

# NEW TIBET

TSERING DORJE GASHI

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Memoirs of a Graduate of the Peking Institute  
of National Minorities

by

TSERING DORJE GASHI

(Translated from Tibetan)

INFORMATION OFFICE OF HIS HOLINESS  
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## Translator's Note

When Tsering Dorje's "Ten Years In Communist China And Tibet. . . . . 1956-66" was published in 1977, it quickly became something of a bestseller. Friends and well-wishers lost no time in advising Tsering Dorje to translate his memoirs into English. Even a *kalon*, or a cabinet minister of the exiled Tibetan government, was sufficiently impressed with Tsering Dorje's story to invite him to his house, and warmly encouraged him to find somebody competent to work on an English translation. He was even willing to finance the publication of such a translation. Very soon the author discovered that another surprise was in store for him. The Information Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama had already come up with a draft translation.

And there are very good reasons for the exiled Tibetan public's clamour for Tsering Dorje's story. The story he has to tell is different. Tsering Dorje and his generation lived through one of the most tumultuous times in Tibet's history. In the pages of Tsering Dorje's book the readers see, not only old Tibet in its last dying gasps, but the birth of a new Tibet, epitomized in the emergence of a new class of nationalist students. In many ways, Tsering Dorje, like other China-educated Tibetans, is the product of two worlds. He was born in Phari, the highest town in the world, not far from the borders of Bhutan. Phari of Tsering Dorje's boyhood was typical of traditional Tibet. Life in traditional Tibet, when stripped to its core, centred around the monastery. A Tibetan's whole outlook to life was determined by the monastery's spiritual and intellectual monopoly. In this social milieu, and within its restrictive horizons, Tsering Dorje grew up in his most impressionable years.

Till the age of sixteen, he was educated along traditional lines. In 1956 he and several other youths of his village were sent to China to study at the Peking Institute of National Minorities, now called the Central Institute of Minority Nationalities.

For older and more traditional Tibetans the mental journey from Buddhist Tibet to Communist China was agonizing, to say the least. For Tsering Dorje's generation its youth helped it to take the "great leap" between two diametrically opposed cultures in its stride. It was simply a part of the new generation's new education. But this new generation too temporarily experienced a sense of loss of directions. While their elders, the colourful Khambas, were fighting the Chinese in the grasslands of eastern Tibet, the Tibetan students in China had to contend with an intangible force—the very ideas which had brought about Tibet's humiliation. Thus the Tibetan struggle raged both in the battlefield and in the minds of this new generation. These students were not themselves responsible for the calamity which had struck Tibet. But they were the one new class who showed genuine distress at its present condition, who cared for its future, and who above all, sought an explanation for the fact that Tibet, the hub and centre of a cultural world in the previous generation, was now reduced to a mere frontier province of a new empire.

Much of the value of Tsering Dorje's story lies in the accurate portrayal of the intellectual dilemma suffered by these young Tibetans. His memoirs is not the story of a simple Tibetan nomad, reacting wildly and confusedly to the impact of a materialist ideology. Rather it reflects the conscious attempt of a whole generation's search for an answer to their country's fundamentally changed position in a changing world.

The motive behind the new education which the Chinese gave the Tibetan students was not wholly benign. But their new education, however limited or narrow in scope, not only deepened the Tibetan students' new-found sense of nationality but also helped them to see the failings of their old society. Thus the arguments of a few of the young Tibetans, euphemistically called "progressives" or "activists"

by the Chinese, cannot be lightly dismissed. As recorded in the pages of this book the arguments of “progressives” like Horpa and Kashi, whether on the nature of Tibetan Buddhism or on Tibet’s historical status, represent a point of view. It is impossible to judge how much the opinions expressed by the “progressives” during the numerous campaigns conducted by the Chinese were their own convictions and how much the mindless repetition of Chinese dictated points. Tsering Dorje’s fairness in presenting both the points of view helps in creating a picture of the dilemma of the Tibetan students in China. This dilemma is the dilemma of Tibet itself.

In essence, the dilemma which the Chinese “liberation” of Tibet presented to the Tibetans is the choice between national independence and social change. Certainly the ideal is to have national independence with social change. But this golden opportunity available during the first half of this century was lost. Tibet’s traditional ruling class frittered away Tibetan independence through indifference. Social change, worth its name, the traditional elite definitely refused to bring about. The traditional Tibetan elite’s utter inability to bring about some sort of a directed social change makes the Chinese “liberation” acquire some of the characteristics of a true liberation, a fact which the Chinese have shrewdly capitalised on. The PLA swept across the length and breadth of Tibet, bringing the light of a “higher civilization” and the message of a radical re-ordering of human social relations. The Tibetans saw their independence suddenly disappear before their very eyes and were forced to undergo a social change hardly to their liking. But the reality of the situation forced a choice upon the Tibetans. Much of the current complexity of the Tibetan issue is a result of that choice.

In 1961 the author was sent back to Tibet, and was posted in Lhasa. From this vantage point he gradually came to know the ins and outs of the new society which he saw and experienced in Tibet. On top of this, the Marxist education to which he and his country’s youth were subjected helped him to analyse China’s policies more rationally and shrewdly. Thus the author had the fortune or misfortune



of experiencing “liberation” at first hand, first in China, then in Tibet. In Tibet the author fully realised the shocking contrast between Chinese promises and their performances. This realization led to his complete disillusionment.

I came to meet the author while I was reading History at the undergraduate level at St. Stephen’s College, Delhi University. At the time I had taken a paper in Chinese history, mainly because of interest and partly because of the prevailing academic superstition that it was “easier” than alternative papers. It was around this time that the students at the University invited Tsering Dorje to give a lecture on Tibet today and to talk about his recently published book. His revealing lecture opened for me, and I am certain for other Tibetan students who were there, a picture of Tibet which was very new and one which we had consciously or otherwise kept out of our young lives. My curiosity was aroused. I was willing to listen and Tsering Dorje to talk. On weekends I visited him to listen to his endless reminiscences about life in China and new Tibet.

My interest in new Tibet, deepened by the author’s reminiscences, led me to devote one whole year to the study of modern China at the post-graduate level in History. Thus I came to understand, what I as a Tibetan have long known, that Tibet’s historical development was independent of China. I also came to know the very obvious truth, but which at the time I thought was rather novel, that present-day Tibet cannot be understood in isolation but in relation to the overall political developments in China itself. More importantly, I came to realise the significance of the various mass campaigns in China. These mass campaigns, so vividly described in the early chapters of this book, formed the daily reality of the workers, peasants, and the students of both China and Tibet. This background knowledge of China and of the author’s own life has helped me in making my translation work easier. It is my hope that it has also helped me in making the translation more accurate.

While working on this translation I have kept in mind a few basic considerations. The aim of this translation has been to put across clearly to the readers what the author has expressed in his graphic Tibetan. Consequently as

little editing as was necessary has been done to ensure that none of the warmth and the spontaneity the story Tsering Dorje has to tell is lost.

This book is written in colloquial Tibetan. In this English rendering I have tried to keep as close to the literal sense of the text as the idioms of the two languages permit, except where it was necessary to bring in a clearer manner the real meaning intended rather than translate literally. As such the translation of some of the terms, phrases and metaphors might be technically less exact than they ought to be. In such cases the main consideration has been to convey what the author is saying and not how he is saying it.

The chapters are renamed. They are also regrouped under clearer, more composite headings. Naturally, the sequence of the chapters remain as before.

The author has been an active collaborator in the translation work. Points which were obscure to me were elucidated and explained by the author.

Many kind people have shown interest and offered suggestions while the translation was going on. I would like to thank them. I would especially like to thank Mr. Pema Dorje who retyped the whole manuscript.

Samphel  
St. Stephen's College  
Delhi, March 1980



## Preface

Ever since going into exile, I cherished the desire to put on paper whatever I saw, whatever I heard and above all, whatever I experienced under the Chinese Communists in China and later in Tibet. However, what might be called circumstances beyond my control and in particular my poverty delayed this publication.

The book is primarily based on my personal experience under the Chinese for ten years. I arrived in Lhasa in December 1961 from Peking, where I was studying since 1956. After working in the *Tibet Daily* press for about eight months, I was discharged and told to return to my native town, Phari. For about four years, I took part in road construction, farming, etc, just like any of the local inhabitants in Phari till the night of September 26, 1966 when I succeeded in my flight to freedom. The book covers all this and also gives the reader an idea of the drastic changes that have swept the length and breadth of Tibet, including spontaneous nationalist uprisings by the Tibetan masses against the alien overlords.

The book also contains many incredible but true tales, for instance, how China-educated youths like myself, fought for Tibetan national freedom and that too in the lion's den—Peking. Many such significant events have passed unnoticed by the world outside and they continue to remain behind the bamboo curtain. Therefore, as a Tibetan and as one who witnessed all this, I consider it my moral duty to reveal the sufferings and sacrifices that many young people have made for the Tibetan cause. I feel it is high time that the world outside realized that even the China-educated Tibetan youths in whom the Chinese have had



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great hopes have revolted and continue to revolt against Chinese domination.

It is important that we should know the Chinese policy and what they are doing in Tibet. However, it is an intriguing and complex thing, and therefore difficult to know exactly what, why and how the Chinese system is operating in Tibet. Even for the common masses in Tibet it is difficult to penetrate beyond the propaganda line because they simply have no access to the inside story. They live in a society where there is a perpetual state of emergency. With humility, I may claim to know a little of the inside machinery as well as the outside appearance of the Chinese "socialist" system in Tibet. Hence, this humble contribution.

## To China For New Learning

The Year of the Earth Bull (1949) is vivid in my memory. That year I attained the age of nine, by Tibetan reckoning, and was sent to school. My first school was the Phari Lhakang school whose teacher instructed 130 odd students. I studied for a little more than two years in the school after which I had to discontinue my studies there because of the untimely death of the school teacher. After a break of eight months I was once again sent to school in upper Phari. On reaching thirteen, I was sent to study grammar at the Phari Richung Phothog medical school.

Thinking back now on those days I consider my admission to the medical school as a golden opportunity I had of acquainting myself more intimately with the customs and traditions of my people. The head of the medical school was the respected Palden Gyaltzen-la, a lama scholar whose learning was known far and wide. His knowledge of astrology and Tibetan medicine surely made him one of the great scholars of the 'land of snows' in his time. The central government, at the persistent appeal of the local people who wanted a medical officer to look after their health and hygiene, deputed Palden Gyaltzen-la to Phari. Not only was Palden Gyaltzen-la learned and wise, he was also noble-minded. When any poor, deserving person came to him for treatment and medicine, Palden Gyaltzen-la, as was his wont, after a thorough examination, loaded him with meat, butter, *tsampa* and money, besides giving the prescribed medicine pills. Those who came before his person felt as if they were in the presence of a *Changchub-sempa* (Bodhi-sattva).

True to the traditions of the Tibetan sages Palden



Gyalsten-la was unworldly. He supported several of his deserving students and went out of his way to minister the poor and the sick. Our teacher devoted himself to teaching us the *ngen-ngak* or poetry and the *sumta*, which constitutes the grammar of the Tibetan language. He made no efforts to accumulate wealth for himself. When he first came to Phari, Palden Gyaltzen-la had only a load of *pecha* (scriptural texts) on his back. During his ten years of working in Phari he added nothing extra to his few earthly possessions. Regrettably, after a little less than two years I was taken away from his guidance and was once again sent to one of the smaller schools of Phari.

It was while in my new school that I first heard talks about Tibetan youths being sent to China for new education. One day the Chinese Communist cadre at Phari, Chang Kha—chang, came to our school and spoke to the young eager boys about the benefits of going to revolutionary China to receive new education. Being young, I longed for bigger and more exciting places with lots of strange and new things to see. I pestered my mother and told her that I wanted to go to China. Concerned about my future, my mother and elder brother, after much thought and discussion, decided that sending me to China for education was in my interest. Accordingly they enrolled my name in the list of the students going to China.

There were eight students from Phari, including myself, going to China. Ours was the second batch of students from Phari to be sent to China. At the time a sumptuous party was thrown by the Chinese in their office to the China-bound youths and their parents. Party member, Chang Kha-chang gave a short speech: “The Chinese Communist Party has plans for training cadres from the national minorities. If you are included in this, your future would be secure and bright. You would be in the ranks of the Tibetan pioneers. At the same time you will see the wonders and cities of China which you have only heard with your ears, but not seen with your eyes.” To ease anxious parents he said that the students would be sent back to Tibet after three years. In July 1956 the eight of us, along with about twenty students who joined us

from the Chumbi valley, were given a grand send-off. Friends and relatives dressed in their best clothes offered us *chang* (Tibetan beer) and *khatas* (greeting scarves) and wished us well and a safe journey. We left Phari in a Chinese truck.

We reached Lhasa from Gyantse via Shigatse. In Lhasa we were accommodated in the Gorpa-ling House and had to spend nearly two months there. This was because, firstly, we had to undergo a thorough medical check-up. Secondly, we had to wait for the other Tibetan youths who were yet to come from different parts of Tibet. Gradually coming in batches, approximately 300 youths from various regions of Tibet arrived in Lhasa. This number however did not include Tibetan youths from Chamdo and Nagchuka and beyond. At last we left for Peking, travelling on the Chinese-named motorable road, the Chinghai-Tibet Highway. We noticed at the time that there was no railway track till we had reached the Chinese town of Chengtu. At Chengtu we were put in a train, and via Sian we reached Peking.

On our arrival at the Peking Institute of National Minorities we were given a simple but warm welcome by the Tibetan students who had arrived in the years 1954 and 1955. They received us with bottles of hot water and green tea. They were curious and evidently happy and asked countless questions ranging from the general conditions of Tibet to specific questions concerning their own families. They told us about their experiences in the Institute in the one or two years they had been there. In turn we told them about the developments in Tibet and the particular regions from which they came, about their families, if we happened to know them, and our own experiences on the journey. The old students offered us hot water in cups and jokingly told us, "Nowadays we do not have to dirty ourselves by lot of grease and oil as we used to do in Tibet. We need not trouble ourselves with luxuries like butter tea. Drinking clean, hot water will not only improve our health but will cleanse us of the grease and oil we had stuffed ourselves with back in Tibet." Like others I joined in the laughter and at the time I did not notice the sad irony which the

remark carried.

The Institute of National Minorities was situated in the west of Peking. To the immediate south-east of the Institute lay a hospital and the National Minorities Music and Dance School. To the South was the Peking Meteorological Centre. The zoo was also close by. To the west there were some villages. The campus of the Institute was spacious but at the time there were only a few buildings which were fenced around by newly-planted pine trees whose evergreen appearance, summer and winter, was no small wonder to Tibetan students and was indeed like a tangible rebuke to a person of inconstant nature. There were flower gardens in front of the Institute's main buildings and before the central dining hall. Butterflies gaily flitted in the gardens. Un-Tibetan like, we used to catch the butterflies and press them in books and use them as book-marks. Most of the trees that were planted in the campus were pine and willow trees which grew not in clusters but scattered here and there. Before the communists came to power the place where the Institute was situated had been used as a graveyard. During the construction of the Institute, workmen came across skulls, bones of human legs and hands. The students used to frighten one another by telling ghost stories and warning that if at night one walked alone in the campus one met with ghosts.

The climate of Peking fell clearly into four seasons. The summer temperature often attained 37°C. During summer cicadas on trees chirped shrilly. The noise made by cicadas used to remind Tibetan students of the jingling mule-trains in Tibet. There was a local Chinese saying that if cicadas were kept in the room the summer heat could be lessened and this idea caught on among the students; they caught cicadas and kept them in their dormitories in small baskets. In summer, except in the morning and evening, no one could be seen in the sportsfield. When we took our afternoon nap we sweated profusely and the mattresses became soaked as if bucketful of water were thrown on them. Neither in the classroom nor in the dormitories were there fans. The Chinese themselves were all the time busy fanning their faces with small hand fans. Even when we studied we

could not become relaxed; from our hands, faces and heads perspiration dripped down to our books which became smudged and easily torn.

Winter in Peking was extremely cold, the mean temperature dropping down to 12°C below zero. The students put on their boiler-suits and caps. The classrooms and the dormitories were heated by a special steam heating system.

During an especially heavy snowfall or a snow-storm, if students, when moving from class to class or to the dining halls, did not go fast enough, they got frostbitten and their faces swelled. In winter the most popular sport was ice-skating. In front of the building of the second faculty there was a skating ground as big as a football field. The ground became filled with boys and girls skating. There were the beginners whose attempts at skating were not very different from donkeys trying to walk on ice. If a skater were not careful he was likely to fall and hurt himself. Once I had a nasty fall and did not know whether to laugh or cry. But once the art of skating was acquired one virtually had total freedom on ice. If one watched a skilful skater from a distance one felt as if he had taken on wings and was flying over ice. I came to like the game.

Autumn in Peking, though mild, was windy. Wind stripped the trees clean of leaves and branches, leaving the trees stark bare like poles stuck to the ground. In autumn the students had the extra work of sweeping the campus clean of leaves. Autumn was also the season when the sports-ground became filled with students who played whatever sport they liked, sports like long-distance running, football, pole-vault, short-put, and the rest. Most of the football tournaments were played in autumn and spring. Autumn was a busy, active season.

Spring in any part of the world is a season of joy. Similarly, spring-time in the Institute saw flowers in the gardens bloom into a riot of hue and colour. The brown, dry fields became fresh and green. The white flowers on the peach trees blossomed and their freshness gave us comfort. It was possible for the more sensitive students to draw the following moral from the flowers on the peach trees, "while in the prime of youth make the best use of it. Youthfulness is

fleeting as the flowers on the peach trees. The manner in which flowers blossom will determine the quality of their fruit". And truly the flowers bloomed in the morning and withered in the evening, bloomed in the evening and faded in the morning. The flowers lasted at the longest for about three days and no matter how much one desired to see the flowers again one had to wait for another whole year. Likewise in youth if one has not devoted one's talent to fruitful pursuits mind's regret comes only after the flowers have faded away.

Although there were many double and three storeyed buildings there were only about ten buildings which were four or five storeyed.

There were seven dining halls of varying sizes. The centre of the campus was dominated by the auditorium where cultural programmes were staged, films shown and meetings held.

