Tachai people's commune of Shansi province was a poor village with a meagre average food grain production of 0.75 tons per hectare during pre-liberation days. But the hard work of Tachai production brigade under the leadership of Chen Jung-Kwei as Party Branch Secretary and presently one of the Vice Premiers of the state council made a great improvement in agriculture and as a result in the living conditions of its people. In 1964 Chairman Mao issued a call; "In agriculture learn from Tachai" as a national campaign. Tachai's average food grain production reached 7.5 ton per hectare in 1973.

mmune members had erected a temporary pavilion for the reception. We were given an introduction about the commune in the Tibetan language by the Secretary of the Commune Revolutionary Committee. This was translated into Chinese and then into English by Mr. Feng Chi-You.

There were six production teams with 150 workers in each. The condition of this commune since its organization in 1966 had greatly improved. The number of family units had increased to 252 from the original 80. The total population was 1074. The number of cattle had increased from 220 to 500. Mules and horses had increased from 31 to 132. There were one thousand chickens, 200 ducks, 500 pigs, 32 horsedrawn carts and 32 pushcarts. They had planted an apple orchard for the first time in 1967. With more than 400 apple trees, the members of the commune began eating their own fruits by 1970. But the acreage of apple orchard was increasing every year. They had already built fourteen flour mills and one oil-pressing mill and were running nine threshing machines. They had also used machines for winnowing purposes. They had planted a total number of fifty thousand trees including those on either side of the highway which runs through the commune.

After they had given us this statistical information, we drove to the western part of the commune land where they were actually harvesting wheat. The wheat crop looked very good. The average production of wheat in the land was fourteen to twenty *khe* in one *khe* of land — that is, fourteen to twenty times the amount of seed they had used, or about fifteen to twenty quintals per hectare of land. The borders between each plot of land were planted with broad beans a laguminous plant. The chinko barley crop was even better. Per hectare production was calculated to be more than 20 quintals. The Tyonkha commune not only produced enough grain for its requirements but was able to sell its surplus to the government. We also saw efforts being made to clear more land of rubble and reclaim it for cultivation. In the vegetable plot there were cauli-flower, cabbages, raddishes, tomatoes, spinach and many other green vegetables growing well.

After this we were driven to the other section of the land where they were raising pigs, chickens and ducks. We also saw seven of the flour mills all built in one row. The water of the small stream flowing into the Lhasa river was channelled by mud banks into these mills in a simple but ingenious manner. From here we drove to another place where they had used water to run a threshing machine, and a winnowing machine. They were working to install a micro-hydro electricity generator along side through the same system. All these gadgets they were using were made in Lhasa.

After the tour back to the pavilion, we were entertained with buttered, salt tea which gave none of the usual rancid butter smell. Fresh milk and apples were also served.

Before we left the commune we visited two families of former slaves who had worked on the same estate from the time when it belonged to a feudal lord. The big building in the complex which had been the residences of the former agent was converted into an office of the commune. The residence of these former slaves were clean and tidy. An old lady inmate kept talking cheerfully about the condition of her life and the opportunity her three sons were having one in the PLA, the second in a Lhasa factory and the third in the commune farm. The other one was a younger woman, also a former slave, who was equally excited and pleased about the changed condition in her life.

At the end the officials from the Foreign Bureau pointed out that conditions in Tibet were still far behind some of the more developed eastern provinces of China.

Whether the Autonomous Region can ever compete with the eastern provinces of China is an open question. But Tibet was certainly developing very rapidly. During my second visit to this commune in April 1974 I observed a newly added apple orchard, although the other things were the same.

In August 1974 we were invited to visit another commune

called Changhui (antiimperialism) in the eastern suburb of the town. Chiri Wangdi, the Chairman of the Commune Revolutionary Committee, welcomed us and gave a short introduction. He began by saying that they had been able to raise the political consciousness of the people in the process of the movement to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius and rectify their style of work.

Before the establishment of the commune in 1966 there was a total number of one hundred households with a population of 483, which had increased to 194 households and total population of 864 people at the time we visited the commune in 1974. The cultivated area of land increased from 2,600 *khe* to 2,700 *khe* (1 *khe* is approx. .18 hectare). Production per *khe* has been increased 2.5 times that of precommune days and has reached the average of 14.7 *khe* (*khe* is 14 kg. in weight) per 1 *khe* of land with the highest yield of 24 *khe* in some lands. With the use of sowing machines they had also been able to minimize the requirement of seed from 1 *khe* to .76 *khe* per 1 *khe* of land. They sowed more winter wheat as it had 40 to 100 percent more yield than other cereal grains. They had specialized in grain production following the direction of Chairman Mao to "learn from Tachai in agriculture" and also to learn from the spirit of "The Foolish Old Man who removed the mountain".

The commune presently owned 608 cattle, 1400 sheep and goats, 487 pigs, 39 oxen, 3 tractors, and a workshop for producing small agricultural tools. They had a primary school with four grades in it where 164 students were registered. All the teachers and the political cadres of the commune were Tibetans.

They had one barefoot doctor and eight medical orderlies.

Individual commune members owned bicycles, transistor radios and wrist watches which, Chairman Chiri Wangdi said, they could not even dream of before liberation.

The entire area had belonged to landlords and all the local people were serfs to the lords in the old days. In those days, we were told, there were records of 16 persons being beaten to death, 56 persons being maimed, and 52 people starved to death.

There were more than two hundred adults who could now read and write in the area where everybody was illiterate before.

The supply store of the commune sold clothes, soap, tooth paste, tooth brushes, batteries, shoes, pots, pans, candles, some tinned foods, table clocks and agricultural hand tools. There were two sales assistants who received a monthly salary of 48 yuan each.

We visited the houses of two families. The first one belonged to Dhokar, who had four members in the family. An ex-serf of the landlord, he had been beaten very severely many times in the old days. He had a scar in his left elbow and some missing teeth reminding him of the treatment he received at the hands of the landlord's agent. Now he looked very cheerful and happy, with enough grain, dried meat, clothing, a tidy bed and other things spread around in the three-room apartment which had been a residence of the landlord's agent in the past. Over fifty years of age now, he said with a broad smile on his face that he was happy and sang praises of Chairman Mao.

The second household belonged to a woman called Yangjun. She was 45 years old and had six members in her family. Her husband was a cart-driver, who received ten "workpoints" a day for his driving which is worth slightly over 2 yuan per day. Yangjun had a transistor radio and a big potful of fermented wheat in the process of being brewed into beer in addition to several bagful of grain reserves.

One of the four brigades of the commune specialized in pig raising. We went to see the pigsties at the end of our visit. They had one pigsty for each one of the families of the brigade and a large one for the collective. One hundred and eighty pigs belonged to the 150 individuals of the brigade. In the previous year each individual family had earned 300 yuan from the sale of pigs and pig dung.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The chief ways of recreation today are cultural programs — the cinema, sports, and picnics. None of these, however, are innovations by themselves although variations in the contents and style are new in some of them.

The cultural programs are secular and modern in their settings and presentation. They are sometimes attempts to reproduce Peking opera, but largely they consist of revolutionary songs and dances. The revolutionary songs also include praise and eulogies of Chairman Mao.

On certain occasions we were invited to one of these cultural programs staged in the People's Cultural Palace. This stands in a large open space in front of the south side of the Potala Palace across the main road.

Mr. Chiao, the chief of the Foreign Bureau, was our host the first time we were invited into this hall. During conversations he remarked, "It accomodates only twelve hundred people" .This he meant in refernce to some of the larger halls of the east especially that of the Great Hall in Peking. On another occasion, I was the guest of Mr. Jen Jung, the Acting Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee for Tibet Autonomous Region.

It was a song, dance and musical program. The majority of the artists were Tibetans and a few were Hans. They were all amateur artists who had been working professionally in different

fields at other times. All the dances showed life in Tibet and the struggles of the Tibetans to develop their land. The various items consisted of the apple plantation, the hard work to protect it from storms, snows, etc.; the tea plantation, the initial stage of learning the techniques; the introduction of improved seed from Tachai, the national pace setter in agriculture and improved methods of cultivation; coal mining, the hazards therein and their successes over them; and the close cooperation between the People's Liberation Army and the lay people. Similarly the songs described various activities and improvements, including the new and bright look of Lhasa, and so on. The Tibetans, with their natural love of song and dance, did marvellously well. The very sophisticated orchestra, stage, screen background, excellent sound system and lighting arrangements added to their natural talents considerably. The most popular items of the day that aroused the highest sensation in the hall were the Tibetan songs and dances by well known celebrities, the most prominent of whom were Miss Chaiden Droma, Chang Liu-chu and Mi Jo-ju. Mr. Chang, who had visited Nepal with Miss Droma as a member of a cultural troupe, sang a Nepali song.

These types of song and dance programs are not just for the sake of entertainment alone. They are the "weapon in educating the people and striking blows at the enemy" says a report. It further states that drawing on the rich legacy of Tibetan music and folk literature the skits, songs and dances composed by these young amateurs are being staged to serve the revolutionary struggles of their own people. They have quickly grasped the significance of making literature and art a weapon in educating the people and striking blows at the enemy.

The picnic is an old traditional custom of entertainment and recreation for the Lhasans. Every weekend the shaded groves and the green along the bank of Lhasa river is full of people entertaining themselves in groups of individuals or families. More people go out on a Sunday during the month of August than at other times. At this time many people spend three or four days with their blankets, screens and improvised temporary tents.

Many Lhasa families lock up their houses and move the whole establishment on such occasions. Some, we found, spend up to a fortnight in a holiday mood in these groves, which the Tibetans call "Linkha". Linkha means both the park and the picnic. So the month of August was really in a "Linkha" mood for the Lhasans. We had to postpone a general meeting of the Lhasa Nepalis for three weeks because the majority of the Tibet born Nepalis of mixed origin were in no less a "Linkha mood" than the Tibetans themselves.

The sports events in the stadium attract mostly young people although there are some old people as well. Sports are popular during autumn and the later part of spring. The frozen lake near the Potala palace becomes a busy skating ground during winter months. A few Hans but mostly Tibetan youths enjoy this sport greatly. But the cinema, as in many other places of the world, is the most popular, all-the-year-round source of entertainment for almost all the young people and for some elderly people.

The feature films shown in Lhasa are usually sober, educative and revolutionary in theme, but never lavish or sexually provocative. No films with any amorous scenes are ever shown, yet cinema houses in Lhasa are very popular with young people, not so much for the entertainment the films provide as for the relative privacy they afford in the darkness of the hall for the amorous youths during the two odd hours the film is on. Thus the cinema is becoming more and more the place of beginning and nurturing love affairs among the young while at the same time they are becoming more and more sober in public. A quick, meaningful glance at each other and an invitation to the cinema is all that is needed as an initiative from a boy to test the response from a girl. It is an interesting development even when no films with any amorous scenes are ever shown.

When our son, Keshar, was in Lhasa he visited these cinema shows on several occasions and got the impression that many young couples did not go there to watch the movie at all. The

observation made by Deepak, our fourteen year old son, was even more interesting. He came back from a cinema one evening quite excited with his discoveries. He said, "These kids are are not any different from those at home."

"Why do you say that" ? I did not quite understand what he meant.

"They made just as much noise, banged their benches, whistled and shouted at the management when things went wrong in the showing," he explained.

"Why did you think that they should not do so when things go wrong ?" I enquired.

"I never said they should not" he snapped quickly.

"But I had the impression, until I saw this, that they would be a bunch of docile and submissive kids."

Deepak is not the only boy I know who carried such an impression about the young people in the Tibet Region of China.