There were several faculties in the Institute. The second faculty had 800 odd Tibetans and the first about 100. Besides, there were a large number of Tibetans in the political, language, history and the song and music departments. Altogether there were approximately 1000 Tibetans in the Institute when I was there.

The subjects taught varied from class to class. In the second faculty, where I was in, the subjects taught were Chinese, mathematics, painting, music, science, geography, physical training and politics. In my faculty one of the subjects taught was how to use the abacus. Tibetan was taught for two hours in a week. However the main subjects were Chinese, politics and mathematics.

The daily study routine was as follows: the day started with self-study from six-thirty to seven-thirty. We had classes from eight in the morning till twelve at noon and again from two in the afternoon to four in the evening. From seven to nine in the night we had our self-study again. There was a change of one hour in this routine in summer and winter to suit seasonal changes. On Monday nights the students held discussions. The Monday night meetings were called "the discipline and behaviour criticism meeting." The meetings were primarily held to discuss measures

for breaches of classroom discipline and for fostering friendship and social harmony among the students. In the meeting each individual student's behaviour was discussed, his cleanliness, his attitude towards teachers and his studies. The meetings were chaired neither by Chinese nor Tibetan teachers but by the class monitor. The naughty students among us used to dread the Monday night meetings.

The Institute was an institute of many minorities. There were the Uighurs and Kazakhs of Sinkiang, Mongols, Huis, Koreans, Chuangs, Miaos, Yis, Tungs, Lis, Lisus, Pais, Kus-los, Tibetans and also Hans in the Institute. The Institute represented more than forty different minorities. Of these students, Tibetans, Hans, Mongols and the Uighurs and Kazakhs of Sinkiang numbered the most. The student from Sinkiang were intensely proud of their culture and their traditional costumes. Even after six years in the Institute the Sinkiang students did not discard their costumes to adorn the blue boiler-suits of the Hans. This was a lesson to us, the Tibetans, I felt. I deeply admired the Sinkiang students for their rocklike pride in sticking to their traditions but I was not able to follow the demands of my own culture with the same faithfulness.

Before 1958 the living standard of the Institute was high. At the beginning of every summer and winter the students were fitted with a set of new clothes, and the Tibetan students were provided annually with *chuba* (Tibetan dress). If a student's quilt-cover tore he could get a replacement by approaching the office through his class monitor, *pen turin*.

Meals consisted of rice, steamed bread and two more dishes. When meat was served it was invariably either pork or mutton. For breakfast we got rice gruel and sometimes, on rare occasions, flour dough fried in oil. Sometimes we were given the juice of boiled sweet peas. On important national occasions like May I and October I we were served better meals with a number of dishes and better quality rice and steamed dumplings called *mo-mos*. On Tibetan New Year day the meals served in the dining hall consisted of Tibetan food. Those Tibetan students who were good at cooking were engaged in the kitchen. On

such occasions the students waited outside the dining halls earlier than usual and there was a small rush to get in.

Text-books, exercise-books, ink, pens, soap, towels tooth-paste and tooth-brushes were supplied by the state. On the top of this the students received a monthly stipend of eight yuans. The students at the time were permitted to receive money from home, which they sometimes spent eating outside in town. On Saturday nights films were shown in the auditorium and tickets were sold for five *phings* or 0.05 yuans. The students who were broke crowded in front of windows and doors and tried to get a glimpse of the film by peeping through winpov-panes and door cracks.

During this time a rather liberal social life was permitted. Most students liked going to the nightly sessions of traditional dances held in the second dining hall. The students dressed in their best and went to the nightly 'dance' in style. The dance session usually went on till two in the morning.

On Saturdays and Sundays the football field was filled with students competing in different sports; and the names of the teams they represented were emblazoned on their chests. We Tibetan students had our own teams in football, basketball, table-tennis and the like, and they bore names like "Gang-jong Team", "the Forward Team", "the Youth Team", "the Ear Team", "the Nose Team" and so on. There was also motor-bike racing and cycling. However few learnt how to rid a motor-bike since there were only two motor bikes in the Institute. Besides, there was the cross-country race and some Tibetan students could run an incredibly long distance without pause or rest. There were Tibetan students who were good at javelin-throw, short-put, discus-throw, hand-grenade, pole-vault and the rest. Most of them had a good physique.

Dancing was greatly liked by the students of the Institute. Tibetan songs and dances were frequently performed in the auditorium. Play acting was popular among Tibetans. Though I liked watching plays, I could neither write them nor act in them.

In this period the students, group-wise, were permitted to go sight-seeing to places of interest in and around Peking. Some of the places were the Peking Exhibition Hall, (for-

merly the Soviet Exhibition Hall), the Peking planetarium, the zoo, and the palaces of the Manchu emperors. We went swimming, boating, and to see films. To the west of the Institute lay a village which had a small river running by. The water of the river was not clean but since it was nearby we sometimes swam in it. Being a poor swimmer I got nearly drowned one day. Ever since I became rather allergic to swimming. The above is the conditions and the standard of living of the Institute from 1956 to 1957.



# The Peking Institute of National Minorities

In 1957 every part of China was swept by the “anti-rightist” campaign which soon engulfed our Institute and worked big changes in its administration. For example the Principal of the Institute, Phi Sha-tung, was branded a “rightist”. Along with him many of the teachers, cadres and advanced students were labelled “rightists” and “right-opportunists”, besides a variety of other names. Important changes took place in the Institute’s administrative personnel and teaching staff. With the coming of the anti-rightist campaign the comparatively high standard of living enjoyed in the Institute came under fire. The main intent of the anti-rightist campaign, which was officially considered as the second phase of the “rectification” movement, was to cure the “unrepentant rightists”. In the Institute the campaign was directed against the waste and extravagance under the “old regime” of Principal Phi Sha-tung. On the whole the campaign was a reaction to the unexpected backfire to Mao’s clarion call: “let a hundred flowers bloom; let a hundred schools of thought contend”.

The campaign was started in the Institute by the students meeting in their classrooms. In the classrooms the teachers spoke thus: “The present campaign is a political movement to successfully implement throughout China the second five-year plan and to further consolidate the hold of socialism. Recently the rightists wearing the mask of the people, defying the party and Chairman Mao, blatantly made big plans for the restoration of capitalism. However their efforts were turned to dust by the militant revolutionary power of the broad masses following the correct leader-

ship of the party and Chairman Mao. In our Institute there are representatives of capitalism. A few of the Institute authorities are an example. Following them are cadres, teachers and students, who harbour bourgeois and petty bourgeois thoughts. In order to reform people of this type we have started the second phase of the rectification movement. To intensify the campaign the students, from a firm standpoint, must involve themselves in self-criticism and also point out the mistakes of others. The present campaign is an opportunity for every student to show his ability and prove his worth. The students must work for the propagation of the revolutionary spirit and culture, they must be an inspiration to others, and undo their own mistakes and to speak out their own bad points. Considering this as the guiding principle the students must point out, without hesitation and without covering up, the mistakes of others, teachers, cadres and whosoever goes wrong. If a student does this he will not only have understood the heart of this movement but have proved his ability and worth."

After this meeting the authorities engaged in a massive big-character poster campaign, continuous for days. The posters were stuck on the walls of the dining halls, classrooms, auditorium, dormitories, the library, hospital and the walls of every other building.

The posters contained scathing attacks on people who "behaved like capitalist-roaders" and had "the mind of petty bourgeois", persons who were like "pigs fed by the people", people who had "the outrageous behaviour of a drunkard", persons who had "human body but snake's head", persons who had "diseased mind" and indulged in "bourgeois excesses", people who were like a "two-headed woodpecker" and had "an empty mind in a beautiful body," who acted in a "defeatist manner" and indulged in "bolsism" and who were "self-centered, divorced from the masses", who were "gluttons, who, the more they ate, the thinner they got" and whose "mind was diseased by tuberculosis". These were a few of the many condemnations by which the thought, way of living and behaviour of the "rightists" were attacked.

The Institute's Communist Youth League put up big

character posters with the organization's name written on them. Among the posters was the following: "If we are truly the revolutionary students who are helping to establish socialism, we must acquire the thinking of the proletariats. The origins of the thinking of the proletariats lies in the economic conditions of the proletariats and therefore studying the economic conditions of the proletariats is important. Till now the standard of living in our Institute has been high and luxurious and the students were turning into princes and princesses. This is because some of the Institute authorities did not have the slightest concern for the economic conditions of the country. On the contrary they planned to restore capitalism and drag this Institute into the capitalist den. The Institute did not have a clear-cut political standpoint and indulged in extravagance. If all this is not immediately corrected then the economic development of the country will be harmed. If a person drops even one grain of rice to the ground that becomes a waste. China has at present a population of almost a billion: if every one of us happens to waste even a grain of rice each, then the whole of China would be wasting billions of grains of rice. If we put a stop to all this wastage and extravagance, food for thousands of people for one whole year would be saved. From now on we students must voluntarily state that we want our food to be rationed and that we shall be content with only one dish. Moreover the pocket money that we receive from our homes is people's money. We must not think that it is our money and shamelessly spend it in sparing out in town, seeing movies, going for picnics, buying cigarettes and beer, eating out because the food in the Institute is considered poor. If we students continue to behave indecently and indulge in bourgeois extravagance our names would appear in the big-character posters and we would be pulled up and criticised and be made to confess in the discipline and behaviour criticism meeting. We students must actively and positively involve ourselves in this movement. We must set an example to others and behave modestly and decently. If we can do this we will become good students."

As a mark of their resolve the "rotten" behaviour of Wangchen from Chamdo was criticised in big-character

posters. This was the first shot in the campaign of students being made to criticise each other's behaviour in numerous posters. Here are some of the actions and behaviour for which a student was criticised: for wearing tight-fitting trousers for wearing pointed shoes, for doing one's hair in provocative fashion, for going out for movies and plays, and for wearing good quality clothes of wool and other superior material. These habits were condemned as that of "prince mentality". If a student rushed in the auditorium, classroom, dining hall or made loud noises he was criticised in the posters. A student could even be criticised for his gait and style of walking.

The rectification movement lasted for over half a year in the Institute. During this period the number of people from the teachers down to the students and the number of times each of them struck up big-character posters numbered several lakhs. According to the boast of the teachers and the class monitors, in the whole of Peking, if the sheer volume of posters were to be calculated and compared, then the Institute came somewhere at the top of the list.

Following the rectification movement the standard of living in the Institute was reduced to proletarian levels. The students did not have a choice between steamed dough and rice as before and had to be content with one dish of boiled vegetables. On some mornings food did not go around all the students and some had to attend classes after gulping down hot water. It was truly a proletarian way of living. The noisy activity of the fields was silenced. Some of the light-hearted students humorously said that their stomachs did not permit them to play too hard a game of football; it was more in tune with the times if less energy was used by concentrating more on books. I too used to question the wisdom of doing too strenuous an exercise when the food we got was so poor.

The Saturday night dances in the second dining hall were stopped. This was because the traditional dances reflected the traditional bourgeois life-style which if not uprooted at once would adversely influence the minds of the students. There was the danger of poisonous weeds growing in the revolutionary Institute.

From 1958 onwards we did not get any chance to visit the places of interest in and around Peking. Formerly the students were granted a monthly stipend of eight *yuans* each but this was reduced to two *yuans* and five *motse*. Far from enjoying the luxury of visiting places, if we did not use ink, exercise books, pens, towels and soap etc. sparingly, they did not last us to the end of the month. Sometimes our tooth-paste ran out and we had to clean our teeth with coal dust. Similarly sometimes we did not have soap and our morning ablution consisted merely of splashing water on our faces. In such poor conditions even washing clothes become a big burden for us. Without sufficient soap washing clothes could mean continuously rubbing them for an hour or two to make them clean. The students when hard pressed pinched other's soap, which sometimes resulted in altercations. Winter and summer no new set of clothes would be issued; we had to keep adding patches to the one we had on. Even when the quilt covers tore and the cotton wool came out, we had to keep on using them till the authorities took notice and issued us a new cover, which was a long-winded process. Though we were reduced to such conditions the anti-waste campaign in the Institute had to be kept going without stop.

## Gods, Ghosts and Marx

The “religious freedom” campaign was a part of the rectification movement. Prior to the start of the so called “religious freedom” campaign the students of the Institute held many different religious beliefs. The religions followed were Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Bonism, besides many minor sects. At the time a student could follow any religion of his choosing; no one questioned him about it. As such there was no need to start a religious freedom campaign: there was absolute freedom to either follow or not to follow religion. If a student did not believe in religion he was not punished for his disbelief. To start a “religious freedom” campaign when true religious freedom was enjoyed meant that the campaign had ulterior motives.

The religious freedom campaign was started by the students being told to assemble in their classrooms. In our class one of the responsible cadres said: “The fact that our Institute is keeping pace with the times is heartening. Till now in many movements and campaigns the Institute authorities, teachers, and the progressive students have done many commendable deeds. Consequently the red nature of this Institute is clearly becoming more and more red. However we must not become smug but strive extra hard to go forward and not be left behind or in the middle. At present in all the forward-looking, advanced areas the revolutionary wind is blowing, new thoughts of socialism are flowering all over the country; in such a time it is opportune to debate on the existence of gods and ghosts. People’s understanding and way of thinking must be deepened; and their eighteenth-century mind must be made forward-looking. Dialectical materialism must be made to expose the

falsity of idealism; all the students must positively participate in the religious freedom campaign and keep pace with the rest of the country. This movement is a struggle between progress and backwardness; between people who are forward-looking and backward-looking; between materialism and idealism. In this movement the students who are able to wash their minds clean and positively participate in the *thamzing* (struggle meetings) are good students, students whose minds are progressive and in tune with the times.’

He continued, “The Chinese Communist Party, considering Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism as its guiding principle, is the leading force of the proletarian movement and it does not recognise things which go beyond the material phenomenon. Religion is an idealist concept and was perpetuated by and benefits only the exploiting class; it is a shadow without substance, Religion is an instrument in the hands of the exploiting class to keep the broad masses in ignorance while they—the exploiters—lying down, eat up the produce of the working class. To fool the masses further the exploiting class spread lies and falsehood. For example the exploiters to confuse the masses, tell them that their present condition is the result of their *karma* or past deeds. In this situation the Chinese Communist Party looks to the interest of the broad masses and not those of the minority group of the exploiting class. Consequently it must be stated clearly in this meeting that partymen and those teachers, students and cadres who are members of the Communist Youth League, should not have religious faith. If one still wishes to follow religion then one must voluntarily resign from the respective organizations. The ordinary students must also think deeply and find out the merits and demerits of religion, who benefits from religion and whether gods and ghosts really exist. These must be debated out.”

He continued, “We Communists have no religion. The Communist Party recognises religion as poison and not something progressive and beneficial. Lenin said: ‘Religion is a big obstacle embedded in the minds of people for thousands of years. It is deeply rooted in people’s mind and it has many ramifications and cannot be destroyed by armed force. As

many human society progresses and people's understanding deepens and greater scientific advancement is made, only then will religion gradually disappear'. And this is true. In this campaign the majority has total freedom to worship and follow any religion they like. They are free to be Buddhists today and Christians tomorrow; they are free to be atheists today and religious the next day. This freedom cannot be questioned by anyone. This is the socialist policy of religious freedom.

"However it must be further said that before we have the dictatorship of the proletariats in our society, by following the principle of Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism, we must constantly debate on who benefits if religion is followed and who benefits if religion is not followed. Without fear, suspicion and mistrust the students must debate, laying bare their own minds. We will welcome this". Thus he concluded his speech.

It is difficult to describe in detail the reception and reaction which the so-called religious freedom campaign met in the Institute as a whole. I would like to recount the debate which my class had on the existence and relevance of religion. At first most students in the class believed in religion; there were only few who did not believe in religion. These non-believers were party members and alternate party members. In my class there were forty-six students, including one party member and two alternate party members. The religious freedom movement in our class was launched by the trio attacking religion out and out. They said: "Religion is poison. Religion has given us neither anything to eat nor drink. On the contrary *tsampa* and butter have to be wasted as offerings to images of mud and bronze. Prayers and prostration before mud images has not helped the individuals who pray and prostrate, leave alone benefiting the masses. What better can be expected from mud images and blind faith."

Immediately a boy from Lhasa got up and replied, "What you have just now described and condemned is an out-growth of religion and not religion itself. This indicates that you do not fully know what religion is. I am not well-versed in religion but I know that religion is not for the benefit of



individuals in this lifetime only. More important religion helps us to bear the sufferings of this lifetime with greater fortitude and helps us in our striving for eternal salvation and happiness. For this butter and *tsampa* need not be wasted nor is offering essential. The important thing is that through compassion a person should do his work, eradicating from his mind hatred, envy and anger. Without working under the influence of these three poisons if a person remains and does good then this is real religion." Saying this he sat down.

A party member, a person called Kashi from Chamdo, got up and displaying deep anger said, "What have you said is one big lie. There is no greater mistake than saying that a person who believes in religion is a good person. It is like a blind man trying to describe an object. We are also from Tibet, our people have followed religion for generations but till now I am yet to hear of someone having attained enlightenment. Bearing names like *lama* and *drapa*, (monks) the yellow robbers and red bandits have neither practised religion nor sacrificed their lives for it's sake. The fruits of the labours of the broad masses are given without reason to these robbers and bandits who only eat and sleep. Far from sacrificing the comforts of this life the lamas and monks think only of how to further exploit the masses throughout their lives. It is the lamas and monks who are gone mad by the poisons of lust, hatred and jealousy and not the people. What is wrong with the broad masses working for their own living? Where are the three poisons in this"? Saying this he stared intimidatingly at us and sat down.

Kashi was followed by a boy from Gyantse. His reply, "I do not agree with what Kashi has said. The people for their own interest voluntarily make their offerings and burn incense and light butter-lamps. I have not heard any lama demanding from the people the fruits of their hard work. My own family through faith make offerings to lamas. We do this as a mark of our faith and respect. Since we have been granted religious freedom who can stop us from exercising our personal freedom in the way best suited to us? Moreover there is no case in our history of a monk forcefully extracting money from people. I do not suppose any

other student has heard of such a case. As for you Kashi, you did not have to make offerings but could sit down and enjoy the fruits of your work.” Saying this he himself sat down.