Some elderly people, a few middle-aged and even fewer youths still follow the practice of going along the Bhakor road around Jho khang, the ancient and important temple of Lhasa that has been restored at a tremendous cost now. There are more people on Full Moon, New Moon and on the eighth days of the fortnight. There were some religious die-hards who went round even the Linkhor ring road which is the outer ring and is about three kilometers in total length.

The Drepung Temple was once opened for people to visit for religious purposes and they were allowed to burn lamps on the altar. One of the officers from the Lhasa Foreign Bureau once-remarked, "we do not stop people from worshipping or from following religious practices although we try to educate them and help them realize that religion is bad and is often used by clever people to exploit the simpler ones. We tell them this during our group meetings. Yet we know there are some who will not be so easily convinced. And we let them continue with their convictions."

One person who watched these developments on Bhakor ring once made a remark about it rather wryly. "Until some months ago there were a few old hands who would go their usual round of Bhakor but denied it whenever asked. They would say that they were on an errand or something. But the number is gradually growing and these people are beginning to admit openly that they are on the religious round."

One evening during one of my walks, I saw a few people who were counting strings of prayer beads in their hands. But they were careful to cover the beads by one hand while the other did the telling. They did not seem to be comfortable in being observed but nevertheless they must derive a great deal of satisfaction in being allowed to practice their religion in their old age.

THE LONG JOURNEY

In October 1972 I received a message from our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that I should report personally to Kathmandu. Although I had not been informed about the exact reasons for this, I guessed that I must have been included in the entourage of our Prime Minister Kirti Nidhi Bista who was making an official visit to China. Prime Minister Bista's visit was not announced yet, but we knew that it was coming. Before I left Lhasa, however, our Prime Minister's visit to the People's Republic of China was officially announced.

Planning to reach Kathmandu on the evening of November 3rd, I left Lhasa with Nani and Mrs. Durga Pradhan, the school teacher and the wife of Girish Man Shingh Pradhan, of our Consulate staff, on the morning of 1st November and camped at the hotel in Shigatse. The day was clear, sunny, beautiful and warm with a temperature of about seventeen degree centigrade.

We were received by Mr. Wang and Mr. Yang Tri-Kang who spoke good Kathmandu Nepali. Mr. Yang knew about Nepal personally more than any other Chinese official I had met since I crossed the border. We relaxed and chatted over a bottle of special wine. They gave us some tinned fruits and a bottle of Mao Tai, for use on the road.

The next day remained clear, crisp and beautiful all along. The landscape, unlike during the last week of July when we came from Nepal, was grey and dry. The fields were fallow as the

harvest was over. But in lots of places the threshing was going on with the help of animals as they walked over the dry heaps of the harvest. We ran into quite a number of loaded yaks, often driven by Tibetans wearing sheepskin on horseback behind them. We saw a larger number of animals on the road this time than on the previous trip.

Above 5,200 meters the landscape looked wilder. After the first major bend we turned south facing the Himalayan Range, and for a few fleeting moments we had the magnificent view of the entire Mahalangur Himal from the north, the first good view I had from a distance in the north.

It was 4 p. m. in the afternoon of November 2nd when we arrived at Luglu. We had made good progress driving three hundred and fifty kilometers in seven hours. This time we had an extremely skilful driver who seemed to take a great deal of pride both in the maintenance of the car and in running it. The day had favoured us with the most beautiful, clear weather. However it was the driver who had maintained a good, even, and constant speed with very smooth and careful driving. In fact we had to admit that he was the most skilful driver of all those we had while travelling back and forth several times during my term of office in Lhasa. Personally, too, he was more sociable and much less reserved than some others we had to drive with.

But in Luglu a group of people stopped us and informed us that the high pass between here and Nyalam was covered with four feet of snow and therefore was not passable at all. We had not heard of anything of the sort until we were so close — only about thirty five kilometers away from the pass. In fact Mr. Yang Tri-Kang had made jokes before we left Shigatse in the morning about how they had worked very hard to keep the weather good and the day had been so brilliant and clear for our journey. None of us had even dreamt of heavy snow on the road.

The driver was confused too. After a while he suggested that

it might be worth our while to try it and see how far we could go. We could always return to Luglu if it turned out to be impossible as suggested by these people. So we proceeded. But after about twenty kilometers we began to plunge into the snow fields right and left. The few inches of snow on the road did not quite stop us but gave an indication as to what lay ahead as we were gradually gaining altitude. We went on for a few more kilometers, when we saw two transport trucks returning after a good try a few kilometers ahead of us as we had intended to do. Frustrated and annoyed, we returned to Luglu and unpacked in the same room as we had spent a night on our way to Lhasa in July.

The PLA people at the camp were as helpful as they had been on our previous trip. In the evening they got together, discussed the problem and set about working very early the following morning without my knowing. I had decided to return to Shigatse and try to make contact with Lhasa and Kathmandu. So we packed up our things, loaded the jeep and went to the breakfast room where the commander of the camp smilingly reported that he had collected a truck load of people and had sent them with shovels to try to clear the passage. Therefore he advised me to stay for two days in the camp until they finished clearing the road. Later in the morning our driver took a dozen more people in his jeep and went to the site. So the prospect, I thought, was very good. Although the day was rather hard spent in that small village amidst the dry, desolate and cold countryside, we were pleased with the apparent possibility that we might still be able to cross the pass.

Everything seemed well and good until the party returned absolutely exhausted in the evening and reported that there was so much snow that it would be weeks before it would clear and it was impossible for them to finish clearing it.

Nani and Durga Pradhan had brought three little Lhasa Apso (terrier) puppies as gifts, two for our children and one for a relative of Mrs. Pradhan. During our journey they were put

in a wooden box and I had hardly taken any notice of them. But on that night my sleep was constantly disturbed by these squeaking little animals. I was very annoyed with them. To my amusement the two ladies sat up on their beds and began to complain that their sleep was disturbed. So in the middle of the night we sat each on our beds and began to discuss the problem of how to dispense with these puppies. At the end three of us agreed that we would get rid of them somehow the next morning.

Early next morning we thanked our host the PLA Commander at the camp for all they did for us and left for Shigatse. On our way we stopped at Tingri for a while. As usual a small crowd of people gathered around us; and we thankfully gave away the puppies to the nearest persons standing there. The recipients looked surprised but very pleased, while others looked on with some degree of envy. Lhasa Apso seemed to be prized even here. We met two of our Namche Bazar Sherpas whom I have already mentioned in an earlier chapter. We proceeded on to Shigatse, much relieved, having got rid of the puppies.

From Shigatse I was able to send a message to Lhasa on the telephone and finally talk to our Consul, Gopi Nath Dawadi, personally on the phone. He then sent a telegraphic message to our Foreign Ministry in Kathmandu. Still hoping that the pass would clear in a few days, I waited in Shigatse for four days. When I received more detailed information about the snow conditions I decided that there was no point in waiting.

On the 8th of October we left Shigatse for Lhasa. But the day turned out to be just as eventful. Our drive thus far had been smooth and safe. The driver was doing well. The only peculiar thing about him was that he kept sniffing through his nose with a jerk every few seconds as if he had a running nose. When Nani and Durga Pradhan realized that it was not a running nose but his habit, they began to laugh. But on the morning when we started out of our camp at the Shigatse Hotel our driver behaved rather strangely. He stopped at the crossing of the highway for a few seconds, looked to both sides and took a right turn instead

of the usual left turn. I thought that he was going to a gas station or on some other such errand before he would start on the highway. But he continued to drive at a slow speed for two or three more minutes until we reached a small bridge just at the northern edge of the town. He stopped his car there and looked around hesitatingly for another escort car which would be following us for a while before it would overtake us and be on the lead for the rest of the journey as it had done on the previous day. Then he mumbled a few unintelligible words and proceeded ahead. Within a minute we emerged into the pleasant Yalu Tsangpo Valley and began to drive on the highway along the right bank of the river. It was a much more interesting and pleasant drive than the Gianze route we usually travelled. I took it for granted that perhaps he had planned to travel this northern route to Lhasa. So I did not tell him anything. Everybody in the car enjoyed this drive along the wide sandy riverbed. But after driving for just over an hour and covering a distance of about 50 kilometers, he stopped suddenly, slid back the window on his side, stuck his head out and enquired of the people who were working on the road whether it was the road to Lhasa. It was a road to Lhasa all right. Whether it was in use or not was a different question. He, however found out that it was not the road he was supposed to be on. He realized that he had made a mistake. So he turned around and drove back. We were all very much amused as we had enjoyed the extra drive. So we laughed. The driver became nervous and sniffed more frequently.

But this delay meant that we reached the lakeshore Yamdrok Tso much late in the afternoon and we got the chance to see the lake in an entirely different setting. It was after dark and the half moon was half way up the sky throwing its mild light over the partly frozen lake and over the frosted mountains. The lake, absolutely calm, had all the stars bright and dim strewn along the infinite depth of its waters. The section of the lake, visible from the place where we were, looked like a crescent faintly glittering beside the mountain that looked dark with only a few stripes of white frost showing at intervals. I, never before or after, had the opportunity to see the mysterious charm of a dimly lit night over

this famous lake. But this time we had a breakdown of our car. Our annoyance at this was dispelled by the enjoyment we derived from looking at the scenery while the poor driver kept fiddling with the engine for hours in the dark in the cold. The driver was able to fix the car and move just about the time we were getting hungry and were about to freeze inside the car.

It was past midnight when we arrived at Lhasa to the great relief of our friends. They were informed by the Foreign Bureau in the morning of our departure from Shigatse. Therefore they were greatly concerned when we did not arrive in time. Everybody in our Consulate enjoyed the entire story when we repeated it afterwards.

JOURNEY TO PEKING

Our Prime Minister, Kirti Nidhi Bista and his party were scheduled to arrive in Peking via Rangoon and Kunmin on the 15th of November 1972, on an official visit. I was instructed by our Foreign Ministry to join the party in Peking. So I made a request to the Foreign Bureau in Lhasa to make arrangements for a seat in the plane. The Foreign Office in Lhasa informed our Consulate, the following morning, that they had succeeded in procuring two seats to Chengtu in Szechuan for myself and for Mr. Chu, a member of the Foreign Bureau who was going to escort me up to Chengtu, which incidently happened to be his home town. He had been instructed by the Foreign office to wait in Chengtu until my return from Peking. From Chengtu I was going to go along to Peking. The plane seats to Chengtu were always booked at least two months in advance. The surface route took twelve days on the road and not many people enjoyed that. So it was not an easy job to get us seats in the plane at that very short notice. This was one of many examples of their cooperation with us in Lhasa.

Lhasa airfield is quite a distance away from the town. So we left Lhasa at 6 p. m. in the evening for the airport as there were only early morning flights in and out of Lhasa. It took us more than two hours to reach the airport, where we had supper and a night's rest at the guest house. All the fellow passengers of the plane were there to spend the night too. There was an adequate number of furnished rooms for all the passengers.

We had our breakfast before dawn the following morning

and got ready for the plane. It landed at the airport at nine a.m. But nine O'clock in Lhasa according to Peking time is quite early. Mr. Chu, the Director of Civil Aviation, had come along with us from Lhasa to see to the arrangements. He stayed at the airport until the last minute to see that everything was right and to see us off.

The four engine Ilyushin-18 turboprop plane was packed absolutely full. There were eighty-eight passengers including four or five children. The flight over the sea of mountains of eastern Tibet was a fantastic experience. These barren mountains and the sandy basin of Yalu Tsangpo with only a few settlements tucked in some valleys looked different from any other.

After the first hour we were flying over the mountains which were covered with some snow. We could also follow the Szechuan-Tibet Highway upto a point and then gradually it was lost under the clouds. The mountains in the east had some forests too. As soon as we had left the last big mountains, we were skidding for a while over the sea of clouds. Szechuan basin, where Chengtu is located, is covered with the clouds throughout the year. The sun was such an unusual phenomenon in Szechuan that even a dog barked at it whenever it came out. "Of course this is a joke" said Mr. Chu. Another joke which I learned from him was about Kweichow, the famous home of the celebrated Chinese whisky, Mao Tai. The traditional saying about the province was that there was no three-li length of straight road, no three days full of sun, and not even three *Yen* (.03 yuan) in anybody's pocket. This was the old saying but now the story is different altogether.

Once we came down through the clouds, one could see the beautifully cultivated fields and soft low hills around the basin. We were received at the airport by two Chinese officials from the Foreign Bureau under the Szechuan Revolutionary Committee.

The contrast between Lhasa and Chengtu was quite striking. The lush green surroundings and the ornamental trees and shrubs

at the airport were very attractive. This terminal building was big and impressive. The ground was wet and the weather warm. The people did not look quite as rough and sunburnt as in Lhasa. The officials were better dressed. It was a contrast from every point of view.

We drove on a metalled highway lined with tall eucalyptus trees through green countryside with houses invariably surrounded by clusters of bamboos. Chengtu was a big city with heavy traffic and busy streets. All the big buildings and wide streets were built after liberation. Before that, we were told, the city had narrow dirty lanes with small shabby structures on either side. We were taken directly to a big hotel which looked as if it must have seen the days of prosperity in the past. But presently it was largely vacant. The suite I was given was a very elaborate and luxurious one. The rooms had high ceilings. The mellowed colour of the furniture, the peeling paint on the walls, and only a few people in such a big place indicated the change it had undergone. In the past this place was always "filled with rich exploiters, gamblers and capitalists who spent money lavishly on luxuries". Now it looked only partly occupied by people on official visits.

The connecting flight to Peking was not scheduled until seven a. m. the next morning. At seven p. m. in the evening Mr. Li, the Deputy leader of the Foreign Bureau under the Provincial Revolutionary Committee for Szechwan, with two other members, Mr. Wu and Mr. Shui, called at the hotel and invited us to dinner. The dinner, with typical Szechwan delicacies, was a real feast. The Szechuan special wine and the steamed glutenous rice with spices carefully wrapped in a piece of banana leaf were a few of the remarkable items I remember well. Our hosts Li, Wu and Shiu, were all soft spoken and very polite. We talked about China and Nepal, their respective past and present, the problem of China still having to deal with the reactionaries, etc.

The following morning I was at the airport at six thirty as the plane was scheduled to take off at seven. Unfortunately the

plane was delayed until three in the afternoon. The authorities kept postponing the flight until the weather improved. They said that it was raining in Sian, their next stopover on the way to Peking.

The Chinese aviation rules are very strict about safety precautions of all types. Not knowing exactly when the flight would take off, the passengers had to wait at the airport all that time. Mr. Chu, my companion from Lhasa, and Mr. Teng the other gentlemen from the Szechuan Foreign Bureau, also had to wait for me at the airport. The airline staff made a great deal of fuss about the discomfort I had to put up with. After lunch they took me into a small room, where there was a bed with clean linen and invited me to take a nap and rest. It was not an unusual courtesy in China as most people take an afternoon nap after lunch. But I was not ready for it so I declined the offer and stayed in the lounge.

Finally we took off again with a full load of people in the same type of plane as the one we had come in from Lhasa. Once we were up, we were flying all the time over the thick sea of cloud and could not see anything below. We had a glimpse of the Bayankara Mountains and the Chilian mountain range that stuck out above the clouds in the distant left from us as we flew north-east from Chengtu.

We came down in Sian for half an hour. Sian was the first established center of the powerful empire more than two thousand years ago. Emperor Kao Ti had founded the western Han dynasty and the capital at Sian (then known as Changan). Later on Emperor Wu Ti (140–87 B. C.) had consolidated his authority over the empire. He had commanded the military expeditions that extended the western frontiers from his throne in Sian (Changan). The ancient silk-route was actually opened up during the reign of this Emperor, Wu Ti, of the Han dynasty.

It sounds a little strange when we hear of it now, but the two great empires of the day, China and Rome, flourished at the same

time in almost complete ignorance of each other. Each one of them considered their own empire as the center of the world.

A few centuries later, during the time of the Tang dynasty between the sixth and seventh centuries, China's first medical school — the Imperial Institute of Physicians — was founded in Sian (Changan), the capital.

Li Ching-wei and Tsai Ching-feng wrote in an article, "Its three hundred students studied internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, acupuncture, moxibustion, massage, cupping and treatment of eye, ear, nose and throat and skin diseases." The article published in *China Reconstructs*, Vol. XII, No. 7, also stated that "In the tenth century China was preventing smallpox with a human vaccine" and "By the sixteenth century this method had travelled to the Arab world and Europe". Smallpox, however, was completely eradicated in China only in the early 1950's. We in Nepal were taught about the pioneer doctor, Jener, who had "discovered" smallpox vaccine in England during the nineteenth century while we learnt nothing about the history of China and her civilization in our school days.

Talking about the Chinese civilization, H. G. Wells writes in his *Short History of the World* that the reign of the Tang dynasty marked other great period of prosperity for China.

"Throughout the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, China was the most secure and civilized country in the world. The Han dynasty had extended her boundaries in the north; the Sui and Tang dynasties now spread her civilization to the south, and China began to assume the proportions she has today. . . .

A new and more vigorous literary school appeared, there was a poetic revival; Buddhism had revolutionized philosophical and religious thought. There were great advances in artistic work, in technical skill and in all the amenities of life. Tea was first used, paper manufactured, and wood

block printing began. Millions of people indeed were leading orderly, graceful, and kindly lives in China during these centuries when the attenuated populations of Europe and Western Asia were living either in hovels, small walled cities, or grim robber fortresses. While the mind of the west was black with theological obsessions, the mind of China was open and tolerant and enquiring.”¹⁵

In about two hours and forty-five minutes, the plane came down at the Peking Airport. Mr. Yeh Sen-Chang, the Deputy Director for Asia Department of the Foreign Ministry, who was appointed as Chinese Ambassador in Rangoon some months later, was at the airport with his English speaking assistant to receive me. Mr. Yeh also spoke English himself. After a brief conversation at the air-port, we separated and I went to our embassy.

The next day I returned to the airport in the afternoon to join the entourage of our Prime Minister, Kirti Nidhi Bista. The airport was full of people in colourful dresses, waving coloured flags. Various Chinese dignitaries, including Premier Chou and the members of the Diplomatic Corps, were present.

I did not have much responsibility during this tour but received and enjoyed all the hospitalities as a member of the delegation. I had a suite for myself at the Peking guest house. The hospitality and the treatment was at its best. I had a most enjoyable holiday with pomp and pageantry added to it.

The same evening we attended, at the People’s Great Hall, a mammoth banquet hosted by Premier Chou En-lai. Exquisite Chinese delicacies, one course following another, and good music, the band playing Nepali numbers also, made the evening memorable.

Premier Chou En Lai casually asked me if I spoke Tibetan

⁵¹ H. G. Wells, *Short History of the World*.

while he went round clinking the Mao Tai glass for a toast. With Mao Tai and all the varieties of Chinese delicacies it did not take many days for me and other members of the party to put on weight.

We took a tour of the Imperial Palace grounds and saw all the priceless treasures on display. These recalled the ancient and medieval glory of the Chinese civilization and culture.

On another occasion we visited the exhibition of artifacts that represented modern art and craftwork in China. The exhibition displayed fourteen thousand pieces of art and craftwork in jade, coral, mother of pearl, wood, ivory and embroidery work, representing different areas of China. The organizers of the exhibition told us that the idea was to let the people from different provinces exchange ideas and experiences so that they could learn from each other. This reflected the progress and success made by these people after the Cultural Revolution.

We visited the Institute of National Minorities where they were training more than 1000 worker-peasant-soldier students from more than 50 nationalities, including Tibetans, to dance, sing, read, write, and to learn the Han language. Basically it is a cadre training center where they teach political thought and philosophy. Founded in 1951, the Institute has faculties of Political Science, arts and minority languages and literature. Nearly 10,000 students had already graduated from the Institute. One of the programs the Institute Party Committee often organized was to take the students to visit places where Chairman Mao had carried out revolutionary activities in his early years. We visited different classes while they were at work. At the end, the trainees entertained the guests by staging a cultural show.

One other morning we were shown the Peking subway (underground railway) and the elaborate underground fallout shelter. This was built in response to Chairman Mao's call, "Dig tunnels deep, store grain everywhere". In the same evening we saw the famous Peking Opera, "Red Lantern", staged in the theater of the People's Great Hall.

We saw the Great Wall which was constructed for the first time in different sectors in the fifth century B. C. during the warring states period, as defences against the Huns. It was later completed during the 3rd Century B. C. in the Chin dynasty, when China was unified. The Great Wall is famous as one of the seven ancient wonders of the world.

I also saw the *dagobas* (chaitya). The first one of the two was designed and built by the famous 13th century Nepalese architect, Arniko, and the other one was a copy of it built later on. The original White Chaitya was constructed during the middle of the 13th century A.D. Arniko, who is said to have died in 1306 in Peking, was known by the name Pal-po (Balabahu) and had received high honours, titles and recognition from Emperor Kublai Khan. This chaitya was basically designed and built on the Nepali styles and principles of architecture. It is said that the architect, Arniko, had gone to Lhasa from Nepal leading a group of Nepali artisans on invitation by the local ruler. By the time he had built some temples with gilded roofs, his reputation had reached the Imperial Court whereupon he was invited to Peking where he achieved both fame and fortune before he died.

From this White Chaitya, Y. K. Silwal and “Toofan”, the first and second secretary of our embassy respectively, took me to see the Temple of Heaven. The magnificent, three-tiered, round-roofed temple was built on a platform of elaborately carved marble, with a long, raised causeway in front of it. The blue glazed tile roofs and the interior, gorgeously painted in different bright colours, including gold, was brilliant. This was the place where the emperors of China offered their sacrifices for the general welfare of the people.

The Chinese people seemed to have maintained their modesty and traditional courtesy. Consistently came the expression, “China is a developing country. We are trying our best, but there is a great deal we have to learn and achieve. So please point out any weaknesses you notice and help us develop and learn more”.

Any arrogance or conceit was conspicuously absent in the manners of the Chinese individuals we met.

On the 18th of November an agreement on technical and economic cooperation was signed between China and Nepal, according to which China would provide assistance to Nepal to build some more highways, a trolley bus service between Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, an extension of the brick and tile factory and the establishment of a cotton textile factory. Our Prime Minister and the party were very happy as they had a sizeable gift to take back home.

I took the opportunity to discuss some of the issues of Lhasa with the Prime Minister, who approved of the steps I had taken and the things I had already done. He also endorsed my line of thinking and approach over some other important and outstanding issues.