After him an alternate party member called Horpa from Nagchuka rose up and spoke, “We are revolutionary students and therefore our thoughts, behaviour and ideology all must be revolutionary. Religion is obsolete and is of no use now. Religion is a medieval ideology, an important weapon in the hands of the exploiting class. The different exploiting classes used different religions to keep the broad masses in ignorance. The masses did not find out who exploited them and ate up the produce of their hard work. The masses believed that whether a person was rich or poor depended on the merits or good deeds accumulated by him in his past life; if a person wanted to know what he had done in his past life, he had only to look at his present condition; a person’s future road depended on his present mind. The broad masses drinking such poisonous water for hundreds of years could not see the concrete reality lying before their eyes and did not even hear the word “revolution”. In such conditions our society plunged into the depths of theocratic darkness. Confined in a barbaric, backward society and hearing nothing about this big, wide world we lived our degenerate lives in isolation. We were like the well frog which thought that the well in which it lived was the only world. In this way we spent our lives for thousands of years.

“All this is because the pernicious influence of religion was too strong. People looked towards the sky and prayed to the gods and did not realise the potential power within them. They lacked the power and confidence to stand up in the spirit of revolution. The tendency of our people to bow down and to meekly accept the oppression of the exploiting class is caused by religion. If religion had not spread so widely and deeply in Tibet our conditions would have been far better than they are now. I am a Communist and far from believing in religion I will oppose it to the utmost. Our main responsibility is to make Tibet take the first step towards development and for this a determined

spirit is required. Whatsoever obstacle, big or small, lies in Tibet's path to development all must be destroyed. We the students must never fall under their spell. This is not only my responsibility, it is also the responsibility of all the Tibetan students. Just now a few students talked as if religion is something good and correct. I must urge them to think deeper and try and find out whether religion is really beneficial. We must discuss and think from day to day, from month to month. Today, suddenly, I am not going to say that your thinking is wrong and backward. One day you must wash your mind and grow in it the revolutionary spirit of fighting for revolutionary aims in common with other students. I have both hope and confidence that one day there will be born in you the revolutionary power to fight the old." Saying this he sat down.

After this the meeting was adjourned. A section of the students said that they had full faith in religion, others remained neutral by keeping mum, while still others voiced their strong opposition to religion and said gods, ghosts and karma did not exist.

This debate was carried on in the dormitories, dining halls, on the sportsfield and in the classrooms. A few days later another religious freedom campaign meeting was called. The debate in the meeting was started by a student named Pempa from Tashi Lhunpo monastery of Shigatse. He said: "The movement that is being launched at present is the religious freedom movement. The most important characteristic of religion is that it has no or hardly any connection with politics. Consequently I see no reason in bringing political issues in this campaign. The question of Tibetan backwardness or development is a political issue. However no one can deny that there was nothing wrong in the way religion was practised in Tibet. To cite an example it is like many of the political mistakes made in China. The people who practised religion wrongly were wrong and not religion itself. The origins of the widespread rightist attempt to restore capitalism in China lies in the cadres themselves and not in the writings of Marx and Lenin. In the same way many monks and lamas have violated religious principles and acted in complete opposition to the tenets of

religion. Consequently when a person with only a superficial knowledge of religion looks around, he thinks that religion benefits only a minority. This impression is created by those who adorn religious garments and not by the words of the Lord Buddha which do not contain any mistake. The most important characteristic of Buddhism is the scope it gives for discussion and debate. The debates are not conducted in any old fashion and the arguments in them put forward dictatorially and with threats; on the contrary they are conducted systematically and the arguments in them substantiated by facts. I do not know how truths in other religions are arrived at, but Buddhist truths are established by debate and discussion, which is one reason for its widespread appeal and expansion. It is not that one fine day the exploiting classes held a meeting and established the Buddhist truth.

“Whether the debates are on political issues or religious matters it is important to find out the character of the man who first laid the foundation of the ideology which is being discussed. Only then can we get an idea as to whether it is good or evil. Without doing this, debating only about the branches looks rather foolish.

“First let me tell you briefly about the life story of the founder of Buddhism. Everyone knows that it was founded by the Lord Buddha who was the son of King Suddhodhana of the Sakya clan. Prince Guatama did not have any livelihood problems. If he had only thought about this lifetime he could have succeeded his father and ruled the kingdom amidst worldly pleasure and comfort. He did not do this but renouncing his life companion, heir and kingdom and all the happiness of this world, and in order to release all beings from the sufferings of the karmic wheel of life, started in motion the Wheel of the Law.

“Why was it that the Lord Buddha rejected his father’s kingdom and took to what is called religion? The Buddha, motivated by the principle of others before self and moved by all those immersed in the ocean of suffering and wishing to save them from the evils which they had accumulated upon themselves from life to life, preached religion. It was for this reason. Buddhism does not mean that it does not per-

mit free discussion and debate and that only *Kunchok Sum* (the Buddhist trinity) is capable of saving the sentient beings. Buddhism does not mean the mere act of praying to *Kunchok Sum*, doing prostrations, making offerings, giving alms and saying, 'Oh, for enlightenment'. Buddhism is certainly not dependence on others and avoidance of sacrifice and striving.

“Buddhism too is a process of dialectical materialism through constant, honest debate. If the Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism has become dialectical not by threats and intimidation then there is no reason why for Marxism not to recognise Buddhism as a positive social force. When he first started preaching the Lord Buddha said:

Oh, ye Bhikshus and mendicants,  
 Like gold assayed by being burnt, rubbed and cut,  
 Analyse and critically examine my words.  
 Accept them as true not because you respect me,  
 But because they are true.

Accordingly everyone has the absolute right to question the Buddha's words. The questioning must not only be to reveal the defects but to bring out the demerits as well as the merits. Like gold whose purity is tested by being burnt, rubbed and cut, so too must doctrines, figuratively, be burnt in fire, washed in water and rubbed with *kashi-ka* stone, before we can accept them as truth. Truth must be sought truthfully. The misbehaviour of individual monks and lamas should not be misconstrued as defects of religion. Such tendency indicates a lack of understanding.

“A person with bad eye-sight might consider black as white. A person hard of hearing might take a clap of thunder for the silence of the graveyard. This does not mean that there is something wrong with the concrete reality before the person but it means that there is something wrong with his sense organs. Consequently in our present religious freedom campaign when we are debating about the relevance and utility of religion I have every hope that victory will belong to the true and correct. If we take

Tibet as an example, the finest Tibetan scholars for ages past have been examining Tibetan Buddhism. In their works they don't give the impression that they practised religion only for this lifetime. Arya Deva said that if a deed was done for this lifetime it was not religion; but if it was done for the next life it was religion. If we are not acquainted with the words of the Lord Buddha as contained in the *Kanjur* and *Tenjur* at least we can look up to their commentaries as written by Tsong Khapa and his disciples." Thus Pempa brought his arguments to a conclusion and the whole class remained silent.

This silence was broken by *turin* Tang Guo-sey, banging his fist on the table. He said "Most of the students of our Institute are good and have every desire to be progressive. However there are a few who carry the same old rotten brains and have no desire to be progressive. On the contrary they vainly attempt to spread the poison of religion to other students. All the classes of this Institute have politically matured, after being involved in the freedom of religious campaign. In order that our class does not lag behind the rest, you students must consider Horpa, Kashi and the other progressives as your example. This class is my responsibility. I have all confidence that we will not lag behind the other classes."

In the final analysis in the freedom of religious campaign the Han authorities did their best to undermine the hold of religion on the students. For about twenty days after the heated classroom debates, discussions were prohibited throughout the Institute. Walls became covered with big-character posters attacking religion. There were cases of defiant students, members of the Chinese Communist Party, alternate members, and members of the Communist Youth League withdrawing their membership from these organizations because their membership conflicted with their religious belief. Since then the whole of the Institute split into two opposed ideological camps.

## Tibetan Students' Movement In Peking

In the Institute there were secret nationalist organisations run by the more politically matured Tibetan students. Because of the thought-provoking discussions that were held regularly and the genuine exchange of ideas the mental horizon of the students widened and their political attitudes advanced from day to day. Far from being depressed by the real conditions prevailing in Tibet these nationalist Tibetan students drew added inspiration from them. The Chinese fed and clothed the Tibetan students and subjected them to heavy doses of political indoctrination with the hope that the Tibetan students would become their ideological running-dogs. Far from becoming traitors who would sell their country for material gains, the Tibetan students tried to oppose the foreign yoke, and fired by youthful nationalistic fervour, organised movements in order to achieve the goal of "one's own country being ruled by one's own people".

In the underground movement that went on among the Tibetan students in the Institute, the Ear Society gained some prominence. The Ear Society was an underground organization formed by a few nationalist Tibetan students of the Institute. The leader of the organisation was Nyetho Jigme from Gyantse. The Society had around a hundred members. Practically all the members were students who were academically brilliant and were good at Chinese and Tibetan. The organisation was exclusive, members came from only one or two classes.

The Ear Society functioned under the cover of either a football team or a music band. The music band section of the Society sang the Tibetan national anthem daily at the

break of dawn. The patriotic students when they heard the band playing left whatever they were doing and stood at attention.

Functioning on the same lines and having the same aims was another nationalist underground group called the Nose Society. I do not have any definite idea about the numerical strength of the Society but it is believed that all the members of this Society were students who were in the arts faculty.

Later on when the *thamzing* campaigns were on full swing we came to know that the leaders of the Nose Society were Thangmey Kesang Dikiyi from Lhasa and Jampa Phuntsok. These two and a few other leaders whom the Chinese came to know were subjected to *thamzing* (struggle meeting). However the names of some of the leaders are still not known. It is also said that a few of the leaders of the Nose Society took active part in the '59 Uprising. Lobsang Yeshe of Shigatse was a case in point. He was gunned down at Ramagang Druka in Lhasa when the Tibetan uprising raged on there. His name is mentioned in the autobiography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

These students were not mere book-worms who concentrated only on their studies in order to lead a comfortable life in future. These students were genuinely concerned about the future of Tibet, and tried to seek the reasons for Tibet to be under the yoke of a foreign power. They studied the present conditions and possible future of their country and through their discussions generally helped one another to attain higher levels of political consciousness. The outside world knows little about the nationalist movement carried on by the Tibetan students in the Peking Institute of Minority Nationalities. This is because of the all pervading control the Chinese Communist Party has over all aspects of national life. As a spokesman and representative, now that I have the freedom to speak, of the brave Tibetan students of the Institute of Minority Nationalities I would like to tell the story of how these students carried on the movement for the cause of Tibet.

Some of the slogans and writings in the wall posters stuck up on the walls of the Institute and in the market places of



Peking city by these nationalistic students were:

1. The development aid given by China to Tibet is welcome.
2. The friendship between China and Tibet will last for thousands of years.
3. The motorable roads in Tibet built by Chinese assistance will boost the trade between China and Tibet. This is welcome.
4. All thanks to the Chinese, who without the Tibetans even asking for it, helped the Tibetans in the true spirit of proletarian internationalism.
5. Since Tibet must be ruled by the Tibetans, we are doing our best to study under the guidance of the Chinese.
6. For many centuries Tibet managed to stand on her own two feet. The fact that today scientifically advanced and technologically well equipped China is helping Tibet is welcome.
7. The main aim of our studies is to develop Tibet. Our desire is to implement in Tibet what we are learning in China.

All these slogans were secretly stuck up at night and could be seen all over the Institute. During the day they were torn down by the Chinese but the next day the same posters reappeared. The Chinese were so fed up that they could no longer assume an air of indifference.

Soon they called a mass meeting. They said, "At present there are a few bad elements in our Institute, who, thinking along reactionary lines, are plotting to separate Tibet from the big motherland family. This is no small matter. This conspiracy is not the work of the students of the Institute alone. There is some outside force behind it. We already know a few of the students who stick up wall-posters. However this is a time for self-criticism. After self-correction if the students do not indulge in these conspiratorial activities then their past would be forgotten. However if some of the students still continue to indulge in these poster-pasting activities and act outside the constitution then necessary actions will be taken against them." The Chinese planted

their men, party members, cadres, members of the Communist Youth League and activists and informers whom they trusted in the meetings that were now regularly organised; vigilance or investigation teams were set up to keep watch over any dissident Tibetan voice.

However, these actions did not put a stop to the flow and pace of the wall-posters that were stuck up. The slogans of the posters grew more vehement and radical. They were stuck up all over the Institute, on every wall, on the doors of buildings and sometimes even on the class-room black-boards. Some of the slogans were: "Tibet was independent for thousands of years. As such it is not true to say now that Tibet is an integral part of China. Our beloved fatherland is now in the hands of the Chinese."

The posters pasted on walls, doors and black-boards were carefully torn down by the Chinese. Later an exhibition was put up where the Tibetan posters were shown to the students of other minority nationalities with severe admonition not to indulge in such evil practices. The students were told of the big political mistake of indulging in such practices; they had to report to the authorities any person they saw pasting posters. Those caught were to be given severe punishment.

Paying no attention whatsoever to these warnings the Tibetan students continued with their nightly duty of pasting posters. Unfortunately one night while Wangdu from Chamdo was pasting his posters he was seen by a Chinese night patrol. The next day in front of the main hall of the Institute, Wangdu was handcuffed and whizzed away in a motor car by the members of the Security Council. For about two years nothing could be heard about Wangdu. Whether true or not, a rumour was circulated that Wangdu had committed suicide in one of the labour camp prisons.

The arrest of Wangdu did create a stir in the Institute but it had no adverse effects on the spirit of the Tibetan students. Far from being cowed down by the actions of the Chinese authorities the students continued to stick up their posters in the same fervent spirit. One day while I was going from one of the dining halls to the class-rooms, in front of the second dining hall I saw a group of students

crowding before a huge wall-poster. Being curious I joined the crowd. The handwriting on the poster was not like any I had seen before; it seemed as if several people had written the slogans. The poster contained ten points. The ten points in the poster were refutations of the arguments made by Tri-puyu, a Chinese lecturer. He had stated that Tibet was an integral part of China; after the liberation the Tibetans were happy; that the development of Tibet was greatly helped by the construction of the Sikang-Tibet Highway and Chinghai-Tibet Highway. These points were refuted one by one in the poster:

1. Don't you know Tibet is independent?
2. Is the butcher who butchers you your benefactor?
3. For whose benefit is the Sikang-Tibet Highway built?
4. Isn't it built for the quick movement of the armies of the aggressor?
5. What is the meaning of "freedom" and "equality"?
6. Don't mix with people who would become slaves for life.
7. Don't co-operate with the oppressors.
8. Don't co-operate in the attempts at the total destruction of our history and culture.
9. Don't be deluded by your task-master and forget your origins.
10. Don't identify yourself with the reforms that don't give the Tibetan people freedom worth a single strand of hair.

The Tibetan students read the above points with the greatest attention and I felt that some were even trying to memorise the ten points. I myself went through the points at least about ten times. After sometime I heard from behind some one shouting "Move away, move away". Looking back I saw our teacher, Ri Chi-met, coming hurriedly and in a dark and angry mood. It seemed as if he already knew what was in the poster. He did not speak to any of us. He took a pen-knife from his pocket and carefully tore down the poster, and folding it with even greater care put the poster in his large diary. Having finished this he went

straight to the Institute office. We heard later that the hand-writings of the various posters were studied in order to ascertain their writers; to investigate whether there were any outside organisation which managed to infiltrate into the Institute. This was all done by a team of experts who discussed endlessly.

These brave acts of the Tibetan students opened a new chapter in the history of Tibet as far as the united Tibetan students' participation in politics was concerned. The patriotic Tibetan students exposed the traitors and quislings, Tibetans who would sell their country. Even in the classrooms when the Chinese lecturers asked whether Tibet was independent or not, the students, giving no thought to their personal safety, immediately replied that Tibet was fully independent. For example, in the first form when Wong Tung-shin asked whether Tibet was independent or not, Yarphel who was from Koko Nor area said 'Whether Tibet was independent or not could be known by studying Tibetan history.'

Wong Tung-shin asked, "In your opinion is it better for Tibet to be independent?"

Yarphel immediately replied, "Every Tibetan thinks that independent Tibet is better than anything else."

Wong Tung-shin was annoyed and further questioned, "If Tibet is independent, Yarphel, are you going to be its king?"

To this Yarphel replied, "If Tibet became independent, any capable Tibetan could be the leader. I don't have to become the leader and I harbour no such hopes."

Like Yarphel, there was Zomphu Jampa Phuntsok who opposed the Chinese right in their presence. He was in the second form and when one of his lecturers stated that Tibet was an integral part of China, Jampa Phuntsok at once challenged it. He said that Tibet had a long and illustrious history which cannot be erased or destroyed from memory. He asked, "Who benefits from the constant repetition of Tibet being a part of China?" These instances of open defiance became a common thing in the classrooms. The Chinese through guile and severity tried to bring the students on the "correct" path.

But the determination of the Tibetan students remained as firm as the mountains. All these acts of defiance were put under the blanket term of “local nationalism”, and the Chinese conducted *thamzings* and campaigns against “local nationalism”. Yaphel was taken away and no one knows his whereabouts even to this day.

## Down With Local Nationalism

The 'anti-local nationalism' campaign was conducted in the form of *thamzing* (struggle meeting). For about a few days the responsible authorities of the Institute, the party-men and activists and progressives discussed in detail the manner in which the *thamzings* were to be conducted. After some days, before a general meeting of the students of the Institute, a Chinese called Wang Chi-min spoke: "At present our Institute is taking the road to progress. However there are a few bad elements who are making every effort to divide the big motherland family. This evil wind is against the interest of the people of China. Consequently some people must be subjected to *thamzing* to reform their mind. Every student must make every effort to avoid being influenced by the evil wind and must fully participate in the *thamzing*. Those who are neutral and fail to participate in the *thamzing* campaigns will themselves be subjected to *thamzing*. No one will be let off. The purpose of the *thamzing* campaign is to separate the students animated by local nationalism and those animated by the spirit of the great motherland. There are students who are forward-looking, whose level of political consciousness is high, whose class standpoint is firm, who are capable of adding to the strength of the country, and who oppose without hesitation the reactionary trend. These are the party-men, the progressives and activists. On the other hand there are a few backward-looking students who consider the party and the masses as their enemy, who try to smash the revolutionary movements, who create antagonism between people and who, motivated by local nationalism, try to break down the fabric of the motherland. These bad elements have organised

secret groups to oppose the policy implementation of the Institute. These people cannot be considered our colleagues. They are our enemies. The Chinese Communist Party gained the leadership of the peasants and proletariat through armed struggle. Previously our policy was to serve the people and oppose the enemy. Our present movement is to fight local nationalism. Those whose mind is filled with the poisonous weeds of local nationalism must be beaten. No mercy should be shown to them. Till ultimate victory is won this movement will not be ended. Local nationalism must be destroyed at all costs." Thus Wang Chi-min concluded his speech, and in conclusion told us that there was a meeting in the dining hall of the second form.