On the nineteenth of November, Prime Minister, Bista and party took leave of Peking and flew to Kweilin, a winter resort town in the autonomous region of the Chwang people in Kwangsi Province in South China. Kweilin was fantastic. After arrival I took a look around, and was struck by something most unusual in the landscape. Away in the distance I could see mountain ranges on all sides; nearer there were no ranges but only columns of mountains, with absolutely flat land between the bases of these columns, and this marked the unusualness which I had been struck by. These pillars of mountains, shooting up skyward for hundreds of feet, were of all shapes and sizes. Some of these columns in the distance looked like giant dolls. The whole scene looked like a giant's chess board in play. As we drove to the guest house I kept looking at these mountains. Sometimes one could see some mountain tops canopied by white fog, producing a very strange and dreamy look. They all looked like imaginary paintings. There is no doubt that this place is famous as the most beautiful place in China. Our experience in Kweilin, the most enjoyable of the entire tour of China, and the boat trip along the Likiang river

were very relaxing. The place was enchanting and was like a dreamland.

The visit to the grottoes, a limestone cave, in fact a combination of caves in one of these doll-like mountains, was another memorable experience. The immensely large, spacious caves were full of stalactites and stalagmites of almost any shape one could imagine. This gave impressions of a magic effect; but it, was really the result of man's handiwork supplementing nature's. The Chinese electricians and decorators had given full play to their imaginations. Concealed lighting of different colours, spot lighting from different angles and chiselling to give desired shapes had created different scenic effects. There were artistic stepping stones laid across shallow pools; and as one looked down to the bottom of these pools, trick lighting gave one the impression of great and frightening depths. Limestone caves and tricks of coloured lights are nothing much in themselves but the combination of the two in these Kweilin grottoes were very enchanting. We owe a great deal to our hosts of Kweilin and other Chinese friends and leaders including the Deputy Premier, Li Hsien-nien, who had accompanied us from Peking and stayed with the party throughout this very enjoyable tour.

From Kweilin we were flown into Changsha, the capital of Hunan. Here we visited at a village called Shaoshan, and the modest house where Mao Tse tung was born and had spent his boyhood days. We also saw the Museum where many articles and paintings connected with Mao's life were displayed. We also visited an embroidery factory that represented one of the four schools of traditional style of Chinese embroidery. The four independently developed styles of embroidery were Hunan, Szechuan, Suchow and Peking. They continue their traditions to this day.

Later on we went to see a multipurpose irrigation project which pumped up water for an irrigation canal on either bank of the river, ran a rice mill and provided electricity for the commune.

We saw an aquaduct and a canal built by another commune. In the evening we saw the display of the collection of silk, potteries, musical instruments and other belongings together with the two thousand one hundred year-old body of Marquies of Ta, recently unearthed and preserved in a museum. Later in the evening we saw an interesting puppet show. Wherever we went in Changsa larger crowds than at other places greeted us. Their cheerings and hand clappings were louder; and people seemed more eager and demonstrative. So we all wondered for a while until we learnt that on the call of the central government, the Province of Hunan had provided assistance for the Sun Koshi Hydro electricity Project of Nepal. All the workers and technicians in the project had come from Hunan. So the Hunanese had a specially soft corner in their heart for the Nepali guests and a good reason to be more inquisitive and get excited.

We left Changsha for Kwangchow (Canton) on 23rd November. Kwangchow was beautiful with its green hills and busy streets. It was a very different town from others in the interior. We saw a flower show where several dozens of chrysanthemums were displayed. The Canton Commodities Fair, which is open for one month twice a year each spring and autumn, was already closed. But it was reopened specially for our Prime Minister and his party for a day. It displayed everything from squeaking toys to roaring tractors, and sophisticated computers: from herbs to finest filligree works on ivory, jade, and silk fabrics. This Kwangchow (Canton) Commodities Fair has been held jointly by China's many foreign trade corporations every year since 1957. According to an article "Growth of Foreign Trade of China" (which was received through the courtesy of the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu and was published in the *Rising Nepal* on October 1, 1973, on the occasion of the anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China) "this fair has drawn wide attention throughout the world as China has already established trade relations with more than 140 countries". "China", the article stated, "has achieved new progress in expanding trade and economic relations with other countries since the beginning of 1973 and both her imports and exports have increased significantly."

“The number of businessmen coming to attend the fairs and to hold trade talks with the Chinese side”, the article continued, “has increased year by year. The 1973 spring fair drew 26,000 visitors from more than 100 countries and regions. On display, in the fair, were a total of 30,000 samples of export commodities and other exhibits showing China’s achievements in various fields. Of these, 9,000 were new varieties of products. The total volume of China’s foreign trade has increased by 48.4 per cent from 1965 to 1972, imports and exports being balanced.

“Today China offers the world such goods as machines, tools, hardware, motors and instruments, medicines, dyestuffs, medical apparatus, bicycles and sewing machines. The variety of exports has increased and quality has been constantly improved.

“Crude oil with exceptionally low sulphur content produced by China’s Taching Oilfield was one of the exhibits at the 1973 spring export commodities fair and it is being exported for the first time.

“China has always adhered in foreign trade to the principle of equality and mutual benefit and of helping to meet each other’s needs. It respects the sovereignty and wishes of the other side and pays attention to the needs and supply potential of both sides so as to achieve mutual economic benefit. There are broad prospects of the development of trade between China and the rest of the world”, the article concluded.

On the evening of 24th November our tour program came to an end after an excellent acrobatic show. On the morning of the 25th, we travelled in a special train to Sumchun, the railway station on the border between Hong Kong’s new territory and the People’s Republic of China.

Finally we said good bye to each other. The Prime Minister and the rest of his party returned to Nepal. The Ambassador

and Mrs. Subba, the military attache and Mrs. Karki and I returned to Peking.

I had a few more days of relaxation and sight-seeing in and around Peking. Ambassador Subba's family was very hospitable and kind to me while I was their family guest until I left for Lhasa.

RETURN TO LHASA

When I said good bye to Mr. Yeh Sen Chang, the Deputy Director of the Asia Department and the present Chinese Ambassador in Rangoon, to The Royal Nepalese Ambassador Subba and his extremely nice family and other officials of our embassy at Peking Airport, I was leaving with a very heavy heart. The most enjoyable tour, together with the company of friendly and hospitable people, was over.

I was once again free and alone on the plane to look at and brood over those beautiful snow mountains on the far right. The plane was packed full of people to whom I could not speak a word as I did not speak any Chinese. I am sure they would have responded and would have spoken a few words, although it is unlikely that one would ever run into a chatty co-passenger on this flight as one would on other airlines. But it was a rare chance that on my way to Peking from Chengtu, I had found myself sitting next to a dignified-looking, middle-aged Chinese gentlemen who kept smiling at me for the first few minutes and then broke into some conversation in English. He said that he was an agricultural scientist returning to Peking from a visit in Szechuan. But this time I did not find any such companion to talk to.

I had bought my own ticket when I went to Peking, but this time the Chinese Foreign Ministry had bought one for me. Maybe this was the reason that the Sian airport authorities took special care of me as an official government guest. When the

plane stopped in Sian for a while and I came down the ramp, there was a pretty girl in a jean suit to escort me all the way to the terminal building. I followed her obediently until she took me to a small room where I was left alone for half an hour. The previous time no one had taken any notice of me in Sian. So I had sat in the big lounge with hundreds of other people where I felt like an airline passenger anywhere. There had been nice girls who had taken notice of me as I was sitting alone without a mug of hot tea, and one of them brought one over to me. I said "shie shie ni" (Thank you). She smiled. Everybody else took his own cup of tea from the counter as I noticed afterwards. The girls looked around for people who did not have one. I had been quite happy with this arrangement and with being part of the crowd. But this time, locked up as a special guest in a snug and furnished room, I felt different. After a few minutes two men walked in and asked in English what sort of lunch I would like to have. I said "no lunch for me". They were somewhat confused and repeated the same question again and said it will be late when the plane landed in Chengtu. Actually they had received an instruction from Peking to get lunch ready for me. I was informed about this by Mr. Yeh Sen Chang at the Peking air-port. But I did not feel like eating alone in a closed room.

After about forty-five minutes, another nice-looking girl in green jeans opened the door and motioned me to come out. I followed her to the plane. I felt very conscious as I was walking to the plane without crowds of passengers around. Everybody else was already tightly secured in his seat. I was led to my seat where I could see both the mountains on the right and the hilly settlement down below once we were up in the air. Unlike last time on my way out, the weather was beautiful and clear on this day and I could see a wide range of views outside.

At Chengtu airport there were Mr. Chu, who had been waiting all the time for me, and Mr. Teng from the Foreign Bureau under the Szechuan Provincial Revolutionary Committee. I felt like I had arrived home when I saw these old acquaintances. They

took me to the same "guest house" as last time where I was going to stay for two nights. I had just missed the morning plane to Lhasa. I was delayed by an extra day in Peking because of the bad weather and cancellation of the flight to Chengtu.

The Foreign Office in Chengtu did their best to fill in the time with sight seeing programs. In the evening Mr. Li, the Deputy Director of the Foreign Office, with his two comrades, Mr. Chow and Mr. Shui, dropped in at the hotel and invited me over for dinner again as on the previous occasion. We discussed many things of common interest. This time we discussed more about the socio-political situations of China and even about the ideological conflict within the system itself. The class back-ground of the people involved was quite important to them. "Just being good is not enough, it is a question of the class one belonged to", one of them remarked.

The next morning they took me on a sight-seeing tour. We saw an old Buddhist Monastery called Pau Vans in Shindu, a suburb of Chengtu. This was the first Chinese style Buddhist Monastery I had seen. It was very large with temples and big square courtyards. Now it was maintained only as a place of tourist interest. So it looked empty and vast. There were many Chinese tourists looking at it. I was told that the average number of visitors per day was about five hundred. A few of them had their own cameras too. The weather was so bad that it was dark with fog until eleven O'clock in the morning, and we had to drive very slowly with our headlights on until we arrived at this monastery.

At the entrance of the temple there were huge figures of the guardians of the four directions, two on either side. Once we entered the main gate we faced the main statue of the laughing Buddha. They were all in Chinese style. But further inside there was a statue of Sakyamuni of unmistakable Nepali style. There was one very interesting room with five hundred life size terracotta statues of disciples representing the people from different parts

of the world, They were called *Wu Pe Lho* (five hundred deities). Next we visited a park dedicated to the memory of a famous poet called Tu Fu. Chengtu was the capital of Shu Kingdom during the three kingdoms period of China until about 1,750 years ago.

After lunch we went round the main shopping centers where a large number of people gathered around us wherever we went. Many of the shoppers left off their shopping and followed us. Most of the shopping stores were busy and crowded.

The next time I was in Chengtu, I visited the museum that was built about 15 years ago. It was very near the Chengtu Hotel where I was staying. This hotel was also built about the same time as the museum. The wide boulevard is lined with rows of green trees, big buildings on either side, showing sections of very narrow streets lined with low, small shabby dwellings reminding one of what old Chengtu looked like in some places. The museum itself is an impressive building with all of its four sides opening into wide lobbies and a courtyard in the middle. The courtyard, in the front has a giant statue of Chairman Mao standing on a high platform.

The Deputy Director received us at the museum. The artifacts displayed in the collection were mostly unearthed accidentally when they were digging foundations for new factories. They had not done a systematic excavation of the sites yet. But the display covered a wide range of periods – from about 3,000 B. C. to the 19th Century — and a wide range of artifacts – ranging from chipped flint stone hand tools and hand adzes to the finest silk, brocade, porcelain, filigree and inlay work. They had objects recovered from the tombs from the Han dyansty to the Ming dynasty (206 B. C., – 1644 A. D.) There were interesting similarities in some utensils and designs to the artifacts that were discovered, along with the 2100 year-old corpse of Marquies of Ta near Changhsa in Hunan.

The Deputy Director also pointed to some distinctly Nepali style bas relief stone images of the Buddha and other deities from

the early fifth century A. D. and said that they were the works of a Nepali craftsman who had travelled to China and had finally ended as a high dignitary at the Imperial Court in Sian (Changan)

Some years back the Hsinhua News Agency had reoported the discovery of a stone inscription in the area in China where a Nepali scholar of the same period had gone and had in five years translated the text about Buddhism into four hundred thousand Chinese characters.

After the tour of the museum, I thanked my host and the cheerful girls, who had accompanied us all along the tour, and returned to our hotel.

After lunch and a short rest, we went to visit the exhibition of the paintings in another section of the same museum building.

There were two hundred water-colour paintings done on silk scrolls. They were all realistic paintings of workers, peasants and soldiers – what the Chinese describe as revolutionary art. Most of them were done by the most skillful hands and expressed their themes in a soft and elegant harmony, while there were a few by some amateurs that conveyed their themes in a loud manner with stronger contrasts. Szechuan is actually famous for its painters and poets from very early days.

In February 1975, at the end of my tour of duty in Lhasa, I stopped in Chengtu once more on my way home via Kunmin and Rangoon. This time I went to see an old irrigation project, a deer taming center, a memorial palace and a park. The irrigation system was built towards the end of the three kingdoms period over 2,200 years ago in the state of Chin. They have been doing lots of work to improve this old canal which at present serves 10 million people in 27 counties. This irrigation system, called Tukiangyan, was designed and worked by a man called Lu Ping, under the Command of Prime Minister Chuko Liang of Shu. After his death his son continued to work the canal. The

canal works were very ingenious and impressive. This was the period when Prime Minister Chuko Liang emphasized water conservation for irrigation. This man, Lu Ping, along with his son was honoured afterwards and a memorial palace was built for them. This palace was called the "two kings palace" and it housed the statues of Lu Ping and his son.

At the end of the morning Mr. Lo, the Vice Chairman of the County Revolutionary Committee, invited me for lunch and then took me to see a deer taming center where they had seven hundred deer kept for their horns which were used for medicinal purposes.

Next afternoon I went to see a memorial palace built for Prime Minister Chuko Liang, who served under King Liu Pei of the Kingdom of Shu of the Three Kingdoms period. The place was crowded with visitors. Adjacent to it was the tomb of King Liu Pei and a beautiful park was built beside this only a few years ago. The display of *bon sai* trees was exquisite. All these three places were quite crowded with people as they were right in the city. During the Spring Festival, which had been held a week before, there were more than ten thousand people in the park, our guide stated.

Kunmin was another beautiful city where I stopped for a few days towards the end of my journey home. This city, with its big factories, wide boulevards, beautiful lake parks, hotels etc., was for the most part built only after liberation. The local Foreign Bureau Officials, — the Deputy Director, Huang Fen-liang, Deputy Chief of Protocol, Cheng Han, and the interpreter, Wang Chia-Shou — were all extremely courteous and helpful. I visited the exciting Dragon Gate on the Western Hills, an old Buddhist Monastery, a large precision machine tools factory that employed 4,800 people, and a knitwear factory.

THEIR MAJESTIES' STATES VISIT

Their Majesties King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya paid a state visit to China in December 1973, on the invitation of the acting Chairman of the People's Republic of China, Tung Pi-wu, and the Premier of the State Council, Chou En-lai. Their Majesties the King and the Queen accompanied by more than two dozen officials and press representatives, landed at the Peking International Airport at 3 p. m. on December 8th. It was a very colourful and impressive reception. Premier Chou En-lai, many other Chinese dignitaries, members of the Diplomatic Corps and thousands of people were at the airport.

In the evening Premier Chou En-lai hosted a state banquet in the Great Hall of the People. Welcoming the distinguished guests, Premier Chou En-lai said in his speech that China is a developing country herself. He also emphasized that countries strong or weak, big or small should treat each other as equals. He noted that Nepal and China had been friendly neighbours since ancient times, and they have all along sympathised with and supported each other in the struggle against imperialism. He further noted that "The Nepalese government pursues a policy of peace, neutrality and non-alignment, opposes power politics and spheres of influence, condemns racism and colonialism and supports national liberation movements". At the end Premier Chou En-lai proposed a toast to the health of Their Majesties the King and the Queen, to the prosperity of the Kingdom of Nepal and the well-being of her people, to the continuous consolidation and development of friendship between the Nepalese and the Chinese

peoples and the friendly relations and cooperation between the the two countries. In the course of the reply speech, His Majesty expressed appreciation for the understanding shown by the Chinese Government and people, and for providing assistance in the economic development of Nepal. His Majesty said, "The people and government of China, to the satisfaction of the people of Nepal, have extended not only co-operation but an understanding of the Nepalese urge to maintain its own identity and way of life."

"Despite pre-occupation with your own development", His Majesty further said, "you have come to Nepal's assistance with magnanimity, for which we express our deep appreciation."

At the end, His Majesty proposed a toast to the further development of friendly relations between Nepal and China, to the health and happiness of Chairman Mao, to the happiness and prosperity of the Chinese people, and the health of Premier Chou En-lai.

The same morning the *People's Daily* had carried an article entitled "A warm welcome to the distinguished guests from Nepal" in which it said that "China and Nepal are linked by mountains and rivers and have been close neighbours cherishing a traditional friendship since ancient times." Appraising Nepal's situation, the *People's Daily* said "Nepal has a long history and ancient culture. The industrious and brave Nepalese people have a glorious tradition of resisting imperialist aggression. Under the leadership of His Majesty, King Birendra, the government and the people of the Kingdom of Nepal have consistently adhered to the non-aligned policy of independence, self-determination, peace, and neutrality formulated by His Late Majesty King Mahendra and have unswervingly defended their national independence and state sovereignty." The article mentioned the Fourth Conference of Heads of States and Government of non-aligned countries held in Algeria where His Majesty King Birendra spoke strongly against foreign intervention, aggression, and power

politics, and advocated protecting the weak from the strong and freeing the poor from the rich.

On December 10th by command of His Majesty King Birendra, a banquet was arranged in the Great Hall where expressions of mutual appreciation and understanding were made once more.

Time was filled up with important and friendly talks with Chairman Mao, and Premier Chou En-lai, and sight-seeing programs until Their Majesties left Peking on December 11th for an enjoyable tour of Nanking, Suchow, Shanghai and K wangchow (Canton). The Royal party left Canton for Kathmandu on the 14th with about two hours' halt in Kunmin, where the party boarded Nepal's flag carrier.

The meeting of His Majesty King Birendra with Chairman Mao for one hour and forty minutes was reported to be very friendly and cordial. The fact that Queen Aishworya was the first first lady Chairman Mao had received at all during the past few years was also taken as an indication of the very friendly and sympathetic attitude the Chinese leaders have for Nepal and for her people. Subsequently Chairman Mao received many other first ladies from other countries. His Majesty King Birendra's first meeting with Chairman Mao had been in 1966, when he had visited China as the Crown Prince of Nepal.

This visit was considered at home and abroad as both successful and fruitful in further improving the relations between Nepal and China.

On the 12th of December, I left Peking for Canton. Mr. Shiao, a young man from the Canton Foreign Office, was waiting at the airport. He spoke fluent English and remained a very pleasant and helpful companion and guide until I left Canton with Their Majesties' party on December 14th. I innocently caused Mr. Shiao to feel very unhappy and apologetic. I had casually

mentioned to him that I would like to buy a flash accessory for my camera if it was available. He searched through several smaller, specialized shops and large department stores, even when I had told him that I was not serious about it and I did not really need it. At the end he came back and said "I am really very sorry because our Chairman Mao teaches us to be courteous and helpful to our foreign friends. And we young people always try to do our best to assist and guide our friends and visitors. But this time I feel very sorry that I could not help you buy a flash light accessory for your camera". Then it was my turn to feel really very sorry for having given Mr. Shiao so much trouble and caused him to feel so frustrated.

Their Majesties were received with pomp, pageantry and splendour in Canton airport when they arrived from Shanghai on the 12th, even though it was after 11 p. m. and the night cold. Their Majestys were seen off on December 14th with ceremony.

After attending the debriefing sessions on the plane on the 14th and at the Royal Palace in Kathmandu on the 17th of December, and also after having the honour of an exclusive audience with His Majesty on the same day, I wound up my tour and left for Lhasa. Two of our younger Children, Asha and Deepak, accompanied me. Since their schools were closed for winter holiday, they wanted to visit their mother in Lhasa. When I reached Lhasa on January 3rd 1974, I had completed the circuit.

THE DRAGON BONE HILL

On December 11, 1973, I visited Chow-kuo-Tien, the Dragon Bone Hill. Ambassador Subba was very generous to let me have the embassy car and driver for the day. After 48 kilometers of comfortable driving to the South-West of Peking, we arrived at Chow Kuo-tien at the foot of the Western Hills where the Dragon Bone Hill, the site of the world famous Peking Man's Cave, is located. Mr. Pei Wen-chung, a research fellow of the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, discovered the first fairly complete skull cap of Peking Man in 1966. He noted in an article published in *China Reconstructs in January* 1973, that "The site of the first ape-man (*Sinanthropus Pekinensis*) cave, when it was first noted in 1921, was a quarry in a thick stratum of limestone from the Ordovician period, long worked by the local people. The quarry labourers had often dug up animal fossils, which they called "dragon bones". There were such huge quantities of them that the spot was known as Dragon Bone Hill".

When I arrived at the Museum at Dragon Bone Hill, there was a group of about thirty people — all Chinese — ready to start on a regular tour. But, the guide being Chinese, I did not follow this group and tried to look around for an English speaking guide.

This Museum was opened to the public only recently although the work of excavation and investigation had been resumed at the site soon after the liberation of the area, following a break

during world war II and the Chinese Civil War. Li, the embassy driver pointed out to me that the only time he had ever come to this place before was with our former Ambassador, Keshar Bahadur K. C., in 1963.

The significance of this cave was recognized in the year 1927 and large scale excavations followed during the subsequent years. The finding of a complete skull on December 2, 1929, had laid a firm foundation for Peking Man's place in science and had made the site famous. However, this skull and many other fossils of Peking Man unearthed during the following years disappeared in 1941. No one knows where they are now. But the work has now been continuing for many years after those war years. At the present, the museum displays all the findings from the nearby cave and also from other parts of China.

Meanwhile Driver Li and a girl attendant had located a young undergraduate of Peking University working there who could speak some English. He apologized for his inadequate knowledge of the English language and offered to show me around.

The exhibition included the fossils of fishes, reptiles, dinosaurs and primitive mammals dating back ten million years, as well as stone tools, adzes and other artifacts discovered both at Chou Kuo-Tien and at other places in China. There were reconstructed models showing the life of Peking Man and his environment during the Middle Pleistocene Period, about four hundred thousand to five hundred thousand years ago. The range of stone tools, and the animal bones buried in the six-meter thick pile of ash, gave enough indication of the nature of Peking Man's life, and, most important, revealed that he used fire for cooking his food. The guide said that the experts thought Peking Man, living four to five hundred thousand years ago, probably did not know how to make fire himself but had the sense to preserve natural fire, whereas "the upper cave man", living slightly above the Peking Man cave in the same Dragon Bone Hill some ten to twenty thousands years ago, had a fairly developed technology. The

young guide said “The upper cave man was the contemporary of Neanderthal Man.” He added in one breath “we have also identified the remains of people who were contemporaries of Cro-Magnon Man.” They had also unearthed fossil remains representing eight individual cave men. There were also perforated animal teeth, stone beads, fish bones and bone needles which had been discovered in the upper cave.