This meeting was the first meeting directly and solely concerned with the anti-local nationalism campaign. It was the first *thamzing*. Unlike the other meetings, in this meeting a table and some chairs were placed in the centre of the hall. A few Chinese teachers as well as the Tibetan language teachers were sitting before the table. The Chinese lecturers were angry and sat glum and silent. Two or three partymen and some activists were preparing to make their speeches of condemnation and every now and then were looking out of the door to see whether the students who were to be subjected to *thamzing* were coming. Not knowing who was going to be given *thamzing* I asked some of the other students. They too did not know.

While thus waiting in eager anticipation the political thought lecturer Liu Phiu-shi got up and spoke. He said, "Today we are giving *thamzing* to a person who has thoughts of local nationalism. The *thamzing* campaign is not a question of one or two days. There is no definite limit to the duration of the *thamzing*. As long as thoughts of local nationalism are not destroyed, the *thamzing* will continue. Those who think wrongly must publicly admit their wrong thinking and clean their minds. In today's meeting, Amdo Gyakok will be subjected to *thamzing*. Many times before we advised Amdo Gyakok to remould his mind, but without any avail. He still retains the hard crust of the old way of thinking and till now has not made any public confes-

sions.”

Gesturing wildly Liu Phiu-shi shouted across the room, ‘Bring that bad person in’. Through the door Gyakok was brought in like a common criminal by four activists, one dragging him by his shirt-collar and the others pushing him from behind. Gyakok was looking thoroughly worn out. The activists deposited him before the table. Immediately after, all the partymen and activists shouted, “Destroy local nationalism, destroy the reactionaries, destroy Amdo Gyakok”, their shouts reverberating in the dining hall. In this tumult it was difficult to hear what the other people were saying. The lecturers waved their hands to quieten the crowd and when order was restored, Gyakok was told to confess.

A few of the activists shook him up and ordered, “Tell us your evil deeds. Confess them.” Gyakok slowly turned his eyes to the students and said, “I am a member of the Nose Society. I am a local nationalist. But whether I am a real reactionary or not, I cannot say.” The activists with the utmost vehemence shouted, “These things we know. You don’t have to tell us. Because you are a reactionary, you are being subjected to thamzing. Being a local nationalist you must confess your evil deeds. Today is the time to confess and admit. Even if you don’t confess we know everything what reactionaries of your type have done. We are making you confess to break your stubbornness. Reveal who is the leader of the Nose Society? Who put all the reactionary wall-posters? Why was the Nose Society organised? Confess all. Admit and confess?” The deafening shouts of the activists filled the dining hall.

It seemed as if Gyakok, who was before the table, was fully intimidated. He looked like a trapped animal. All around him was a sea of angry eyes. In a thin, feeble voice Gyakok replied “Our leader is Kesang Dekyi. The aim of our organisation is the independence of Tibet. We have contacts only with Tibten students and no one else. A few of the posters were stuck up by me. I don’t know who pasted the others.”

A partymen Tsewang cried out, “Oh, you bandit-robber of a dead dog, Kesang Dekyi herself confessed that she



was one of the leaders. Who are the others? Because you have stuck up posters you are being subjected to this struggle meeting.”

A few other frightening slogans were shouted with great vehemence. These were directed not particularly at Gyakok but at the whole lot of students who were accused of ‘local nationalism’. The slogans were to frighten and intimidate them. The activists asked with one voice “Who formed this reactionary organisation and stuck up the posters? Those reactionaries must be exterminated. Those who try to divide the motherland must be destroyed.” They thumped their fists on the table.

Even among the crowd there were shouts of “kill that dog; skin him alive”. Others shouted, “Your mother’s corpse, your father’s heart. Kill this stinking dog.” It seemed as if the some of the people in the crowd had gone mad; they were hurling abusive words at Gyakok to mentally break him down.

As for Gyakok, he was as dead as a statue. The Chinese lecturers tried to calm down the students, and above the din, one of them shouted, “Please stop this shouting. What we need is Gyakok’s confession. Today is the first day of the thamzing. Gyakok must answer the following questions, who first started the organisation? Besides the students of the Institute who else does the organisation have contact with? Who stuck up the posters near the Soviet Union Exhibition Hall which states Tibet is independent? You must answer all these”, said the Chinese lecturer. “If you admit everything all your past black deeds will be made clean. I myself will guarantee that you would not be given any punishment. We don’t have anything against you, Gyakok. We are against the reactionary thoughts that you are harbouring. If you are able to unburden yourself completely and admit everything there is no need for us to go on with this thamzing. We already know your crimes. Since we want you to become a good person, we want you to confess everything. Today the students are sacrificing their class lessons to attend this meeting. They are here to help you to remould your thoughts. If you do not feel like confessing and repenting before the crowd you could

do so privately in our office. Or you could confess to any reliable activist. Or you could organise your thoughts tonight, and confess tomorrow before the crowd. Make your choice. We are giving this opportunity to you. If you confess and repent there is a future before you. If you hide things you will be destroyed.”

When these last words were spoken as if dogs unleashed from chains many of the activists pounced on Gyakok. They shook him up. Others caught him by the ears and dragged him. Gyakok said, “I will think first”.

After this continuously for nearly a month Gyakok was hauled up for thamzing in his own class. But he neither confessed nor repented. So one day in front of all the students of the second form Gyakok, bound by ropes, was dragged to the door of the Institute auditorium like a yak to the slaughter-house. There were more a than thousand students gathered there. The thamzing was more severe and violent than before. The activists said, “We were lenient to this reactionary before. He feigned dumbness before and uttered only a few words. Far from being repentant he showed signs of annoyance and anger. Today we are going to give him a violent thamzing. If you, reactionary Gyakok, have any supporters they must be revealed now. Reactionary dogs like you must be destroyed.” The activists poked their fingers in Gyakok’s eyes, made him lower his head and eventually made him to kneel down on pebbles.

And Gyakok really seemed to be dumb. He did not utter any word, either in defence or in repentance. His face was long and full of gloom. Looking at him would one felt that he had given up all hope. He seemed not to care whether he was killed or beaten. His impudent silence provoked the fiery revolutionary wrath of the activists like Tsewang, Yalung, Horpa and Kashi. They sprawled him down, jumped on his neck and gave blows on his head. Others also joined in and beat him. The students who were watching this violent thamzing thought that this was the end of Gyakok. When a Chinese lecturer, Ha Phiu-chen, looked in the direction of Gyakok, all his tormentors beat a hasty retreat. Gyakok lay prostrate on the ground. When he finally, slowly, got up, his shirt and pants were all in tatters

and he was bleeding profusely. Gyakok's pathetic figure roused our sympathy but we were helpless and could do nothing.

Amid this expectant silence the political thought lecturer Chang Wan-ching spoke, "There is still time for you to repent. The progressive students are helping you to remould your thoughts. Even if you bleed a little it is of no matter. You must express what's in your mind." Immediately the activists came forward and spat on him and flung their snot on him, and said in a chorus, "Yourt houghts are dirtier than our spit and snot, know this. How is the taste of violent thamzing? Dog, speak out; repent!"

But Gyakok was dumb. It seemed as if he did not want to speak nor did he have anything to speak out. A party-man from Nagchuka called Yalung was fully provoked. Showing his fist in the air, beating his chest as if gone mad and his mouth foaming with saliva, he pounced on Gyakok and gave him a tremendous blow on the nose which sent Gyakok recling to the ground. The other activists caught him by the chest and made him stand up. They said, "To make his nose bleed, hit him on the nose; he will repent when more blood comes out of him. Reactionaries don't need any mercy. Dog, are you still going to remain stubborn? Aren't you going to confess your crimes?" Saying this they let loose another shower of blows on Gyakok's month, nose and eyes. Once again Gyakok was laid prostrate on the ground. His body was covered with spit, snot and blood.

Then the political thought lecturer Liu Phiu-chi in anger pointed his finger at Gyakok and shouted, "Make that old dog stand up". The running-dogs like hungry vultures seeing a dead horse pounced on Gyakok and made him stand on his feet. Gyakok's face was swollen and covered with blood. Gyakok as we knew him was unrecognisable. Despite this the Chinese lecturer in a big loud voice that was meant to frighten and intimidate said, "Whoever harbours thoughts of local nationalism has no other road to travel but this. Look, if you don't want to be treated like this you must confess and repent. Are you amused at his figure? The *thamzing* against the doers of crimes will go on. Old stub-

born minds will have no other road to travel but this. We are trying to make this wicked dog become a good man. However he does not co-operate. By falling down on the ground and pretending to faint, he hopes that he would be able to hide his crimes. We won't let him off." He pointed his finger at Gyakok's nose and shouted, "Stand up, you dog! Show your face to the crowd. Stand up and don't try to hide your crimes." The ever-obliging running dogs once again pounced upon Gyakok and getting hold of his hands and legs made him stand up. But Gyakok did not have the strength to stand up. He was neither alive nor dead. The running-dogs were helpless; they could only shout.

At this moment Wang Chi-min, a Chinese lecturer, shouted, "Swindler, he is trying to be dead before his time comes. Even if this dog dies China will have one less reactionary. There is nothing astounding in this. Reactionaries like him will undergo violent public trial." Wang Chin-min faced the rest of the students and fired, "Are you entertained by this spectacle? Now you know the road local nationalism will lead. Drag away this corpse. Drag him away inside." The activists, catching hold of his hands and legs, dragged Gyakok inside the auditorium. This was the last time we saw Gyakok. At the time we wondered why the Chinese punished Gyakok so much. Gyakok faithfully kept his vow of secrecy. From Gyakok the Chinese did not get any information they had not known before. His spirit of determination was a lesson to us. Like him more than thirty students were subjected to thamzing or public trials.

To get results the Chinese gave three different degrees of thamzing. There were big, medium and moderate thamzing. These different degrees of thamzing were given to people advocating local nationalism, having poisonous weeds of local nationalism growing in them and the sympathisers. The big thamzing had about a thousand people watching, like when Gyakok was put on public trial, and the victim was subjected to violent criticism and blows. The medium degree thamzing gathered around two or three hundred people and the accused was beaten and criticised.

The small thamzing was held in the respective class-room of the accused where he was criticised and intimidated. More than sixty per cent of the Tibetan students in the Institute were threatened with one of the three kinds of thamzing.

Many students were subjected to the big thamzing. It is difficult and pointless to give an account of all the thamzings. The following are the account of the more famous thamzings and the background of the principal victims involved in these trials.

Gyakok whose public trial I have dealt in detail was born in north-eastern Tibet near lake Koko Nor. His parents were poor peasants. Gyakok was twenty-seven at the time of his thamzing. In 1951 he was taken to Shigatse by one of the officials of Tashi Lhunpo monastery as his personal servant. In 1955 he was sent along with other young Tibetans to the Peking Institute of National Minorities. He studied non-technical subjects. He was good at studies and had a good command of Tibetan and Chinese. Studious by nature he liked sports and games. He was honest and straightforward. Like many other serious minded Tibetan students he paid special attention to Tibetan history and spoke freely and fearlessly on the independent historical development of Tibetan culture and the independence of Tibet. I heard later that he was one of the key leaders of the Nose Society which tried to mobilise a movement for Tibetan national liberation. Whenever debates on the independence of Tibet flared up, Gyakok became conspicuously noticeable by his firm advocacy of Tibetan independence.

Like that of Gyakok's a thamzing which became the talk of the students of the Institute for a while was that of a student from Gyangtse. This particular student belonged to the 1954 batch of students to arrive at the Institute. He was a tall, athletic boy, who loved games and sports, and was very good at them, particularly at gymnastics. He was selected in the Institute's sports team and he frequently went to other colleges in Peking for athletic meets. At the end of the campaign against local nationalism he was expelled from the Institute's sports committee. His views on the independence of Tibet were well known and he was subjected to violent, vigorous sessions of public trial. At one of the ses-

sions of thamzing in the dining hall a Chinese, Yang Chung-shing, in an outburst of anger smashed a big china bowl belonging to the dining hall on the head of the victim. Blood started trickling down the face of the victim. Yang Chung-shing, still not satisfied, picked up another china bowl but he was over-powered by a few Tibetan students and taken outside to the Institute office. Nothing was said against Yang Chung-shing's impetuous act but the office personnel turned their annoyance on the students who had overpowered him, and accused them of local nationalism. The accused through loss of blood fainted and fell on the ground. Several students took him for medical treatment.

In 1960 he was sent to Tibet and worked in Gyantse under Chinese surveillance. In 1962 while on my way from Lhasa to Phari I spotted him from a distance in Gyantse. Besides waving and smiling at each other in recognition, we had no time to have a quiet, long chat. Later during the Cultural Revolution, he was clamped into prison.

Wangchen, son of Yaptsang of Chamdo, was in the 1955 batch which was sent to the Institute. From the time he first set his foot on the premises of the Institute, Wangchen was one of the students who did not yield an inch to the pressure of Chinese indoctrination. On the contrary he convincingly argued on every opportunity he got the case of Tibetan independence and substantiated his arguments with solid historical facts. The activists accordingly labelled him "the chief gossip-monger". Through small, compact, secret organisations he carried on the fight for the Tibetan cause and stuck up on the Institute walls huge posters proclaiming the independence of Tibet. During a violent session of thamzing when he was asked who had ordered him to stick up posters, Wangchen replied that he had stuck up the posters through his own initiation; no one had ordered him. For about a month or so he was given prolonged doses of intensive thamzing, after which he had to forfeit studying and was sent to a labour camp. Nothing was heard of him.

Gonpo Tsering, from Lhasa, was in my batch which was sent to Peking in 1956. At the time of his thamzing he was only eighteen; and was the youngest of the nationalistic stu-

dents who incurred the wrath of the Chinese. Gonpo Tsering was a talented boy, good at games and played the flute well. He was a flutist in the Tibetan students' music band. The nationalistic students of such calibre, within the limitations set in by the force of circumstance and by the very fact of being in the heart of Red China, did their utmost for the cause of Tibet. Even after he was sent back to Tibet in 1963 Gonpo Tsering continued to fight for the Tibetan cause. I was to hear later that the Chinese masters of Tibet, angered by Gonpo Tsering's acts of open defiance, had done him to death.

It was not only the Tibetan male students who were actively involved in the underground nationalist movement. The Tibetan girl students too contributed their bit and a classic example of the heroism displayed by the Tibetan girls was the case of Thangmey Kesang Dekyi. Kesang Dekyi had come to the Institute in the 1955 batch. She was a typical Tibetan girl, quiet, unassuming and well-mannered. She was, however, interested in politics, and, like others, was nationally conscious and studied and worked for the larger national interest. She was a leader of the Nose Society. Before the start of the thamzing sessions the suspicions of the Chinese fell heavily on her. The Chinese searched the girls' dormitory for recorded evidence of the existence of the underground nationalist movement and the names of the students involved in the movement. While the search was going on some activists spotted Kesang Dekyi swallowing a ball of paper. She was given thamzing and was interrogated: "If you don't tell us what was written on the piece of paper, we are going to dissect your body". Kesang Dekyi remained undaunted and replied that the paper she had swallowed was her love letter and she would feel embarrassed if others read it. She said that the paper did not contain anything political and if the Chinese did not believe they could dissect her.

Another prominent leader of the Nose Society was a young aristocrat, Sampho Tsewang Samphel, who belonged to my batch to be sent to Peking. He was a dedicated and nationally conscious individual and worked fearlessly for the larger national interest. His nationalism went beyond

the confines of sticking posters with patriotic slogans.

During his thamzing sessions he like Gyakok merely admitted his own personal “crime” and remained totally silent on the nationalist activities of the Nose Society and its members. The reason why he was given thamzing was that the Chinese suspected him of being a founding member of the Nose Society. The Chinese consequently branded him as the “chief”. He was the main driving force behind the fact that early in the morning the Tibetan students sang and played the Tibetan national anthem. In the big character posters he wrote patriotic slogans and in meetings openly stated the case of Tibetan independence. Later he was kept under strict surveillance and his “freedom of speech” was taken away from him. In the thamzing sessions, which went on continuously day after day for more than a month, Tsewang Samphel was verbally abused and physically beaten. When I met him years later in Tibet he was hunched and aged. However these personal hardships had not dampened his nationalist spirit. He had organised an underground nationalist movement. This movement was soon uncovered by the Chinese and Tsewang Samphel and his colleague Lhathong Thupten Gyurmey were publicly executed on 16 October 1970.

The above accounts of a few prominent nationalist Tibetan student leaders is not to give the impression that the members of the nationalist organisations came from only one part of Tibet. The truly national-minded students came from all parts of Tibet, from Lhasa, Chamdo and others. As the Tibetan students’ understanding of the academic subjects taught to them deepened their political consciousness grew. Their critical faculties were sharpened and they looked critically at the Chinese policies implemented in Tibet. More than anything else the brief period they stayed in Peking made them ask questions. The China-educated Tibetans did not become their blind obedient followers.

From the 1000 or so Tibetans educated at Peking the majority were sent to the villages as mere interpreters. In meetings where extremely important political matters were discussed the suspicious Chinese always had a Chinese who knew Tibetan attending. Qualified Tibetan youths were not



given jobs commensurate with their qualifications. As far as I know while I was in Tibet the *Hru-chi* (Secretary) post of not one *chue* (district) was held by any of the China-educated Tibetans. Even in the *hsien* (sub-district) administrative division there was not a single Tibetan who held any post that carried power and responsibility. The young Tibetans were not given any effective say in the running of Tibet, not because they were incompetent but simply because the Chinese did not trust them.

# Old History and New Awakening

The term "local nationalism" is a Chinese label for the legitimate activities of the minority peoples under Chinese domination to regain their rightful independence. It is also a policy to destroy the revolutionary movements of the different minority peoples. In 1958 a campaign called "Oppose Local Nationalism" was started. Like other campaigns in the Institute the first shot in this campaign was fired by responsible authorities of the Institute. After this the students were made to assemble and discuss on "local nationalism". The discussions, not being centred on an abstract thing like religion, but on down-to-earth politics, aroused much passion and heat. Violent clashes occurred.

I would like to give a gist of the arguments put forward by the responsible authorities. In the Institute's main auditorium before an audience of more than a thousand students the principal, Sung Yon-trang initiated the campaign of "Carry Through the Socialist Education Movement Opposing Local Nationalism", by stating, "Our Institute has many different nationalities. Under the good care of the Party all the students are growing up in mind and body. This is welcome. This is also an achievement of the Institute in its very short history. Involving themselves in many of the political campaigns, the students are activated and their political consciousness has advanced further. All are motivated by progress and unity. During the time of the Manchus the minority peoples were held in contempt and were not considered as one with the Hans. Consequently China split into many petty provinces, each ruled by a warlord. Lacking any unified control China yielded easily to foreign aggression. Half of China came to be ruled by petty dynasties and the other half came under the domination of colonialism. Even the reactionary government of Koumintang, adopting great Han chauvinism, held the minority peoples under contempt and only recognised five big mino-

rity nationalities. Even those who were recognised as minority peoples were not treated with due respect. Without caring for the interests of the minority peoples the Koumintang carried on a policy of armed aggression in their territories. This policy created disunity in the big motherland family and a big contradiction arose between the minority nationalities and the Han people. This contradiction is still a threat to the unity of China.

“However the distrust and the suspicion of the minorities for the Han people will eventually disappear. The Chinese Communist Party is based on the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat and will look after the interests of the people of China. The Party Central Committee and Chairman Mao, because of their great love for the minority nationalities, are leading them towards progress and happiness. Under the correct leadership of the Party the cadres of the minority nationalities are looked after with great care. An evidence of this is the Minority Nationalities Institute here in Peking. The establishment of these institutes is an important step for the minority peoples. All students must make every effort to strengthen national unity. China is a populous country with many nationalities. The leaders of this country will have to come from all the nationalities and not as before from only one nationality. An individual from any nationality having the ability and education can become a national leader. It might be even possible that a few national leaders might come from the students of this Institute. Everything, however, depends on one’s own determination. Everyone knows that among the country’s leaders there are already many from the minority nationalities. Consequently the most important need for every nationality, whether big or small, is national unity.

“Of whatever nationality, you are the subjects of China. Those who, thinking on reactionary lines, shout “independence for minorities” are mistaken. Such thoughts weaken national unity and smack of “local nationalism”. Some of the students of our Institute are influenced by these poisonous weeds. This thinking is a wrong political attitude to adopt. Any country divided and separated will have no

strength. National unity means national strength. To quote a popular saying, 'ropes made of many strands of hair are strong and lasting; one strand of hair is no rope'. Disunity makes a country succumb to foreign aggression. The fact that China fell under foreign domination was because of the lack of unity in the country.

"The word unity is very important. No one must think wrong on this matter. At present there is an evil wind blowing in the Institute. Some students are claiming local independence, setting up parties in every unfrequented nook and corner, and pasting up wall-posters. These things are not done here. If anyone has the truth to tell, why not tell before everyone when the regular meetings are held?"

"Most of the students are good. They desire to travel on the path of progress. By increasing one's political consciousness one must keep going on this path. Everyone, especially the party members, cadres, members of the Communist Youth League, lecturers and students must consider this movement as a revolutionary responsibility. The movement that we are launching is mainly on political matters; it is a movement of discussion and of a true exchange of ideas; it is a movement to discover the political standpoint and viewpoint of every student."

After this the class lecturers gave similar speeches. We then dispersed to our respective classrooms and expressed our thoughts according to our own viewpoints.

Hence it was nothing but debates. Most students marshalled their thoughts and presented them with sincerity and conviction on the biggest question that confronted them--Tibet and her place in the world. In our class the debate was initiated by a Tibetan called Archung, a party-man. His speech: "Tibet is an integral part of China. Many centuries back Songtsen Gampo, having accomplished many wonderful deeds in the south-west of China, pleased the Tang emperor who gave his daughter to him. As a dowry Songtsen Gampo was given different foodgrains, colourful banners, the Jo of Lhasa, spinners and weavers, and carpenters. All these mildly helped Tibet in her development. Besides these, even today in Tibetan monasteries Chinese characters can be seen. The whole hierarchical

structure of the Tibetan aristocracy is based on the Chinese court model. Two examples are *taichi* and *dzasak* ranks. Similarly the fact that Tibet and China were one is reflected in many of the names of articles used by Tibetans; *tseldor*, *ngempung*, and *kadrang* are words which have spread widely in Tibet, which indicates the deep relationship which existed between Tibet and China. In face of all these historical facts how is it possible for us to say Tibet is independent? Those who say Tibet is independent are the followers and the running-dogs of the upper strata Tibetans. They do not and cannot stand with the Tibetan people. After the peaceful liberation Tibet has advanced in leaps and bounds. The fact that many Tibetan students are receiving education in China is an opportunity which ought to be accepted gratefully by every Tibetan student. Despite all this, to still continue to talk about "independence" is a shameless act. What are we gaining by saying "Tibet is independent"?

"Can any one of you tell me what we have accomplished by being independent? Till now Tibet has made moderate progress but motivated by local nationalism some people are trying to drag Tibet back to the days of backwardness and feudalism. I feel that in our class there are some students whose minds have such poisonous weeds growing. It is better that they express their thoughts."

Immediately a boy from Lhasa, one of the Ear Society type, rose up and spoke. He said, "I don't have much to say, but I don't see any adequate reasons for Archung's statement that Tibet is an integral part of China. His statement that Wengcheng Kongsho's coming to Tibet as the bride of the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo made Tibet an integral part of China might fool children but not students who are well-read in their country's history. We have adequate knowledge of our country's history to know that Tibet during the time of Songsten Gampo, far from being a vassal of the Tang Emperor as you have implied, was a unified Central Asian military power. The Tibetan minister Gar Tongtsen was sent to the Chinese court, and as a representative of an equally powerful country, Gar Tongtsen asked for the hand of the Chinese princess for his king. If by Songtsen

Gampo's taking of a Chinese princess as his bride, Tibet became a part of China, on the same argument will not the Nepalese also lay claim to Tibet since Songtsen Gampo also took a Nepalese bride?

“Archung, you said that there are many Chinese character writings that can be seen in the Tibetan monasteries and that this also makes Tibet a part of China. This, I feel, is another of your baseless talks. Nobody says that there was no relation between China and Tibet. On the contrary the relations between the two countries was extremely good and we have every hope that this will improve in the future. Every student of history knows that when the Sakya lamas were the dominant political power in Tibet relations between China and Tibet, predominantly on the religious sphere, was amicable and friendly. But this relationship was purely religious and had no political implications.

“Similarly there are articles used by the Tibetans which have Chinese names. This is more an indication of cultural contact and fusion between the two countries than a case of political dominance of one over the other. To still persist and argue that these superficial cultural influences make Tibet a part of China is childish. On the same ground India can argue that Tibet is their's by simply stating that Buddhism came from India. If all these countries put forward such claims, into how many parts does Tibet have to be divided in order to satisfy some wild fancies based on tenuous cultural links?

“You, Archung, condemn the people who say that Tibet is independent as the running-dogs of the upper strata Tibetans. Can you tell us whose running-dogs are the people who say Tibet is an integral part of China? The fact that during the course of our studies here we have been looked after well is gratifying. However we cannot accept the opinions of people, who instead of basing their arguments on facts, try to create shadows where there are no objects.”

Having concluded his speech the speaker sat down. A partyman, Kashi, rose up and spoke. He said: “It is not that we are saying Tibet is an integral part of China after we have come to this Institute. There are sufficient historical facts to substantiate our statement that Tibet is an

integral part of China. To counter the Younghusband Expedition into Tibet the Manchu Emperor sent reinforcements. Moreover without the prior approval of the Manchu emperor Tibet could not establish any diplomatic relations with any other country. Similarly the *depon* rank of the Tibetan army general was given by the Chinese government. Both the Manchus and the reactionary government of the Kuomintang, through their consuls or ambans at Lhasa, treated the local Tibetan government subordinate to them, especially in matters concerning foreign relations. Is it possible to say that by stating these substantive historical facts people are attempting to create "shadows without substance"? The minority peoples must know where their interests lie. By uniting and co-operating with the other minorities of the big motherland family we are travelling towards progress and happiness. In face of all these advantages to persist in attempts to secede from the big motherland family is a big mistake. This road is not a road for the broad masses of Tibet. This path serves the interest of only the exploiting class. We must not be fooled by it. On the contrary we must strengthen nationalities unity and build a new Tibet." Kashi thus concluded his speech.

After him Wangchen from Chamdo, a Nose Society type, rose up and spoke. His speech: "It is true that we have come here to study in order that in future we can help in the development of Tibet. It is equally true that in order that we establish a new Tibet we must develop our own abilities. There is no benefit in giving education to a Tibetan who does not want to use his acquired ability for the development of Tibet. There might be few among us who does not have any love for Tibet. Naturally I need not make any special appeal on this point. No one is protesting over the fact that China is helping Tibet commercially and in all other spheres, since Tibet cannot at present stand on her own. But to connect all this with China's political dominance over Tibet and to say that Tibet is a part of China is wrong. The explanation given by Kashi just now seems inadequate and fails to convince. The fact that China had her representative at Lhasa is an indication of a relation that

existed between one country and another. Similarly Nepal also had its representative in Lhasa. Both at the national and international level political matters were decided upon and executed by the Tibetan government. Matters of supreme political importance were referred to the Dalai Lama. This is the first time I have heard that the Chinese amban decided the political affairs of Tibet.

“It is debatable whether the word *depon* for the Tibetan army general is of Chinese origin. Even if it is, there is nothing to be astonished about. For example the Tibetan army discipline was based on the British model. But Britain does not lay claims upon Tibet.

“Everyone is aware of the fact that Britain invaded Tibet. In the Wood Snake Year (1903-1904) when the Young-husband expedition forced its way into Tibet all the patriotic Tibetans, men and women, united to defend their soil. Since it was at Gyantse the Tibetans offered the stiffest resistance to British military force the Tibetans in honour and praise refer to Gyantse as “The Heroic City”. The veterans of those days tell us that it was the Tibetans themselves who resisted and fought the invaders and not any foreign reinforcement army. To go deeper into history, an Anglo-Tibetan treaty was signed. The Chinese amban did not have any power to stop the signing of this treaty. When the expeditionary force sent by Lord Curzon neared Lhasa the amban made attempts to go and welcome it. The Tibetan government stopped him. As such, where does the question of the Chinese amban exercising power on external affairs come in?

“The Anglo-Tibetan treaty or the Lhasa Convention was signed by the Regent, the Tri Rimpoche, (since the Dalai Lama was absent) the Kashag (the Cabinet of the Tibetan government) and the abbots of the three monasteries of Gaden, Sera and Drepung which together with other lay members, constituted the *Tsongdu*, a body which represented the people of Tibet. Settlements reached concerning the border, trade relations, and political matters were recorded. Isn't this an indication that the Tibetans had full control over their country's foreign relations? If Tibet were a part of China why did not the Manchu court stop the Tibetans



from signing this treaty? To contradict historical facts and fabricate lies is of no benefit. We are debating here to discover the truth. To make black into white and to still say that we must make every effort for the development of Tibet is like showing a sweet before a person's eyes but putting a stone into his mouth." After this the meeting was adjourned.

For a few days after, a select group of party members, alternate members, and members of the Communist Youth Federation daily held secret meetings. Later it was reported that those at the meetings were constantly leafing through note-books and were supplied with facts for arguments in future meetings.

When a meeting was again held, a partyman, Horpa, said: "A few students, their minds uncleaned, and thinking with their old brains, continue to say that Tibet is not a part of China. They must know that the consequences arising from such statements must be borne fully by them. No one is going to save them. The condemnation of the statements of the progressive students that Tibet is an integral part of China is turning black into white means that poisonous weeds of local nationalism are flourishing here. The present campaign does not mean that there is contradiction within the people but between the people and the enemy. Despite the urgency of the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, there is still time for those who are resisting to go forward towards the socialist roads, to stop and think before they plunge over the precipice of feudal backwardness.

"There is no indication whatever that Tibet was independent. The leaders of Tibet were directly appointed by the Chinese emperor. As a reward for his achievement of devising a script for the Mongolians, the Fifth Dalai Lama was given the south-west of China by the Manchu emperor. He was given the title of "Dalai" which in Mongolian means "ocean". The enthronement of every new reincarnation of the Dalai Lama had to be approved by the Manchus. The seal of the local government of Tibet was bestowed by the Chinese emperors and the Tibetan local government generally had no decision-making powers on matters

of supreme political importance. These historical facts are of no mean importance and value. In the face of all these facts, who can still say that Tibet is independent?" Saying this he stared for long at Wangchen and concluded by saying that if anyone has any contradictory arguments to put forward they should do so in this meeting.

Sampho Tsewang Samphel from Lhasa an Ear Society type, took the challenge. He argued: "In the intimidating speech made by Horpa, he classed those who recognised Tibet as a part of China as people whose thinking went along with the rest of the masses but those who thought Tibet independent as "reactionaries", "evil elements", "people who manifested local nationalism". Horpa, you are a Tibetan. Like us you have lived in Tibet. The people who know most about Tibet are the Tibetans themselves. Those who say Tibet is a part of China are the Chinese lecturers. I have never heard any Tibetan scholar, well-read in Tibetan culture and religion, say Tibet is a part of China. Moreover, Horpa, how did you, a Tibetan, come to know the words "local nationalism"?

"Even if our just aspiration is considered "local nationalism" there is no harm. The fact that the Chinese are persisting in stating that Tibet is an integral part of China is nothing but great Han chauvinism. Our contention that Tibet is independent is in the interest of the Tibetan people and if this is called "local nationalism" we are hardly worried.

'Tibet was independent for many centuries' is an off-quoted phrase. Nevertheless it must be said again and again. Tibet was an independent country for many centuries and this is not only written in black and white in books but reflected in the way the Tibetans speak and think.

"Horpa contended that as a reward for inventing a script for the Mongolians the Fifth Dalai Lama was rewarded by the Chinese emperor. It is difficult to rely on such statements. Before the rule of the Dalai Lamas Tibet was ruled by kings starting from Ngya-Tri Tsenpo to Lang Dharma. Was the rank and status of these kings given by the Chinese emperors? Is it true that the seal used by the Kashag was given by the Chinese emperor? Or, is it true that the letterings of the seal are in Chinese? All this is empty talk if

they cannot be substantiated. I, myself, have seen the seal of the Kashag with my own eyes. The letters of the seal are not Chinese but come from the Hor-yig script. Tibet was independent for many centuries. To deny this fact and, in order to avoid personal danger, to say that Tibet is a part of China is an act of cowardice and un-Tibetan. A nation is made up of people, land, government, army, separate language and history and numerous other distinguishing features. Even at the cost of my life I will never accept the fabrications made by a militarily stronger country to justify its conquest of a weaker neighbour.”

Except for the four students, the rest of the class with once voice shouted “We shall also not accept them! We have no desire to sell our country!”

## The '59 Revolt

In the night of 18 March 1959 we were rudely woken from sleep and were told to assemble in our respective classrooms. We thought that there had been a fire in the Institute. Having assembled in our classroom we heard the astounding news from the mouth of our class monitor, Kashi: "The reason why the emergency meeting is held tonight is to break to you the news which was wired to us. There is a revolt in Tibet, and there has been lot of killing in Lhasa. The details will be given by our lecturer Ma Phuyu-chi."

The news, no doubt, astonished us all and I wondered what exactly had happened in Tibet. After about ten minutes, Ma Phuyu-chi entered the classroom with a piece of paper in his hand. Enquiring whether all the students were present, he placed his cap on the table and said, "The reason why you have been called for this emergency meeting tonight is to tell you that from March 10 onwards there has been unrest and fighting in Lhasa. The condition has worsened since yesterday and the rebels are spilling blood and destroying everything with utter disregard for the suffering of the populace. This rebellion can be traced back to around 1956 when a few upper-strata reactionaries first made contacts with foreign imperialists, and, in collusion with them, made plans to obstruct the democratic reforms and separate Tibet from the big motherland. The rebel headquarter is in India in a place called Kalimpong. I need not tell you the names of the leaders of the rebellion; we would gradually come to know them. With the excuse of protecting the person of the Dalai Lama when he was invited to attend a theatrical show at the PLA headquarters at Lhasa the rebels took up arms.

"The rebels killed nationally-minded Chamdo Phakpa Lha Chenpo, and the Tibet Military Command's Sampho Tsewang Rinzing was badly hurt and many PLA soldiers, Han cadres and local people were killed in the streets. The

walls of the Bakor were filled with counter-revolutionary posters and the rebels shouted anti-motherland slogans. However the PLA of Tibet Military Region Command on the order of the Chinese Central Government, did not fire a single shot at the rebels. Chairman Mao and the Chinese Central Government were patient and did everything to bring the rebels to understanding. But the rebels, far from coming to understanding, on the contrary, increased their rebellious activities and in the night of 17 March launched armed attacks against the headquarters of the PLA at Lhasa, the Lhasa People's Hospital and the PLA motor assemblage factories. Consequently the Chinese Central Government gave the order to the PLA Tibet Military Area Command to quell the rebellion in the interest of the Tibetan people. In about ten hours the main bastion of the rebels was stormed and taken over and the remnant of the rebels would be swept away as quickly as possible.