The fossilized ash pile had yielded the remains of a hundred different types of animals and the remains of forty individual men of different age and sex. To be able to serve and reflect on this concrete evidence of early men and their ways of life — the ancestors of modern man — was fascinating.

We finished up our tour of the exhibition in a large room dominated by the skeleton of a huge dinosaur and some fossilized tusks of mammoths. Our guide then took me to the nearby Dragon Bone Hill itself. We went past the upper cave first. The upper part of this cave had slid down during the excavation, so it was not much of a sight. But the Peking Man’s Cave (or the lower cave) was a real cave. It still gives an indication of its being used as a shelter by Peking Man. Our guide pointed out the sites from which the pile of ashes and the bones had been dug out. One side of the cave was still marked and further excavations were planned. According to the article mentioned earlier, the cave was about 140 meters long and 42 meters wide at the widest place. The cave contained “one of the world’s richest stores of fossils of ancient man, and animals and stone artifacts known to date. The discovery of the skull of Peking Man”, the article continued, “and the numerous stone implements and layers of ash provided the ‘missing link’, the stage between ape and man – in Darwin’s theory of evolution between ape to man”. There are photographs and more information about this published in *China Pictorial*, January 1973, and in *Peking Review*, Jan. 26, 1973.

NEPALIS IN TIBET

The Nepali population of Lhasa proper is about 350. In addition, about 15 more Nepalis live in the suburban villages, seventy in Shigatse, one in Gianze, and seventy-five in Yatung. Of this total (511) about forty were born in Nepal, about twenty were from the Kathmandu Valley living temporarily in Lhasa, and about the same number were from other parts of Nepal. All the others were born in different parts of Nepal, outside of Kathmandu. The others were born in the Tibet Region either of mixed parentage or mixed ancestry of a few generations back, but all still maintaining Nepali Lineages.¹⁶ Following the agreement between the two governments the people with mixed origin were given a choice of citizenship in 1962. Those who opted for Nepali citizenship were given Nepali passports; many others opted for Chinese citizenship and thus the people were formally and clearly aligned on two sides for the first time in history.

In 1974 a majority of these Tibetan born Nepalis of mixed origin were wage earners, a few were farmers, one or two were livestock herdsman, about 35 ran small retail shops, fourteen of them owned and drove horsecarts and about a dozen carried on

¹⁶ The total number of Nepalis residing in Tibet estimated by Giuseppe Tucci in 1948 was 3,000. Spencer Chapman gave the figure of Nepal-born Newars as 6-700 in 1936; Charles Bell estimated the presence of 6-700 Newars and over 1,000 persons of mixed parentage in the year 1920, and the earlier recorded figure is that of Waddell, who counted 800 Nepalis in 1905.



Children at Nepali School of Lhasa



Han Children in Tibet

international export and import trade between the two countries under government license.

The majority of them were illiterate, and the remainder, with the exception of very few, were barely literate with very little idea of a modern government, the international situation or of the standard of international trade. At this time in Lhasa there were a few Nepali traders who were educated to some degree and were therefore aware of the world outside and had some knowledge of international trade. They were trusted by the authorities of both Lhasa and Kathmandu. These few traders were doing relatively well although not all of them had had much education. There was one other reputable firm which was still doing some trade, although this was much reduced from the older days.

We made a practice of calling meetings of Nepalis living in Tibet at frequent intervals. There were a few individuals of mixed parentage who had apparently opted for Chinese citizenship in 1962, but for some reason had changed their minds afterwards and had decided to apply for Nepali citizenship. The case was still unsettled at the time I left. There is a primary school for Nepali children in Lhasa with an enrollment fluctuating between 40 and 80 at different times. Any attention given to this school gave the utmost satisfaction to the school children and their parents. Nepali text books were brought from Kathmandu and were distributed. Qualified teachers were appointed. A few other outdated customs of feudalistic days were abolished. The *Thakali** (Elderman) system of older days was non functional by this time. So it was stopped by general consensus and all of the Nepalis were encouraged to approach the office personally whenever necessary rather than through the *Thakali* as was the expected practice of older days. They were advised not to follow the old Tibetan style practice of bowing down with bent knees and protruded tongue in front of the Consul General, as it looked out of

* This was a combination of Newar practice of *thakali*, as a chief of the caste or kin group *guthi*-council, and the headman as a representative of district government for the village administration in the hills of Nepal.

date. Similarly the forced practice of receiving the Consul General when he arrived from or departed to Nepal with the offering of *Khata* was changed into voluntary social calls. The forced attendance for receiving *Tika* during our Dashai Festival was stopped. It is only His Majesty the King of Nepal whom we should all revere and from whom we should receive *Tika*. No other Nepali officer is a constant enough figure to bestow *Tika* upon any other individuals. Thus was explained the reason for stopping the *Tika* ceremonies. There were a few individuals who, in the name of tradition, insisted that the *Tika* festival should be allowed to continue at the official level. So, for this reason a Lama was appointed as the temple attendant who would also offer *Tika* ritually during festivals. This Lama was a Nepali and had been a disciple at Drepung monastery for 21 years.

Requests were made to the Chinese officials for the procurement of a new site and compound in an open area for a new building as our consulate building, with no sanitary sewage system, was unhygienic and outdated for modern Lhasa. It was situated in the dirty, narrow lane in the old and crowded part of the city. There was some sentiment attached to the old historic building and its manorial style, but the requirements of efficient work and comfortable living outweighed the sentimental attachment to the old building. The Chinese officials employed architects to plan and build a new building in an open area near Norbulinkha, the people's park.

In addition to all of this, in view of the illiteracy of a vast majority of Lhasa Nepalis, it was considered necessary to adopt a process of education. So frequent meetings at the consulate were organized and the clauses of the treaty between Nepal and the People's Republic of China and the agreement about border trade between Nepal and Tibet were explained to the Lhasa Nepalis. In the beginning they were rather lukewarm, but gradually most of them understood the need for the meetings and the effort to help them behave as responsible citizens of a friendly country was gradually successful. They realised that many problems had been created by their earlier lack of knowledge.

The Nepalis, including the consulate officials, were all on a Nepali time schedule, so that everytime there was a meeting, appointment, or dinner with Chinese officials, they had to compute the time difference. Chinese time is two hours and twenty minutes ahead of Nepali time. The Chinese officials made sure on every occasion on which they had a dinner or other engagement, that their Nepali guest understood that the time meant was "Peking time". Conversely when they were invited by the Nepalis, they never forgot to make sure and compute the difference.

There were occasional cases of a few Nepalis moving into Lhasa from rural areas and running into difficulties in trying to obtain a ration card. Formerly such a card had not been required. The practice throughout China now is that no one from the rural areas may move into any urban or industrial area without prior approval of the relevant authorities. This is how the authorities, have managed to avoid unemployment problems in the industrial and urban areas. Such problems for Nepalis were created by these changed circumstances and the inability of the resident Nepalis to understand the changes that had taken place. They were minor problems in themselves but very aggravating to those directly concerned, and they caused many headaches for the consulate staff. Patience and tact solved most of these problems. As mentioned above, we discontinued some old practices and adopted new ones. This must have seem radical, but we in the consulate were unanimous in our decision that these steps had to be taken.

If we had any success, it was due to the hardwork and un-failing support of our consulate officials: Gopi Nath Dawadi, Trailokya Ratna Bajracharya, Greesh Man Singh Pradhan and Dwarika Das Shrestha.

—All of us, wives included, also developed a practice of giving formal, full orientation on conditions in Lhasa for new coming staffs and their families. Accordingly we organized a program for our newly arrived wireless operator, Dwarika Das Shrestha, and his family in July, 1973.

There had been Nepalis in Lhasa who had unknowingly been misled to create complicated problems. Some of them had interpreted that the Consulate General was expected to assist the Nepalis in whatever activities they might undertake.

Therefore in the very beginning, as has been noted earlier, it was made abundantly clear to all the Nepali adults through periodic meetings, that the Consulate would “defend, assist and protect” them only in their lawful pursuits and never for irresponsible, undisciplined, and unlawful behaviour. Lawful pursuits meant activities provided for in the treaties jointly signed by the representatives of the two countries. They were reminded of the relevant clauses of the May, 1966 *Agreement on Trade, Intercourse and Related Questions* between the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and Nepal, which remain in force today. Clause, 2. under *Article IV* said :

“Nationals of one country in the territory of the other shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the Government of the host country and abide by its laws and regulations, pay taxes and respect the customs.”

Clause 3, under *Article IV* said :

“All civil and criminal cases or disputes in the territory of either country involving nationals of the other country shall be handled by the Government of the host country.”

Article V said :

“The two Governments shall encourage and support the development of trade relations between the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and Nepal. The authorities concerned of either country shall protect the legitimate interests of the traders, of the other country in its territory and facilitate their business activities. The traders of either country in the territory of the other must abide by the

relevant laws and regulations and shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the host country.”

Many people approved and agreed. Some did not comprehend at all, and a few were indifferent to the entire purpose of the meeting. But the meetings were continued and repeated at frequent intervals. Quite a few among them do not understand any Nepali at all. They speak only Tibetan, live only as Tibetans do, understand only Tibetan ways of life and know only the Tibet Region of China. But their Tibetan relatives and counterparts receive regular political education. It would not be easy to deal with the Nepalis if they were to continue to live with their traditional values in modern Tibet. A few case histories will give the picture of the state of Nepalis as it existed in Tibet until recently.

The Drokpa

A few miles west of Lhasa proper and over the hill lived a family consisting of a husband wife, and two children, all of whom carry Nepali passports. This family came to the consulate and requested the consulate to assist them to settle in Lhasa proper. They knew that if they came without the prior approval of the authorities they would not receive their ration card and everybody knows in Lhasa that it is very expensive to live without a ration card, although it is not entirely impossible.

The head of this family said that he is a Drokpa (meaning pastoral nomad). He has no land at all. His entire family is forced to make a living from sixteen yaks and five sheep. He pleads that the number of his livestock is not adequate and therefore living is very hard for him and his family, although he has a permanent house to live in. This man and his wife look quite healthy and well fed. They are dressed in warm, heavy, woolen clothes in traditional Tibetan style. Therefore it is difficult to believe everything he says. One learns from experience that the method of argument used here is to apply pressure and to insist rather than reason logically. When told that Lhasa will not provide them with a soft or more comfortable living than they have in the pasture area, he insists that they will make a living by working on building sites as labourers. He claims that there are quite a few building projects going on in Lhasa at any given point of time, in which many Nepalis of mixed parentage work to make a living. Is this a better way of living than the life of herdsman in the suburb of Lhasa ? He is not sure and therefore changes the sub-

ject. He, with his wife and children, would like to return to Nepal. On inquiry he says that he has never been anywhere outside of Tibet. He has no relative or acquaintances in Nepal and has no savings to establish himself there initially. Neither he nor any member of his family speak a word of Nepali. They do not know who their ancestors were. So he agrees that his return to Nepal would be even harder for him. He takes leave with a confused smile.

The next time he showed up at the consulate was six months after his first visit, and he repeated the same requests once again. He was advised to try at the Lhasa Foreign Bureau for permission to move to Lhasa. He agreed and left. After a few months he returned to the consulate and reported that he had surrendered his yaks and sheep to the collective. So presently he had no other problem except that he owed some money to some of his relatives. He wanted to borrow 100 yuan from the consulate. But considering everything it did not look as though he would be able or would have the inclination to pay back the money. So he was given sixty yuan out of the Social welfare Fund for Nepalis, as an outright gift. He was happy, and did not show up again.