“This news is to be regretted. However the rebellion has quickened the pace towards a good future, and the Tibetan peasant – serfs would see the days of democratic reforms sooner than expected. The suppression of the rebellion has hastened the process of transforming the semi-feudal, semi-dynastic and semi-barbarian Tibetan society into a new socialist society. A bad condition has been turned into a good condition. Every student must clearly understand that the rebellion is neither a conflict between two races nor arising out of the fact that the person of the Dalai Lama was endangered. It is not a conflict between one country and another nor between Tibetans and the Hans. Everyone must analyse the news thoroughly and understand its significance. Only with such analysis you will not travel the wrong road in future. This rebellion is but the last agonies of the dying reactionaries. The nature of the rebellion is basically a class struggle. It is a struggle for the triumphant liberation of the Tibetan peasant-serfs.

“You must write home and advise your family not to join hands with the reactionaries. If your family has already participated in the rebellion you must advise them to change their paths. Write as many letters home as possible. Without sealing your letters, hand them over to your class

monitor. The office will send all the letters together to Tibet.”

Accordingly, for several months we had to send letters to our families every week. From the end of 1959 to mid 1960 some senior Tibetan students were divided into three batches and were sent to Tibet one after the other. We all hoped to know what exactly had happened, but it was very difficult to know what was actually happening in Tibet. For several days the main news item in the *Peoples Daily* was the revolt in Tibet. No one received any reply from home for his letter. Far from knowing about whole Tibet we did not even know what had happened to our own families, and our worry and mental tension increased.

After some months, Tan Kuan-san, the Political Commissar of the Tibet Military Area Command arrived in Peking. He came to the Institute of Minority Nationalities, and, in his speech to the Tibetan students, outlined the general condition of Tibet with particular emphasis on the uprising. His lecture: “After the suppression of the recent rebellion, democratic reforms have been initiated throughout Tibet to make the region take its first step in the people’s revolution. The hopes of tens of thousands of peasants and serfs have come true and this situation cannot be described but as extremely good. At present one of the most important tasks is the propagation to the masses the correct policy of the Party. To achieve this goal the communication gap must be bridged. This duty falls on your shoulders.”

Urging us to help Tibet take the road to progress and always to be determined, he continued: “The anti-motherland activities of a minority group of upper class reactionaries, who not, stopping at anything, instigated the rebellion, turned their back to the motherland, revolted against the masses and socialism, are activities that could not have been done in a short space of time. It is definite that the reactionaries had made contacts with foreign elements many years back and the armed revolt was planned. The rebellious activities of the Tibetan traitors have been of fairly long duration. In 1956 many Tibetans of the upper strata, wearing the mask of religion, travelled to India to establish contacts with

foreign reactionaries and gain their support for the separation of Tibet from the motherland. We knew of these activities from the beginning. But in keeping with our policy of patience and to make the officials of the local government understand, we cautioned and advised them but without any avail. On the night of 17 March, the rebels, not stopping at anything, actually rose up in arms and launched armed attacks at the PLA garrison at Lhasa. Through loud-speakers and megaphones, we explained to the rebels the Party's correct policy towards the minorities.

“Failing to bring the rebels to understanding and reconciliation, having all other means exhausted and as a last resort, at the command of the Central Government, the Peoples Liberation Army stationed in Tibet retaliated, crushing the rebellion in Lhasa within four hours. A condition of slavery and repression has been turned to one of freedom, and countless peasants and serfs, having won their liberation, are on the threshold of a new age of prosperity. Living in such exciting times you students must prepare yourselves from now on to carry out the responsibilities that would fall on your shoulders.”

Giving a few words of praise to the first batch of Tibetan students sent to Tibet from the Institute, Tan Kuonsan elaborated: “All students must clearly know that the rebellion instigated by a minority group of upper class reactionaries is a struggle waged between class and class and not a confrontation between two peoples. The nerve centre of the rebellion is a place in India called Kalimpong from where a minority group of upper strata reactionaries established contacts with foreign imperialists. After the armed revolt was suppressed a minority group of reactionaries obeying orders from higher authorities went around the town distributing pamphlets, tearing up portraits of Chairman Mao Tse-tung and hurling abusive words at the Party. The chief trouble maker is Gyalo Thondup. He has been staying abroad, and, in the manner of a dog trying to make friends with a fox, Gyalo Thondup colluded with American imperialism and foreign reactionaries to separate Tibet from the big motherland family. The declared reason for the armed revolt is to protect the Dalai Lama from

imagined dangers when he has invited to attend a theatrical show at the PLA headquarters at Lhasa. The real reason however is to safeguard the ruling cliques' own interests by foolishly attempting to subvert the might of the Peoples Liberation Army. For this Gyalo Thondup has secretly trained rebels in foreign countries and has been in league with the Khampa bandits for many years to lay the ground for the armed revolt.

“However, it must be said that the Dalai Lama was not in league with and had no connection with the rebels. This is shown by the correspondence we two kept up between March 10 to 16. It is evident from the three letters he sent me that he, as a matter of expediency, had to keep up the semblance of co-operation with; the rebel reactionaries. His letters are printed in the *Peoples' Daily* and everybody can see them.

“Only a minority group of upper class Tibetan reactionaries have turned their back to the motherland, revolted against the masses, turned away from socialism and blatantly abducted the Dalai Lama. Before the abduction of the Dalai Lama we did all we could to safeguard his person. The Dalai Lama's personal desire was to come to the headquarter of the Tibet Military Area Command of the PLA but, unfortunately, he was abducted before that. However the Dalai Lama will continue to hold the posts of the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region and the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. The Dalai Lama is bound to return to the lap of the motherland.

“Every student must study and understand the recent events. If their true meaning is understood no one would lose his sense of direction. It is possible that some of your neighbours in Tibet might have joined forces with the rebel bandits. But the important thing is not to lose your own direction and travel the wrong road. Similarly you must prepare and train yourselves now to face the task of bringing back your family members, if they have travelled the wrong way, to the bright socialist road. This is your responsibility. As soon as possible the second and third stages of the democratic reforms will be introduced in Tibet. I have



full confidence that with determination and under the wise and correct leadership of the Party we would be able to develop our country.” Thus Tan Kuon-san talked for almost one whole hour.

The Principal of the Institute elaborated on the importance of the lecture delivered by the general and told us to continue the discussion in our respective classes.

In her book *Tibetan Interviews* (Peking) in a chapter entitled the *Character of the Lhasa Rebellion*, Anna Louise Strong has written that the number of people involved in the “rebellion” was around 20,000, mostly from Lhasa and Lhoka. She has also written that the areas immediately covered by the uprising contained ten PLA divisions with 100 cannons. In all, the number of PLA soldiers stationed in the affected areas throughout Tibet numbered 1400. From among this, wrote Anna Louise Strong, two PLA divisions were kept as reserves and were not directly involved in the fighting, and that the “rebellion” was quelled in about 74 hours. The author added that when a tea party was given in her honour in the Lhasa PLA headquarters of Ghakyi-khang she came to know from the PLA officers that the number of Tibetan “rebels” killed in the fighting was around 600. All these half-truths handed to her by the Chinese officials have been recorded by Anne Louise Strong in her book as if they were facts and events which she herself had observed.

Pre-'59 Tibet had around 642 aristocratic families and 2136 monasteries. Seventy per cent of the Tibetan aristocracy and monastic establishment took part in the uprising. The author of the *Tibetan Interviews* has recorded that 1400 PLA soldiers easily quelled the “rebellion” in which 20,000 ‘rebels’ militarily took part. One is left in utter amazement when one imagines how only 1400 soldiers could have subdued 20,000 ‘rebels’ and that within such a short space of time. At the time the Tibetans could not refute the contentions of Anna Louise Strong. Fortunately this task has been performed unwittingly for the Tibetans by the Chinese themselves. In an interview in an East German weekly magazine of 20 April 1959 the Chinese representative to the German Democratic Republic had said, “In the

fighting in Lhasa about 40,000 has been killed from both sides, one side's dead being almost the same as the other side's". Returning from China I spent almost a year in Lhasa and had the chance to see things for myself, and here the accounts of the uprising from both the Tibetans as well as the Chinese, from people involved in the fighting and had physically experienced its agony. In his commentary to his Tibetan translation of the *Kamasutra*, the celebrated Tibetan scholar, Gedun Chopel, has stressed the importance of practical experience over theoretical knowledge thus:

What scholar Mipham has written from hearsay,  
 And what profligate Gedun has written from experience,  
 The difference in blessing between the two might vary,  
 But only the learned and wise will recognize the truth.

The militant uprising of the Tibetan people in Lhasa on 10 March 1959 against Chinese domination was the culmination and continuation of the Tibetan nationalist movement which started with the Chinese entry into Tibet in 1950. On the 23rd of May 1951 the Chinese coerced the Tibetan delegation in Peking into signing the Seventeen Point Agreement on the Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet." Many points the Chinese accepted and promised not to violate. For example the Chinese vowed in clause four, 'The central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet. The central authorities also will not alter the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama. Officials of various ranks shall hold office as usual'. In clause seven the Chinese promised, 'The policy of freedom of religious belief laid down in the Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference shall be carried out. The religious beliefs, customs and the habits of the Tibetan people shall be respected and lama monasteries shall be protected. The central authorities will not effect a change in the income of the monasteries'. Since 1951 about 50,000 PLA troops were stationed in Tibet and the clauses of the agreement which the Chinese themselves inserted and vowed not to

break were one by one violated. Conditions became unbearable for the Tibetan and having no other peaceful recourse the patriotic Tibetans started the nationalist movement to oust the Chinese. Because of the worsening conditions the movement took on a militant character. This situation was aptly described by the Dalai Lama when on reaching Tezpur in Assam he made a statement on 18 March 1959: 'The relations of Tibetans with China became openly strained from the early part of February 1959'.

The spark of the uprising of 10 March 1959 was lit by the Chinese action of inviting the Dalai Lama to the PLA headquarters at Lhasa for a theatrical performance. The Chinese fixed a date for the performance and the Dalai Lama was informed that he was to come unescorted to the PLA headquarters on 10 March. The news spread like wild fire and when the local populace heard it they staged many angry demonstrations in Lhasa city and shouted slogans such as, 'Tibet is independent,' 'PLA go away from Tibet'. Crowds surrounded the *Chensel Phodrang*, the summer palace of the Dalai Lama, in Norbu Linka. Even when things had reached such a critical stage the crowds confined their political action to peaceful demonstrations and slogan shouting. But the Chinese aware of their vast military superiority tried to cow the populace; it was only when the Chinese staged naked military offensive by bombarding the Norbu Linka did the Tibetans in self-defence take up arms and retaliate.

On 16 March Chinese reinforcement came from Chinghai (Amdo) and Sikang (Kham) and Lhasa City was surrounded from all sides and was, to all intents and purposes, besieged. The Chinese increased their military activity and around ten in the night of 19 March bombs were thrown at the Tibetan resistance camp from the Chinese military headquarters. The sound of bombs were first heard around 11.40 (Peking time) in the night of 19 March and the next day, 20 March, around dawn, the bombing had still not stopped. Places bombed were the Norbu Linka, Chokpori, Kundeling Monastery and the Potala. This was the first time the people of Lhasa heard the sound of bombs in their life. Fighting, intense, and continuous, went on

throughout 20, 21 and 22 of March and it was only around 1 p.m. (Peking Time) of 22 March that most of the defences of the fighting Tibetans were broken down and the fighting stopped. Much damage was done to the priceless works of art in the monasteries and public property. Later observations have shown that about 1300 bombs fell on Kundeling monastery and Norbu Linka alone. Behind the barricades of the fighting Tibetans there were many killed and injured simply due to lack of ammunition for self-defence. Though the Tibetan soldiers and guerrillas of the volunteer armed force lacked modern weapons they were not frightened but fought back bravely. Wearing ancient armours and using old weapons, the resisting Tibetans in Norbu Linka and Chokpori managed to repulse the attacking PLA soldiers four or five times.

From the night of 22 March the besieged Tibetan gradually managed to slip away making their way to Lhoka in Southern Tibet by crossing the Kyichu and the Yarlung Tsangpo rivers and continued fighting there. On 23 March the Tibet Security Committee was established at the PLA headquarters. Countless patriotic Tibetans in Lhasa and other areas were arrested, given thamzing, imprisoned or quietly snuffed off. If we take Lhasa into consideration, the whole city was packed by PLA soldiers and all able-bodied male Tibetans, whether armed or unarmed, were clamped into prison for a week or two on the pretext of interrogating them. Though most of the people from Lhasa were released, there were many Tibetans from the outskirts and surrounding areas who were lost and could not be traced. After a month or so people started seeing dead bodies in unfrequented spots and in the waters of Kyichu. When the Chinese authorities learnt of the flight of the Dalai Lama they behaved like an elephant gone mad. The commander of the PLA headquarters Tang Gohei sent a report to the Chinese Central Government on the Lhasa uprising and this report was reprinted on the 8 April 1959 in all the important newspapers of China.

From 24 March PLA military concentration was on Lhoka, where Tibetan resistance was still continuing. Reinforcement of 20,000 PLA infantry was sent and reconnais-

sance planes were flown over the area, possibly in the vain hope of tracking down the Dalai Lama's flight. Places where there were large concentration of people were bombed. 2500 cavalrymen were called from Inner Mongolia and along with a sizeable cavalrymen from Shigatse were sent to Lhoka. Before April there were about 70,000 soldiers in the Lhoka region and with the later reinforcement the total strength of PLA manpower in Lhoka was around 100,000. Though the Tibetan army and guerrilla forcees lacked modern weapons they fought bravely and effectively. Even after three or four months the PLA could not bring the fighting in Lhoka to an end. On 3 July when Tang Gohei gave his report, "The Present Condition of Tibet," before the Preparatory Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region he said that all the "rebels" were yet to be subdued. The number of Tibetans killed from 10 March to July 1959 alone is unprecedented in Tibetan history. In Lhasa alone about 18,600 Tibetans were killed. In Lhoka, Chamdo and Nagchuka the estimate of the number of Tibetans killed was around 32,000. All in all about 60,000 Tibetans died in the resistance fighting since 10 March 1959. The number of Tibetans who took up arms in the uprising movement was about 20,000 and those who fled to the neighbouring countries was about 50,000. Those Tibetans who met extreme hardship and loss of family members total 30,000. Even as late as 1977 the spirit of the 1959 Uprising has not been extinguished; on July 1977 in Tsolho area South of Koko Nor Lake in the Kuta *hsien* about 20,000 Tibetans rose up against the Chinese masters and many Tibetans were killed and injured.

## Famine and Travel in China

Towards the end of 1959 the higher classes of the Institute were divided into three groups and were sent, group-wise, to Tibet; by the end of 1960 about 500 students had been sent to Tibet. The main work of the students from China was to act as interpreters. Some were, however, given work as teachers and accountants. The same year Tibetan school children, along with students belonging to the minorities of south-west China, arrived in our Institute. The year 1960 also saw a radical change in the curriculum of the Institute. The subjects taught to the Tibetan students changed and the students were taught practical things like electricity, surveying and agriculture etc. The impression was created that the students, when they arrived in Tibet, would be able to work in whatever field they were trained in. It was during this period that I went to study printing at the Institute's printing press.

From the end of 1959 onwards, wheat and related foodgrains were strictly rationed and people had to resort to the policy of 'tightening their belts'. The Institute also experienced the hardship which prevailed in the rest of Peking. An individual student's monthly ration was reduced to twenty *gyamas* of foodgrains. This seemed an unfair punishment to the students who were healthy, athletic and normally did strenuous exercises. No matter with what moderation the students ate, their ration cards stretched at the most to twenty-five days. For the remaining six or seven days the students had to survive on spinach, leaves and on anything that remotely resembled vegetable. Such a miserable diet drained both health and strength. We lacked the power to voice our suffering and had no alternative but to continue bearing the hunger and hardship.

From the beginning the Institute authorities in countless sermon-speeches lectured at us: "If the country experienced famine or draught everyone of the 600 millions must try to

overcome the hardship by eating less and increasing his inner strength. The establishment of socialism is everyone's duty, and without being depressed or defeated by temporary problems, each individual must face the future with courage. If, however, there are people who cannot face the challenge it is certain that these people are of no service to the masses. These are the category of people who are incapable of contributing anything positive to the establishment of socialism. They lack the revolutionary spirit of facing hardship and of being unafraid of death. Naturally they burst into defeatist cries. Without being all the time obsessed by the fear of survival, of cold and hunger, we must make every effort to contribute to the economic development of our country.

“The present situation of the country is extremely good. Though the famine has raged on for three years, not one person throughout the whole of China has died of starvation. This is because of the Party. Under the Manchus and the reactionary government of the Kuomintang, a similar condition as this one would have decimated the population of China. Because the government of the People's Republic of China is truly the people's own government, it considers the interests of the people of prime importance. Food-grains are rationed and distributed equally so that it covers everybody and everyone has enough to eat. The rationed grains must be eaten with stinginess to make it last. The present hardship is a test to the people's revolutionary spirit. The minor problems we are now facing is common to any period of peace. We must learn to endure such minor hardships. Otherwise, we would lack the discipline to establish socialism, and world opinion would label us as a people lacking revolutionary spirit—a disorganised, incoherent lot.”

The authorities would then quote a long list of ‘legendary heroes’ of the epic Long March; heroes who cared not a single strand of hair for their individual lives. According to the Institute authorities, these veterans of the Long March marched tens of thousands of “li”, climbing snow-capped mountains, fording treacherous swamps, fighting pitched battles on flimsy bridges, crossing the celebrated Tatu River, besides facing and overcoming innumerable

other hardships.

These were the tales the authorities recounted to us daily—of how the Red Army, due to lack of provision, was forced to eat dead bodies, dead horses and dogs. Similarly a kilogram of rice had to go around twenty soldiers. The soldiers ate anything that remotely resembled food, even their own boots. On top of these hardships the Red Army had to fight retreating battles against the Kuomintang. Of the hundred thousand hardships overcome by the Red Army, of the sacrifices made by the soldiers, and, how eventually, the Red Army drove out the Japanese imperialists and overthrew the reactionary government. These tales were told to make light of our present hardships and to fire our spirit.

Said the authorities: “Such were the hardships borne by the Red Army. If we cannot bear our little share of problems, far from being a credit to the heroes and heroines of the Chinese Revolution, we would make them feel ashamed.”

The basic message of the tales of the legendary heroes of the Chinese Revolution was “tighten your belts”. The rationed food that was given to us was completely inadequate, and there was the danger of our dying of starvation. Those comrades, highly privileged in the socialist social hierarchy, were not forthcoming in their help and we suffered in the socialist society with continued cuts in our ration. Even solid vegetables, like radishes and potatoes, were included in the category of foodgrains. Time came when the Peking people fought over leaves from trees. In the socialist society where the masses had won their liberation and were supposed to be happy with lots to eat, one thought which throughout twenty four hours obsessed their minds and appeared before their eyes was food. Even our daily conversations were wholly to do with food or the lack of it:

How much did you eat today?

I ate one *srang* less today. The rest I shall need tomorrow when I would have more strenuous work.

Does your ration coupon carry you to the end of the month? As for myself I have no alternative but to tighten my belt for two or three days.



Thus we told another the sorrows of hunger. These conditions made the people prone to various afflictions and swells grew up all over our body. The sickness and death rate increased month by month. The cloth ration for a year was three metres. This amount of cloth ration did not allow us to make new shirts and new pair of trousers. We patched our old clothes so much that the city of Peking was reduced to a truly proletarian city. What Khrushchev said when he came to China aptly described the conditions prevailing then: "The climate of China seems very pleasant; a pair of pants is shared by two Chinese. The Russian climate is moody, and the people there change clothes according to the changes in season." We went out to town in the oiled and inked clothes we wore in the printing press and factories. Our sleeping quilts and beddings were no better. Our bedding covers were torn and in rags, and they could not hold the cotton wool together. When we slept with heaps of cotton wool stacked up here and there, it reminded us of Tibet, where we were accustomed to see flocks of sheep in scattered groups up on the hills.

Deprived of adequate food, good health and sanitation and obsessed with dark, depressive thoughts, we were afflicted, it seemed, by a deadly, insidious disease, which drained us of our confidence and vigour. I did not hope for much, except the joy of seeing my country, even for a moment. The passing of a day seemed like that of a month. In such hardships we spent almost two years, and that period was as if I were born in a land of *yitaks* or the hungry people, where we actually lived through the saying of "flames of fire from a starved man's mouth".

In the first week of December 1961, about twenty of us from the factory were told that we would be sent to Tibet. Gladly we made preparations to return to our country. Before we left for Tibet, each of us were given a coat and pair of boiler suits, a hat, a pair of canvas shoes and blankets. These were given with the words: "Despite the difficulties the country is going through, these articles are given to you because of the Party's genuine concern for the minority nationalities".

The factory authorities shook hands with us and echoed:

“The opportunity which you had of studying for about six years in the capital is not easy to come by. All Tibetans wish to see the capital city but an opportunity like that of yours is very rare. People in Tibet are bound to ask questions on the progress made in the heart of the motherland. Since your neighbours and family members are sure to ask questions, you must prepare yourselves now. You are educated and can think independently and the little difficulties you have been through must not be exaggerated out of proportion. You must think and ponder over issues from a broader perspective. Narrow thinking is dangerous and wrong.

“For example everyone knows that Peking city has developed to an extent undreamt of in the old days. These are facts and you must tell the facts. You must describe the things that you see in Peking so that your listeners in Tibet feel as if they too have been in the capital of the motherland. And we hope that you would do good work in Tibet so that you could come back to Peking to attend the award giving meetings.” With these nice words and acting very pleasant they bid us farewell.

In the morning of 13 December, we left for Tibet from Peking's new railway station. After five days and nights of travel we reached Chengtu. We had to spend two days in Chengtu to change trains. The conditions in Chengtu were worse than that of Peking and the city was literally starving. The railway station of Chengtu was filled by starving people and when they saw new faces they at once raised their thin, emaciated palms. I did not see anyone through feelings of human sympathy giving any food to those starving people, nor did we have anything to give. For in a socialist society everyone must act according to orders given from above. Such a society does not leave room for a person moved by human sympathy to come to another's help. Such an action would land one in trouble. In Chengtu while eating our steamed flour doughs, we had to cover them, and keeping an eye on every direction we had to swallow them as quickly as possible. Otherwise people would come running from every direction and snatch away our food. For the inhabitants of the city these incidents had become a part of their life and not much fuss was made

over the “thieves” who snatched away food from people’s hands. The owner of a restaurant where we went to eat told us, “You must be very careful when you eat. We can do nothing if your food is snatched away”. This was absolutely true. Once Rigzin Dorje and I went to a eating place with our grain ration coupons. While eating, rather in-cautiously, a tall man of about forty-five years, suddenly appeared before our table and took off with the steamed rolls on our plates. We could only stare at each other in astonishment. A similar incident happened shortly after. A man in his late twenties, ran away with the *ting-mo* (steamed-rolls) of a person who looked like a factory worker. The worker chased the culprit, who tripped over a piece of furniture and fell flat on the floor. But the piece of food he had stolen, he at once put in his mouth and tried to swallow. The factory worker caught the ‘thief’s’ hair and pulled it and kicked him to get back the steamed-rolls. But the person fallen on the ground was literally oblivious to the blows he was receiving, so busy was he in trying to swallow the piece of stolen food. After seeing such conditions I wondered in what kind of world I was born. I was confused and bewildered. Stuck up on street walls everywhere we saw posters of men, crossed out in red. On enquiring what these meant we discovered that these were the thieves and robbers, shop-lifters, people who robbed and stole from communes and grain-stores. Out of all this misery the sight which saddened me most was the spectacle of two children of tender years, lying face down on the pavement. Their emaciated bodies were shivering and it looked as if they were going to die any moment. I was thoroughly moved, and, though I wanted to give some food to them, I clearly saw that they lacked the power even to open their mouths. Those who were living near by related that the father of the children stole from a grain-store and was killed. The mother had starved to death not many days back. “It is better that these two die. They have neither the energy nor the strength to live.” We ourselves did not have the power to save lives, and with a sad and agitated state of mind we travelled ahead—our eyes literally closed to the depressing surroundings.

## In Search New Tibet

We left Chengtu by train and arrived at the Liuyon railway station. Railway track had not yet been laid beyond Liuyon and from there onwards we travelled by bus. It was December and the weather was extremely cold. When we were negotiating the Thongo-la pass we wrapped ourselves with all the blankets we had. Still our hands, feet and backs pained as if pricked by thorns. We covered our heads and faces with scarves. Our breath froze and stuck beneath our chains and we looked like characters from a Chinese opera, with long, white beards. Since we had stayed for long in low altitude, the climb to Tibet made us feel dizzy and we were overcome by nausea. Our heart beat became abnormal, some of those who were less strongly constituted even fainted on reaching the top of the pass. One of the main reasons for our physical discomfort in our own land was the poor diet we were given back in Peking.

After six days we reached Nagchuka. Nagchuka seemed to be a town formed in the midst of an encircling chain of snow-mountains. Buried by mountains, wind and snow, the whole place was nothing but a scene of desolate whiteness, except for houses, tents and yaks. The temperature was around 30°C below zero. Even in such hard conditions, the Horpa nomads were stripped bare down to their waists and were loading the yaks with a nonchalance which roused my admiration for these hardy people who could so casually defy the harsh Tibetan weather.

All the Chinese cadres in Nagchuka were armed. From the first glance we could see that the People's Liberation Army out-numbered the inhabitants of the place. I concluded that this condition could result only from a failure

at “suppression of the rebellion”. Our arrival at Nagchuka did not evince the slightest signs of welcome from its inhabitants.

While we rested in the place for about four hours the only person to show recognition and welcomed us was Wangdrak who belonged to the second batch of Tibetan students to leave the Institute for Tibet. Wangdrak looked like a typical PLA soldier and was armed to the teeth. His formidable military appearance was in complete contrast to his civility and peaceable nature back at the Institute.

Wangdrak was happy to meet us and told us all the news. He had been in several expeditions throughout the Great Northern Plains or Jangthang to eliminate “rebel-bandits”. There were still remnants of Khampa guerrillas hiding in the mountains. Both soldiers and cadres when moving around the place and its vicinity had to move in groups of ten and fully armed. Otherwise they felt endangered. Nagchuka prison held more than 600 prisoners. Many who were imprisoned before were either transported to Tsa-la Karpo lake or to Kongpo. Wangdrak told us of many people having committed suicide.

While hearing these accounts of life in Tibet a big question at once arose in my mind. I concluded that conditions elsewhere in Tibet would be very much like the one prevailing in Nagchuka. This would mean that many of my acquaintances and relatives might have been branded “rebels” and put into prison. While pondering thus I did not know how I should react if I were met by an acquaintance.

Soon we continued with our journey. When we reached Jang Yangpachen some of the fellow travellers said that soon the Potala would come into sight and rushed for the bus windows. As for myself I thought that sooner we reached Lhasa the better. After journeying for about four and half hours and while turning the corner of the hill where the Drepung Monastery was situated, suddenly the magnificent spectacle of the Potala burst full before us. The eternal Red Palace, possessing the power to rob men’s mind, was there in its full splendour, an ornament of Lhasa city. The splendored, awe-inspiring Potala seemed a palace of the gods descended from the heavens down to the land of men.

The golden roofs of the Potala glittered brilliantly in the rays of the morning sun and I felt as if the road leading to Lhasa were covered with drops of gold.

Having a history of more than a thousand years, the Potala has turned into a symbol of Tibet. From the top of the Potala there now fluttered a Chinese flag.

While we were in China we had heard that during fighting the Chinese had bombarded the Potala, and I thought a corner of the Winter Palace must be badly damaged. On closer inspection it was with relief that I found that nothing of the sort had happened and that the Potala still retained its magnificence and splendour as in 1956 when I had first seen it. The Potala was there with its undamaged beauty. Thinking thus we found ourselves deposited before Teykhang House in "Sho" at the foot of the Potala.

After our arrival in Lhasa I did not have to go to the villages to act as an interpreter. I worked at the Teykhang House which housed the *People's Printing Press* of Tibet. I worked in the press for about eight months. Later the *People's Printing Press* of Tibet was integrated into the *Tibet Daily Press*.

Formerly, Lhasa was the seat of the Tibetan government under the Dalai Lama. Which Tibetan would not feel happy to be in the city where His Holiness the Dalai Lama resided? But this was not so in my time. Lhasa under the Chinese was the source of trouble to the Tibetans. Everywhere one looked in Lhasa, the most common sight was the Chinese. At the point of gun the Chinese taskmasters took the Tibetans everywhere they liked, to the north, to the south and forced them to work hard. Those nationalists who had revolted against the tyrannical rule were transported to the worst places in Tibet, like Kongpo in the south and Tsa-la Karpo lake area in the Jangthang, the "Siberia of Tibet". The others were kept in Lhasa as free labour force. A rough estimate of prisoners in Lhasa, while I was there, could be 5,000. These prisoners were made to work like animals. For example, if there was any construction work to be done, whether building a bridge, factory, or road, the prisoners were made to do it. People were made to pull horse-carts, and iron ploughs in the fields alongside

yaks, and carry boulders on their backs. Their feet, hands and backs turned into one big sore, and bled. But they had to still continue with their work. The prisoners enjoyed not a single freedom and were treated like animals; the forced labour was unremitting. The Tibetans who were made to do forced labour came from the following categories: Tibetans who fought the invaders, those who stuck wall-posters demanding Tibetan independence, those who joined demonstrations; aristocrats and rich merchants. These Tibetans are still undergoing extreme hardship and suffering in the hands of the Chinese. The Tibetans who the Chinese considered dangerous were caught, imprisoned and made to suffer. They came from all the classes of Tibetan society. They included merchants, peasants, nomads, monks, soldiers of the former Tibetan army, government officials and Tibetan aristocrats. At night they were locked up in prisons in Trapchi and Nachentrang and various army cantonments. The most dangerous prisoners, who were not taken out of their prisons and driven to work, include Lhalu, Lama Lobsang Tashi and Gyaltzen Yonten. This type of prisoners was put in the PLA prison at Lhasa. What type of punishment was meted to them is not known. A few of these "blackest" prisoners were released in 1964 with a lot of propaganda blasts in an apparent attempt to polish up the regime's international image. However during the Cultural Revolution they were clamped back into jail and nothing was heard of them.

The Tibetans who lived outside the prison-walls enjoyed a little more freedom. Some made their living by carrying on petty trades, others by working in handicraft centres, some by working on the construction works and road building. A few fortunate ones possessing one or two acres of land cultivated their plots. Similarly there were Tibetan cadres, factory-workers, teachers, soldiers and intelligence men. The Tibetan society that I saw in Lhasa was confused and unsettled. Each and every family in Lhasa was labelled with new words we never came across before. The families were put into three broad categories; the very rich, well-to-do, and the poor. Even among the poor two types could be distinguished, the "white poor" and the

“black poor”. Besides the other Tibetans were put into the Marxist social classification of landlords, petty bourgeoisie, and the capitalists. The Tibetans were categorised into different classes and were ceaselessly told to wage class struggle to the end. The labelling of Tibetans into different classes was a clever move. It created a situation where one Tibetan cadre could not trust another, and the atmosphere became charged with mutual suspicion. Doubtless the reason for creating this situation was to destroy Tibetan unity. No one could express his opinions freely; the atmosphere of fear and suspicions was too strong and pervading for that.

Along with the social transformation in Lhasa, the names of streets, areas and parks of the city were also changed. For the first few days in Lhasa, we felt as if we were in a city we had never been before. To give a complete list of all the places and streets of Lhasa that were given new names would be tedious and here I will give only a few examples. Norbu Lingka is called “People’s Park” and the Lhasa-Muslim Cinema Hall is called “Lhasa People’s Cinema Hall”. Streets were commonly labelled: “The Victory Street” “The Great Leap Forward Street”, and “Sun-shine Street”, and different sectors of Lhasa are known as “South Sector and Liberation Sector”. When I first came to Lhasa before the 1959 Uprising the Bhakor or the area around the Central Cathedral—the focus of the veneration of every devout Buddhist—was seething with life and activity. There were pious Tibetans circumambulating around the Cathedral which housed the image of Jowo Rinpoche, and merchants loudly advertising their wares. After coming from China all this had stopped.

The Chinese out-numbered the Tibetans in Lhasa. The Chinese enjoyed far more rights than the Tibetans, who were not treated as human beings. A foreigner who had not been to Tibet before and totally ignorant of things Tibetan would while in Lhasa feel as if the Tibetans are living in refuge in someone else’s country. To lose one’s country means to become a serf to a foreign lord. Since 1959, the Tibetans have literally become the serfs of the Chinese overlords. Freedom, the essence of Tibet’s dis-



tinct way of life, has been destroyed. While in China, I had always longed to be back in my own country. But when I actually got to Tibet I saw that the Tibetans had been turned into serfs and servants of alien masters, and I got no happiness from being in my own land. Like other Tibetans I too had to struggle to survive the whims and fancies of a foreign master. In this way I spent almost a year in Lhasa.

Typical of the Chinese, they had a definite policy towards a few upper class Tibetans. At that time there were a number of Tibetan collaborators. These Tibetans were financially bought, economically looked after and politically directed by the Chinese. They were labelled the “patriotic few” and enjoyed a comparatively comfortable life. Under this category there were people like Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, Sampho Tsewang Rigzin, Phakpa Lha Gelek Namgyal, Tsogo Dhondup Tsering, Pongda Yarphe, Samding Dorje Phakmo, Trathong Chey Jigme, Lhamon Yeshe Tsultrim. These people were given ranks in the Tibet Autonomous Region. As for Pongda and Samding Dorje Phakmo, they were considered to have done meritorious deeds by coming back to Tibet after fleeing to a free country. But the Tibetans considered them to be fools for coming back, despite the two’s insistence that their mental fog had turned to “rays of understanding”. It is possible that anyone who has not experienced the hardships of Chinese rule would be fooled by their deceptive ways. Between 1964-1965 Lhamon Yeshe Tsultrim and Trathong Chey Jigme were separately put into jail. Sampho Tsewang Rigzin, Phakpala Gelek Namgyal, Tsogo Dhondup Tsering, Samding Dorje Phakmo and Pongda Yarphe were subjected to varying degrees of *thamzing* during the Cultural Revolution and at present no one knows where many of them are.

Especially among these the Chinese have completely obliterated all traces of Sampho Tsewang Rigzin. Pongda Yarphe was given severe treatment and eventually quietly killed. Under party surveillance Samding Dorje Phagmo was made to do forced labour in the day and at night she had to confess her “sins” in large political meetings. On top of this in large, important meetings she

was paraded as one of the “patriotic few” or a “democratic personage”.

Nagabo Ngawang Jigme is used as a puppet by the Chinese. He was given rank and post which carried no real power. He was taken to China and was shown like a toy to foreign visitors. It is definite that the real Chinese policy in Tibet is to use Tibetans from all classes to further their colonial interests. There is not the slightest indication that the Chinese policy in Tibet is for the good of the Tibetans.

## The Panchen Lama

In the midst of the power struggle between Mao and Liu Shao-chi in the early sixties the Tibetans were “granted” the freedom of religious worship and the Chinese promised that the Tibetan cultural heritage would be protected. Needless to say, this was only a window-dressing. The Panchen Lama saw behind the window-dressing. He pointed out this fact in his audience given to the Tibetans. While I was in Lhasa I had the good fortune to have had the opportunity to listen to the Panchen Lama’s discourses. It is with the deepest happiness I remember them. The people who listened to the Panchen Rinpoche’s religious sermons numbered more than 10,000 and it included the people of Lhasa, students, factory-workers and Tibetan cadres. The Panchen Lama in his sermons touched on various subjects and the following is the gist of his talk.

The development of Tibet was upper most in his mind. As such it was important to cooperate with the Chinese to bring about the democratic reforms. If all the development undertakings were real steps towards actual progress and beneficial to the Tibetan people they were welcome. As long as the Tibetans cannot “stand up on their feet” the Chinese would remain in Tibet to help them. The development of Tibet was a Tibetan responsibility. He specially stressed on the fact that Tibet’s rich cultural heritage would not be allowed to die, but on the contrary, it would be given every chance for further development. The freedom of worship was promised by Mao and guaranteed by the Chinese Communist Party and as such all Tibetans could worship freely and without fear, and follow their customs as before. The Chinese cadres were in Tibet to help Tibet

emerge from its feudal, backward past to a developed future. There was, besides this, no reason why there should be more Chinese than Tibetans in Tibet. There was no policy to permanently settle the Chinese in Tibet. Ultimately the important thing was for the Tibetans to develop Tibet through their own effort.