The Farmer

There are a few Nepali families living in a village about a day's journey north of Lhasa proper. One healthy and decent looking young man in modern Chinese work clothes turned up at the consulate one morning. He complained that his cow had been forcibly taken by another man in the village and he had no redress. When asked to clarify his story further, he related a tale of how he had tethered his cow to a peg by the side of his house; how the honking and roaring noise of an automobile on the road passing the village had frightened the cow; how the cow had broken the lead and run away; how it had reached the green field of his neighbour who had taken the cow and had refused to give it back; how he had approached the neighbour with apologies and with promise to compensate him for the loss of his green crops in the field; and finally how his neighbour had turned a deaf ear to all of his petitions in spite of his willingness to compensate his loss.

This could not be the entire story. There must have been other incidents in the village which led to misunderstandings with the petitioner, I thought. And after further enquiries he divulged the other part of the story. His village had been turned into a commune and all the land had been turned into commune land except his own. He owned 13 separate pieces of land where he worked with his family independently. The village authorities had tried to convince him to accommodate himself and his property to the commune. He did not want to do this. It was not obligatory for him as a Nepali citizen to join the commune. He

also said that he had a few Chinese citizens living in a joint household with him, who were entitled to a share of the common property. They were his mother, sister and a couple of in-laws. This made things awkward. As a result, the members of the household were not allowed to use the water from the commune canal to irrigate their land. So he had not been able to sow his field. He argued, how could he produce crops which he needed for paying as tax. He was advised to seek an accommodation with other members of the village and report to the authorities if there were any real injustices done. Subsequently he went to the "Chike Lekun," the foreign office under the Lhasa Municipality that dealt with all the Nepalis except the consulate staff, and received a piece of paper ordering the release of his cow. He came to report this to the consulate but still asserted that he would rather return to Nepal. It was explained to him that Nepal is not a safe haven for irregular behaviour. There are laws to abide by in any country. So he might reconsider the whole thing and make up his mind. The consulate would help him whenever needed. He came on several occasions thereafter but with different problems to discuss each time. Usually these type of problems came from the mixed families where half the members were Nepali citizens and the other half Chinese-Tibetan.

The Cart Driver

One afternoon a group of five men called on me and introduced themselves as horse-cart-drivers. All of them were Tibet born Nepalis. All except one had married Chinese-Tibetan wives. The fifth had a Nepali-Tibetan wife. They said they had not come to the consulate frequently during the past couple of years. The reason they gave was that "only the rich and selfish among the Lhasa Nepalis had influence there". People like themselves "who had neither wealth nor influence were treated with contempt and indifference". But the situation had changed as they realized and they were encouraged to come and state their problems. Their problem was to obtain some sort of insurance against cart accidents, guarantee of their possessions and the future security of their children. I promised to represent their case to the authorities in Lhasa.

After this they dropped in at the consulate more frequently. The leader among them spoke fluent Nepali and made a regular habit of casually calling and gradually he talked more about himself.

His father was a Jyapu (farmer) from Kathmandu, and his mother a Tibetan, both of whom were dead. His wife is a Khamba who had begged all her way from Kham to Lhasa. He was a very poor man living on daily wages all the time in old Tibet. Since 1959 his condition had improved considerably. Now he owned two carts and four ponies all of which were worth ten thousand yuan or about five thousand American dollars. He made a good living and had savings as well. He is financing the

education of his oldest son in one of the best known boarding schools in Kathmandu. He had a private chapel in his Lhasa house where he had a number of idols and thankas, and where he burned lamps everyday and offered water in silver bowls. The Lhasa authorities visited his house frequently and did not object to his religious practices.

At a later date, he reported that he surrendered some of his gold and musk, which he had illegally procured sometime before, as so many other people did, to the local authorities. He was then paid an official price for this and was advised to tell other Nepalis as well of this incident.

He had been allowed by the Lhasa authorities until sometime before to remit twenty pound sterling every month as were so many other Nepalis who were making an honest living. Incidentally, the problem was actually not one of remittance but of convertible currency, as Nepal and China do not have an official exchange rate fixed between a rupee and a yuan. But then he said that gradually this was misused by smugglers and blackmarket-eers to remit their black money by bribing simple people to sell their money orders. When this was made known to the authorities the privilege was withdrawn. So he had the problem of remittance. Subsequently this privilege was restored for those Nepalis who were making money by trade, business and other legitimate earnings.

At one time when asked what his Tibetan neighbours' thought were about the Nepalis in town he answered;

“As far as I know, in our block, we have a very natural and normal relationship. We work together and help each other at times when the occasion arises. We Nepalis are not discriminated against. The Tibetan authorities of the block offer us help willingly whenever we need it”. He added, after a few seconds, “The higher authorities always seem to make sure that the Nepalis get jobs, and are treated fairly and reasonably at all times”. After a few more seconds he concluded “This was not quite the case for the past couple of years, we are having a much better time now”.

The Generous Man

There was a man in his late fifties, a very old Nepali hand, who hung around the consulate for a few days right after my arrival in Lhasa. He was a Shrestha who came from Patan. Every time he came in, he began gabbling and continued non-stop as long as he stayed. He was never coherent. He talked of Buddhas, future Buddhas, and of musk for a few minutes. Then he would mention the amount of the bribes he had given to some former officials of the consulate. Now he would get excited and act out how he had boldly argued with the authorities in Lasha. Now he would say he had been treated very well by the Chinese. Then he would switch topics to the state of religion, idols, thankas, silver bullion, and his wife back home in Nepal whom he presumed to be dishonest and unfaithful. He said there were some dishonest people in the consulate who bothered him. He did not mind bribing honest people, but he could not stand the dishonest. He was known to be the richest Nepali in terms of ownership of movable property in Lhasa. Therefore he did not mind distributing some of it as he expected it back in the next life. He suggested that he would consider any of the needs of the consulate officials very favourably. The only problem he had was his Tibetan born Nepali wife in Lhasa. She spied on him all the time and reported everything including his love affair with another woman. He wanted to marry the latter but the authorities did not endorse her Nepali citizenship. He expected the Consul General to have courage and dignity as a representative of Nepal, the land of gods and assist his mistress in getting Nepali citizenship, for she did after all have a Nepali as a distant ancestor.

All those former officials who had represented him had profited out of his contact. So there was no reason why the present ones should not. Besides God had predetermined everything, and had done everything. None of us should feel proud of our actions. To be sure when he said 'God' he meant "Buddha" and no one else. All the Hindu gods were the servants of Buddha. Before he got up to leave the room he said, "By the way, the thing I hate most is the visitor's book at the gate where I have to write my name and the purpose of my visit. Never before in the history of Lhasa was there a Nepali Consulate where you had to report at the gate in such an insulting manner".

When we had had several sessions like this, at the end of a meeting one day I told him that he need not take the trouble to come to the consulate anymore as I did not think that I could do much to help him. He was enraged, he trembled and warned me in strong language, "Watch out ! I have many strings that I can pull in Kathmandu including the ones in your own Foreign Ministry".

He remained a frequent visitor off and on and I learned not to take him seriously. He died of heart failure about two years later, leaving all his property and problems behind. His property subsequently was divided between his two wives, the one from Nepal and the other from Tibet with the help of the Nepali Consulate and the local authorities in Lhasa.

Poor Buddha

Once I chanced to ask a Nepal born trader what he thought about the attitude of the Tibetans towards Nepalis in general. I was just curious to know whether the average Tibetans had different feelings towards the Nepalis than those Tibetans in authority. According to his observations, the younger people did not have much opinion one way or another. They did not care much. But the older ones, he remarked, say "*Ning Che*". "What does that mean" ? I asked. "Oh," he said, "That means that they are sorry for us. One old man said to me the other day "Ning Che Buddha !" (poor Buddha !) "Why was that ?" I was still curious. "My full name is Budha Ratna Sakya, but they just call me 'Buddha'. "I see", I said "but why were you pitied by your old Tibetan friend?". "You probably don't know much of old Tibet" he began with a long breath, and as an after-thought he added : "As a matter of fact I do not know much either myself, since I came here for the first time in 1965". Then he went on to explain that in the old days most of the Nepalis who came to Lhasa made lots of money easily and quickly. They were then addressed by everybody with the respectful term "Sota la". The Nepalis became bankers, jewellers, traders, order suppliers and, no less significant, also became an attraction for Tibetan girls. But everything had changed since different commodities now were supplied by the state itself. There are large department stores where all consumer goods are available at very fair and reasonable prices. There is a modern bank to take care of the financial transactions and also there are stricter laws of marriage. There are no rich Tibetan women to wear expensive jewellery.

“So” he continued, “you can see that it is just not possible to get rich quick as in the old days. And this change has been clearly observed by the older people, although the young are not aware of much of the past”.

But there was a general impression among other Nepalis of Lhasa that this man was earning some gold by working as a goldsmith denturist. There are Tibetans who believed that a golden tooth would ward off the evil effects of witches and evil spirits in their drinks. So they came to Buddha Ratna for a golden tooth, usually with their own supply of gold, there by giving him the opportunity of saving some gold for himself.

The fact that only the urban based skilled carftsmen and people experienced in business and various types of trade, went to Tibet to make a living made all the difference in the general image of Nepalis in Tibet.

The picture at present is changing very rapidly.

There are only about a dozen Nepal-born Nepalis in Lhasa at present. The number of Tibet born Nepalis in different persuits is considerably higher. And a great majority of them are wage earning, urban labourers.

The Successful Trader

There was another trader from Kathmandu who had never been in trouble since he had arrived in Lhasa. He had gone to Lhasa in 1945 as an employee of one of the biggest Nepali trading firms in Lhasa. He journeyed back and forth between Calcutta and Lhasa for a few years and finally settled down to his own business in 1960. He did not have much capital to begin with. He had started with a humble background of a small business in Kathmandu. He had some education and some experience with trade as he worked for another man's trading concern. So he had only this experience and honest effort in his favour. The authorities in Lhasa supported him and gave him opportunities to buy and sell with a large profit margin. He said he did not quite understand the system in the beginning. So he hesitated and apologized for his inability to invest large sums of money as he did not have it. But this was no limitation, as the Lhasa authorities insisted he should just shoulder the weight and go along with them. The capital was no problem. He could make his payments only after he had finished the deal and made some profit. He did this with a great deal of uneasiness and misgivings. Less than fifteen years later, he now deals with millions. He is grateful to everybody. He dropped in frequently at the consulate and discussed his business whenever opportunity allowed him. He often said that the Nepali traders in Lhasa should have no problems. "Chinese officials have always been very generous and reasonable with us. As far as I am concerned, they have pulled me up and have lifted me from the street into my present status" he declared.

He is respected by most Nepalis in town, although a few from Kathmandu who failed to get rich quickly are jealous of him and talk against him. There are no more than six firms, including his, which continue in the exporting and importing business in Lhasa at present. These traders are among the few who are sincerely grateful to the Lhasa authorities, to the effort of our consulate and to His Majesty's Government's policies on this issue.

At one stage I sought advice on how to raise the issue of a few of our Nepali citizens' claim for some property and for the return of money they had lent to some Tibetans. These Nepalis had approached the consulate and our Foreign Ministry for help. To this the trader said that no Nepali had ever gone to Tibet with a bagful of money. Invariably they have gone there with empty bags and have returned with full ones. Some had smaller bags and others bigger. But full they always were. During the process many Nepalis have either borrowed from, or owed money to, many Tibetans. So if any claims of such properties are made officially, a much larger number of Nepalis will have to return either the property or the money than the number of Nepalis receiving it. So it is advisable for us not to act upon this issue. It was decided to follow his advice.

An Employee Of The Consulate

The consulate has some positions where the locally born Nepalis are employed. One such person working in the mission is a twenty-year old youth of mixed parentage. He and other employees at the consulate had attuned themselves to the strictness of discipline and behaviour imposed by the office. But not much was known about this man until our son Keshar visited Lhasa in May 1973, and stayed with us for some time. Keshar took this consulate employee as his guide to various places of interest. Gradually this young man told Keshar about his family, about himself, and his opinions about things. He said that his family had suffered greatly under the high-handedness of some of the former employees of the consulate. His father, a Jyapu from Kathmandu, drank too much alcohol and finally died of excessive drunkenness. He had been beaten by an employee on several occasions. This "rascal of an employee, who was favoured very much by the officers" had, incidentally, accumulated several hundred thousand rupees by various dubious means. This man broke a leg of the young man's father by beating him severely. The young man, his brother, and his sister also, had always been maltreated by this bully. But now they felt secure as the situation had changed. This bully had been dismissed from the consulate. The boy's mother, a Tibetan-Chinese, was also relieved of her worries that every day she burnt butter lamps at the altar of her house and prayed to god for the prolonged stay of the present staff of the mission. She often remarked that never before had she felt as secure and as relieved as at present. "The present staff of the consulate are very kind to the poor and weak, and had

gotten rid of the bad people. Many people in the town, including the authorities said that it was so". He then concluded by saying "your father must be a communist". Keshar was very much amused at this and said, "No, I do not think my father is a communist. Why did you say that?" Keshar asked. Then the young man told him that he and his family thought that it was only communists who were kind and who looked after the poor and oppressed. Keshar explained to this man that there are good and bad people in every system. He explained that one did not have to be a communist to be good to the poor and weak. There are good and bad communists as much as there are good and bad non-communists. A man's commitment to political ideology had nothing to do with his being good or bad in his personal attitudes. "Why then," this young man had protested "was it that our family and so many other poor people were treated so badly until the leadership of Lhasa and other parts of China had been taken over by the communists?". Keshar, obviously did not have the answer to this question.

FOSTSCRIPT – JUNE 1978

Observers have noted many significant developments in Chinese foreign and domestic policies since the deaths of Chou En-lai and Mao Tse-tung. Arguments have been put forward, and events have been pointed out to support the view that post Chou-Mao- China is different in both her foreign and domestic outlook. Yet there does not seem to have been much change in her foreign policy.

His Majesty, King Birendra, paid a friendly visit to Lhasa and Chengtu from the 2nd to the 9th of June 1976, at the invitation of the Chinese government and I was given the opportunity to revisit these places as a member of the Royal Entourage. His Majesty received a very warm and colourful welcome from the government and the people of China in both Chengtu and Lhasa. His Majesty had flown directly from Kathmandu to Chengtu, opening up the Trans-Himalayan Air Route between the two countries for the first time in history. It was not only a landmark in aviation history, but also a significant step forward in Nepal-China relations. So there was jubilation and excitement both among the Nepali guests and among the Chinese hosts through the week-long tour of Chengtu and Lhasa. Chengtu, in Szechuan, is not a place frequently visited by foreign guests, let alone a head of a state. So it was a big holiday for the Szechuanese when the Nepali King and the Chinese Premier met and spent four days together in this ancient capital of south west China, until the Royal guests left Chengtu for Lhasa on the 5th of June, 1976.

During the three days from the 2nd to the 4th of June,

His Majesty had two rounds of friendly talks with the Chinese leaders, visited the famous Tukiang yan ancient irrigation system, the huge Szechuan Number One Textile Dyeing and Printing Factory, and the Center for Physical Culture, and attended an acrobatic show.

Dinner parties were pervaded with friendliness, closeness and satisfaction rather than with formalities. Both leaders expressed their satisfaction over the continuing friendly relations between the two countries since ancient times. There were no agreements to be signed nor a joint communique to be hammered out. It was all in all a friendly occasion for the further development of mutual understanding and friendship. The complete support pledged by the Chinese Premier to the proposal of His Majesty for declaring Nepal a zone of peace had already won Nepal's goodwill and appreciation for the Chinese; and the removal of the Khamba refugees from the northern border by His Majesty's Government two years before had increased Chinese confidence in the Nepalis.

The visit for me was an occasion to observe the steady and constant progress being made in this part of China. The work they had started a few years ago at the site of water control in the ancient irrigation system of Tukiang yan was completed. More land was being irrigated with this system now than before. It was an intimate and familiar sight for the Nepalis, as the landscape and cultivated fields reminded them of similar scenes in Nepal. More of the old houses on the roadside towns were gone, and new buildings stood in place of them.

The Szechuan Number One Textile Factory interested everybody in the group because a smaller prototype of this factory is being built in Nepal with Chinese cooperation. The acrobatic show engaged everybody's attention because the entire audience of the huge theater paid a standing ovation to His Majesty as he entered the hall. The exhibition of the superb skill and discipline of the acrobats drew rounds of applause.

His Majesty took leave of the Chinese Premier Hua Kuo-feng and the Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan-hua on the morning of June 5th at Chengtu airport and took off for Lhasa — escorted by the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Ngapo Ngawang Jigme; the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Chou Tse, and officials from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Everybody in the party was visibly enthused and excited. The trident jet which had replaced the Ilyushin 18 of former days, took only an hour and 35 minutes to reach Lhasa airport. His Majesty was received at the Lhasa airport by Jen Jung, the acting Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee, and other officials. It was an impressive sight to see the line of long, black Red Flag cars against the grey, barren background of the Tibetan landscape. There were more than thirty cars driving out of the airport at Lokah on the bank of River Yalu Tsangpo. It took about two hours and twenty minutes to arrive at the town from the airport.

At the entrance of the city near the Potala palace, there were several thousands of Tibetans in their colourful traditional dresses waving Nepali and Chinese flags and flower bouquets, beating drums, clashing cymbals and shouting slogans of friendship.

The programs in Lhasa were left flexible and quite informal at the wishes of His Majesty. Some of us who were affected by high altitude and rarefied atmosphere needed rest and those of us who were unaffected had plenty of time to stroll around and see Lhasa.

While in Lhasa, His Majesty visited the Potala and Norbu linkha palaces, Drepung Monastery, Jhokhang temple, Tyonkha people's commune, a middle school, the Carpet and Agricultural Tools Factory, a small hydroelectric power plant, and attended cultural programs and witnessed a target shooting practice displayed by the Militia.

Lhasa looked much cleaner and tidier than at the time I

left it in the beginning of 1975. The mileage of blacktop roads in the city had increased. The Bhakor ring road around the 7th Century temple, Jho Khang had all been blacktopped and the temple itself had been restored to a most brilliant state with more than three years of constant work. It was opened for visitors only a few months before. This temple was the most gorgeous and impressive of all the places we saw. Everybody in the party was awed with the huge golden statues of Buddha Sakya Muni, Maitreya, the future Buddha, the 'Fifth Dalai Lama', Je Tsong Khapa and hundreds of other divinities and Lamas. The richly painted bright-coloured walls, and the glittering golden roofs were beyond description. Every corner of the temple was adequately illuminated with electric lights. The two golden statues of Buddha Sakya Muni, brought by the two princesses Bhrikuti and Wen Chen, were pointed out to us by the guide. When asked by one of the members of the entourage whether they held any festivals, such as the Monlam of former days, the guide answered that on certain occasions they brought groups of people in the temple to show them round as part of their education in the class struggle, but they held no festivals there. This temple was believed to have been built in a dried-up lake when there was nothing around it. Later the city of Lhasa grew on all sides. Ever since this place had become the center of activity for the entire Tibetan people.

On another occasion His Majesty visited the Drepung monastery. It had a new feature added since my last visit in 1974 (I have described the monastery in detail in chapter 10). In "Lo She Ling Tachang" there was on display, realistic figures of Lamas, nobles, slaves and serfs, all depicting different forms of torture in the old days. Presumably this was meant to be a lesson on the class struggle.

The Revolutionary Museum of Lhasa, housed on the main road in front of the Potala, displayed in absolute detail all the historical developments of the former Tibetan social, economic and administrative system, and the behaviours of the Lamas, nobles and the former government, along with the feudal robes, ornamentations weapons and instruments of torture, the dried skins, skulls, and amputated limbs of victims. There were also

some photographs taken during the 1962 border conflict with India and finally the graphic presentation of development and progress achieved after liberation. There were models of the highways connecting Tibet with other provinces of the Linchi industrial area and of the Leihmai people's commune in south eastern Tibet which has made record progress in its agriculture development and in learning from Tachai according to the instructions of Chairman Mao.

In the Potala palace all the dark rooms had been illuminated with electric lights. During my earlier visits they had disconnected the electricity for fear of accidents and fire hazards. This time the visitors were also able to tour the vast "Western Hall" which had not been opened during my previous visit. This hall was the storeroom for the gigantic banner that used to be hung over the southern side of the palace during certain festivals. The rooms on all sides of the Hall were full of huge golden statues of Tsamba (Maitreya), Je Tsong Khapa, Padma Sambhava and a number of other Lamas. We also walked alongside the row of seven Chaityas containing the dead bodies of the 5th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Dalai Lamas. The guide informed the visitors that three thousand seven hundred and thirty one kilograms of gold had been used to build these Chaityas. They also contained the most precious jewels inlaid in them.

The revisit to Tyonkha commune was interesting as I was able to observe some changes in it. The commune had now built a big hall for meetings and rooms for regular class education by party cadres. The population had increased to 1,104 from 1,074 in August 1974. The number of eighty families of preliberation days increased to 252 in August 1973, and had expanded to two hundred and sixty-five in 1976. They cultivated 2,400 *Mu* of land in all. Their apple orchard had expanded and the willow trees had grown taller. The commune driveways were better maintained than in March 1974.

The small hydro-electric plant near the western limits of the city had been completed and commissioned. It supplied one

thousand kilowats of electricity. The two thousand five hundred primary schools at the end of 1972 for the entire Tibet Region had increased to 4,300. All populous towns had their own middle schools. There were two institutes of higher learning and three factory-run workers' universities.

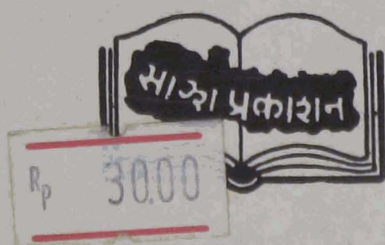
The population figure of 1.5 million had grown to 1.6 million. An increase of 400,000 people during the past 15 years had been recorded.¹⁷

It was quite interesting and pleasant to be able to meet so many of the old friends and acquaintances during the tours and especially during the banquet and receptions. All my old acquaintances – the acting Chairman, Jen Jung Vice Chairmen, Thien Pao, Pasang, Kuo Shi-lan, and Kao Shen hsuan. Director Chen Chin-po, Deputy Director Wang Hsi-liang; and all the other officials of the Foreign Bureau, the Foreign Trade Bureau, the Lhasa Municipality and the Commanders of the Tibet Military Area Command were there. This was also the occasion to feel the relaxed atmosphere of Lhasa. It seemed that it increased the prospect of Lhasa being opened to the people from outside within the next five to seven years. But from Nepal's point of view, the most exciting prospect was the opening up of the possibility of air contacts between Nepal and China directly over the Himalayas. It will make a great deal of difference for Nepal when this route finally opens up.

¹⁷ "From Serfdom to Socialism" – *China Reconstructs* March 1976.
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