After saying this the Panchen Lama looked in every direction and with a sigh of regret and sadness said, "His Holiness the Dalai Lama was abducted from his country to a foreign land. During this period it is in every Tibetan's interest that His Holiness comes to no harm. I have complete faith that he works with heavy responsibility. I pray that His Holiness will live long.

"If the Dalai Lama comes to no harm then the Tibetan people's stock of good fortune is not exhausted. As such it is important that every Tibetan pray that the Dalai Lama will have a long life and that he would be able come back to Tibet. The Tibetans must remain cooperative and help one another, instead of harming each other and acting in the evil ways of poisonous snakes." While thus listening to the Panchen Lama's moving sermon all Tibetans, young and old, wept helplessly. Except the Chinese there was no person in the Barkor who did not have his eyes wet.

After this, in the Tibet policy meeting, the Panchen Lama talked about the maintenance of the Tibetan culture. He talked about the importance of actually practising the freedom of religious worship. In this important talk the Panchen Lama, speaking in the context of the actual prevailing situation, openly opposed the Chinese policy. His speech: "The Tibetan cultural heritage goes back more than thousand years. In the present twentieth century it is inevitable that there would be some drawbacks in such an ancient culture. It is right and correct to make our culture conform to the present situation. But the changes in culture cannot be carried out in the same manner as land reform. There is no reason to destroy everything. To preserve and protect our cultural heritage is the responsibility of Tibetans. The Chinese are bound to respect our country's culture. They would not undermine our culture.

"However there are a few Tibetans who bear the names

“lamas” and “gedun”, but who do not practise the Buddha’s commands properly. They do not adorn the monk’s garb, they bring disrepute to the Dalai Lama’s name. These people wear the mask of religion to indulge in practices that undermine religion.”

After these words he stared long at the assembled people with an angry face and then continued: “for example, if a PLA soldier did not wear his army uniform but wore any clothes he pleased, wouldn’t he be going against army discipline? If a Chinese Communist Party member opposed Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung thought would he still retain all the qualities of a good party member? If a common man broke the fundamental laws, would he still enjoy the privileges which the other members of society enjoy? If a person is a lama, he must adorn the garment of his religion. This a religious discipline. If the Buddha’s followers criticise the reincarnation of the Buddha himself then these people are wearing a new mask of religion. There is nothing to fear if one is doing the rightful duty of preserving one’s country’s culture. This Mao Tse-tung guaranteed many times to me.” So saying the Panchen Lama talked almost for two hours. In the next day’s policy meeting, Tang Gohe, without mincing words, said that the talk given by the Panchen Lama yesterday contained many big mistakes.

At that time the Chinese said nothing bad in public about the Panchen Lama. However in the meetings of Party members and cadres many things were said against him, that in his speech he had praised the Dalai Lama, that he was waiting for the restoration of the old society and that his political thinking was wrong. From this time onwards the Chinese stopped their long honeymoon with the Panchen Lama.

It was around this time the Chinese in Lhasa lived in fear and distrust of the Tibetans. All around the outskirts of Lhasa there were Chinese army barracks. In the Bakor and Sho and in other strategically important places the Chinese had one or two units of PLA. Seeing the big guns poised ready outside the army headquarters one got the impression that the Chinese still had not been able to sup-

press the 1959 uprising. To all the offices and army quarters a Tibetan had to have a permit, otherwise he could not enter. After 7 p.m. (Peking time) no one was allowed to walk the streets. If the reason given by the Chinese for this regulation is analysed, it is certain, as the Chinese themselves said, that reactionary elements lurked the streets to kill the cadres and soldiers. There was no sense of peace and security.

I have a small piece of personal experience to recount. When I used to work at the printing press at Teykhang House, around one April dawn of 1962 we were awakened from our sleep by the sound of gunfire. Unable to find any reasons for the gunfire we were filled with fear and we could not sleep again. For about a few months we did not hear anything clear about that morning's happening. Later the news of that morning's gun fire slowly filtered out. Three well-armed Tibetan guerillas, while entering the office of the Tibet Autonomous Region, was confronted by a guard who yelled "Stand Still". These were his last words for he fell dead. Inside the office two other soldiers met the same fate when they came to their comrade's rescue. However one PLA soldier was only wounded and he fired his gun in all directions. The three guerillas had to flee. The direction of the guerillas' escape was towards Sho and later the awakened Chinese soldiers fired in this direction, the sound of which woke us up that early morning. The two dead PLA soldiers were hit in the head, while the third soldier had his shoulder wounded. According to the wounded soldier the three Tibetan guerillas were equipped with silencers. The Chinese were sure that the Tibetan guerillas had "hand relations" or help from foreign countries. They became very suspicious and intensified their search for the three Tibetans. I do not know whether the Chinese had been able to catch the three guerillas. According to Tibetan whispers in Lhasa such incidents happened several times. On one occasion two Tibetan guerillas were either killed in the firing or died by swallowing poison. In no case was there news that these Tibetans had been caught alive by the Chinese.

The major development undertakings in Lhasa were the

following:—the Nangchen Power Station, cement factory at Lhasa, Dulen coal mine, the bridge over Kyichu, the new army headquarters, the People's Broadcasting Station, the People's Hospital, Guest House and Exhibition Hall. The main labour force in these development undertakings were the Tibetans who were subjected to unremitting forced labour on a diet that was completely inadequate. Many of the Tibetans who were made to do the forced labour died through sheer exhaustion and starvation. My own teacher, Lhotho Allha Gho who used to teach me Tibetan in Phari died in Lhasa in one of the forced labour camps.

The development projects of Lhasa were needed most by Mao. They were accomplished quickly and well and according to plan. The development of Lhasa enormously benefited the Chinese. On the one hand no expenses were involved. The Chinese could use the material and wealth confiscated from Lhasa itself. On the other hand the Chinese could use forced labour. The labourers were not paid, and were fed very poorly. "New Tibet" is built with the blood and sweat of the Tibetans in Tibet. We the Tibetans in exile have nothing but appreciation and admiration at the pace of development that is going on in Tibet. However it is with regret and sadness that we realise that the material advancement of Tibet far from increasing the happiness of the Tibetans has become a cause of their present hardships. For example, the Lhasa Broadcasting Station is used by the Chinese to serve their policy of oppression and has become an important instrument of propaganda. Similarly the products of the cement plant and the coal and coke factory are exclusively used by the Chinese. The Tibetans have no chance to reap the fruits of development. In my six years in Tibet I have neither seen nor heard any Tibetan using cement to built a house of his own, or using a single piece of coal to cook his food or warm himself in winter. Even in the People's Hospital of Lhasa the Chinese and the Tibetans were treated in different sections. They were called the "cadres' register and "people's register". To impress the Tibetans the treatment in the hospital was free. However no careful diagnosis was given and for the slightest ailment, the inevitable injection

was given. Especially in the villages, selected people were given crash-course training of several months and given the name of “bare-foot doctors” and unleashed on the villages.

In 1962 the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party issued its policy directives of disbanding Tibetan cadres. It was publicly announced in political meetings that since the country had experienced three years of famine, cadres from cities would be sent to the villages to help support agriculture. This was in accordance with Mao’s latest directive, “agriculture is the foundation, industry the leading factory”, and hence the CCP’s policy of disbanding cadres.

The cadres were told that if they accepted the CCP’s policy directives, they were not only rendering true service to the broad masses but were true revolutionary cadres who possessed the most prized revolutionary quality of eating, drinking and working together with the people. It was the dedicated, hardworking cadres, so the Tibetan cadre were told, who would bring about the new, socialist Tibet. The cadres through their undying love for the motherland must voluntarily accept the Party’s new political directive. However it was entirely upto the individual cadre whether he wished to go to the country side to support agriculture. The actual situation was in complete contrast to the above announcement.

Before the policy of the dismissal of cadres was announced to the common cadres, in secret meetings of Party members and important authorities of different offices, it was already decided which cadres would be sent to the countryside and when.

The sole aim of the announcement, couched in many pleasant words but which completely contrasted with the actual existing reality, was to deceive and cheat the cadres. With this end in view, extensive meetings to propagate and sell the idea of cadres going to the countryside were held for almost a month. The cadres were praised in lavish words; they were considered “heroes” possessing revolutionary dynamism. They were the advanced cadres who carried out the command of the Party. The cadres were told that they were the people who would take the first step towards



national development. They were needed by the people. Duties would be allotted according to the patriotism and ability of each individual cadre.

Such was the alluring but deceptive opera the Chinese had for the Tibetan cadres. The Chinese Communist Party can be credited with perfecting the art of deception. There is no change whatsoever in the Chinese Communist Party's policy of permanently deceiving and keeping the masses in ignorance. Being the object of Chinese deceit and craftiness the Tibetan cadres themselves have learnt to be cunning. The Tibetans have a saying that the CCP had several different policies. However the Chinese themselves used to say otherwise. Like a beggar arrogating to itself the position of the medium of an oracle, like a cock overcome by lust, the Han party members used to lift their heads high and propagate, "the CCP has only one policy. Those who say the Chinese Communist Party has several different policies are class enemies. The people must recognise the fact that the CCP has only one policy."

Despite their indoctrination and propaganda efforts the Chinese were not able to cover up the true existing reality. We Tibetans have a saying, "the palm of the hand cannot hide the sun".

Without giving too many examples of Chinese craftiness and cunning, I wish to simply relate a personal experience of mine. I learnt one month before that I would be sent to the countryside to "help support agriculture". This was told to me in confidence by a friend of mine who was a Party man. As such I was told to attend only one of the "support agriculture" meetings. I totally disagreed with the cadres being sent to the countryside to help support agriculture. Personally I did not have anything against working in the fields. This was because I would have the opportunity to meet my family, relatives and see my birthplace Phari which at that time I considered to be a place of freedom and happiness.

However to test the truth of my friend's statement I disagreed with the policy of sending cadres to the countryside. Eventually what my friend said turned out to be true. I was included in the first batch of six to be sent to the villages.

While going to help support agriculture, I had twenty *gyamas* of *tsampa*, 33 yuans and the bus fare between Lhasa and Phari and a ration card. With these few worldly possessions on my back, I took a bus from the bus station at Lhasa and, via Shigatse, soon reached Phari.

Later gradually the reasons for the dismissal of the cadres became clear. The reasons supplied by the Partymen were the ones given above – that China experienced three years of famine and as many cadres as possible who voluntarily came forward to work in the fields were needed. The cadres who volunteered were called “dynamic”, “the voluntary-brigade” and “progressives”, and other sweet-sounding names. However there were three real, substantive reasons why many cadres were disbanded. Those cadres were disbanded and sent to the villages who were (1) invalided for long, (2) those lacking an adequate command of Tibetan and Chinese, (3) those not having a good class background. Those cadres who were categorised into either of these three groups were bound to be thrown out. In Tibet that year more than 3000 cadres were disbanded. As for myself, while in Phari, my main source of livelihood was farming. Besides that I sought additional means of livelihood by working in road construction, cutting wood, collecting medicinal herbs, and knitting. I was compelled to live like this for almost four years.

## OLD PHARI

I was able to return to my birthplace Phari after being separated from it since 1956. Chronologically speaking six or seven years are not very long, but in the terms of the social transformation that had taken place in Phari they seemed so long. What was regrettable and sad was that the changes did not benefit the Tibetans. The few Tibetans that were left in Phari were reduced to the stage of working for mere physical survival.

Here I relate the social transformation that had taken place in Phari. In order that the social transformation that I saw in Phari be understood in its proper perspective and context, it is useful to describe the structure of the old society of Phari.

According to local legend the name 'Phari' came from the shape of a nearby mountain in the Phari Chokhor Lung mountain range. This particular mountain was in the shape of a pig. (A pig is called "Phag" in Tibetan and "ri" means a mountain or hill.) This was how Phari got its name. Lying on the top of the world (Phari is the highest town in the world) the altitude of Phari from sea level is about 4600 metres. The maximum temperature is 20° C and the minimum 26° C below zero. The annual rainfall lasts for about four months, and for two months it snows and rains. It snows for about four or five months; Phari could be one of the very cold places of Tibet.

Towards the east of Phari lies the famed Chomolhari whose peak literally seem to pierce the sky. To the south there is the Taktsang Pehung, the celebrated pilgrim spot of Guru Padmasambhava, and around here also lies the boundary between Bhutan and Tibet. To the west of Phari

lies Khambu, celebrated in local folklore for its herbs and water that could cure all the 444 kinds of diseases known in the Tibetan medical system. From Khambu, divided by only a mountain are Lachen and Lachung passes that serve as the boundary line between Sikkim and Tibet. The main trade and travel route to India from Phari and Yatung or Dromo in the southwest passes through the Nathu-la, Jelep-la and Dhungchung-la. To the north lies the Tibetan hinterland with its famed salt mines. There are four pilgrim spots that used to be the focus of devotion of the local inhabitants. These are Chomolhari, Kyoklung, Jowo Kyungdu and Jowo Monbho. Chomolhari is a mountain and is in the east of Phari. Kyoklung is a mountain in the northwest, Jowo Monbho is in the south.

According to a local legend Chamolhari and Jowo Monbho were both guardian dieties of Phari. Ages ago Chomolhari, in one of her amorous moods, bedecked herself in all her heavenly finery and with a vase full of the choicest nectar went to pay a social visit to Jowo Kyungdu. This act of godly unfaithfulness was seen by Jowo Mondbho, whose jealousy was fully aroused. He aimed his arrow and shot the vase out of the hand of Chomolhari. The vase broke and all the nectar came spilling out. Nowadays the place to the northwest of Phari is known as Kyungdu Dhakung where mixed water and soft earth is found. Some of the inhabitants when they used to come to this place say that the water here was holy and drink it.

Phari is a valley surrounded by snow mountains and hills covered by green grass and shrubs. The distance between the mountains in the east and in west is about eighteen kilometres and between the mountains in the north and ones in the south is about twenty-four kilometres. In the central valley lies the town of Phari. The difference in the weather of Phari in the summer and winter is great. In the summer the whole plain of Phari is filled with myriads of flowers and the scene seemed to be out of a painting. If one looked down to the plain of Phari from a hill one got the impression that Phari must surely be one of the gardens of the world. Bubbling down from the hills and mountains are rivulets of clear, cool water. Here in the mountain

streams people used to come in the summer for picnics. They pitched colourful tents and the maidens and young men of Phari used to indulge in various sports. There was the famous archery competition. The competitors used to shout in the Bhutanese dialect and the whole Phari valley used to be filled with the piercing shouts of victorious bowmen—“KYI HI HI” !!! The bowmen used to shout to each other, “Oh friend, you must hit the target once again. I am here (next to the target). Can you see the black spot in the centre of the white target?”

In this season the Phari maidens decked themselves in comely costumes and served tea and *chang* and sang and danced their country's song and dances to their hearts' content. Old Phari was surely the very source of happiness.

In summer the Phari plain is filled with flowers of different colours and shapes. They serve as the ornaments of the valley. The inhabitants have given different names to each and every flower. For example the flowers that grow in the hills are known as “silk flowers”, “prayer flowers” and rose and ones that grow in the plain are known as “Kalsang flower” “gold flowers” and “rice flowers” etc. These flowers fill the valley as the stars in the sky. When I was small I used to spend much time out in the plain dotted with flowers. The pious inhabitants of Phari used to pick the choicest flowers as offerings to the gods and dieties.

The weather of Phari in the winter is very cold. The whole valley and hills became covered with snow and ice, and the streams froze. Drinking water was obtained by breaking holes in the ice. Night and day people had fire burning to warm themselves. The inhabitants not only wore fur *chubas* (Tibetan dress) but fur jackets and trousers. Since snow fell continuously, there was nothing to see but whiteness all over the countryside. When there was a particularly heavy snow-fall one storeyed buildings became buried in snow and cattle could calmly have their hay on house tops! In winter very few travellers came to Phari. There were frequent cases of unfortunate travellers being stranded in the snow and their pack animals getting lost. In these cases far from finding the way, it

was difficult to keep track of one's own fellow-travellers and animals. There were cases of travellers and pack animals dying in the snow. Even the recently-installed telegraph posts were knocked down by blizzards and the telegraph office was left without work for at least half a month. In very severe winters there were cases of families losing their whole herd of cattle. Nomads who had not prepared for the winter perished in the snows.

The severity of winter in Phari is reflected in the country song:

In summer I feel like buying Phari,  
 In winter I feel like selling Phari.  
 In summer Phari is pleasant,  
 The meadows of Phari are pleasant.  
 In winter Dromo is pleaaant,  
 The woods of Dromo are pleasant.

In autumn, immediately after the harvest and threshing, hay was taken up on the roof tops and made into walls of hay. Cattle, yaks, sheep and goats were brought down to the Phari valley from the mountains. If a traveller from a distant region came to Phari at this time he would get the impression that Phari town was a nomads' camp. Even in normal times there was in no shortage of dairy products; in the autumn the dairy produce was as plentiful as water. Allowing for a little exaggeration, in autumn Phari became 'an ocean of milk'. The inhabitants had their full share of curd, cheese and butter. If some inhabitants went to the nomads they would return with at least twenty kilograms of butter without payment.

In accordance with the regulations of the treaty made between Bhutan and Tibet, Bhutanese nomads used to come to Phari from the beginning of summer to the end of autumn. When they came to Phari they had all the freedom as enjoyed by the Tibetan nomads. There was no restriction to the Bhutanese nomads' freedom of travel in Tibet. In fact they were considered as one with the Tibetans. The Bhutanese nomads were very good at making a special curd called *philug*. In the market they used to sell *philug*

curd and even now sometimes I long for the philug the Bhutanese nomads sold back in Phari.

Old Phari was composed of more than a thousand houses and had a population of about 8000. If the travellers from all over are included in this rather rough estimate then the population of Phari and its vicinity would reach the ten thousand mark. Most of the inhabitants of Phari were *tsongpas* (merchants). However there were Amdowas, Khampas, people from central and from other parts of Tibet. Phari also had a sizeable number of Indians, Nepalese, Bhutanese and Chinese.

In this region, though cultivation and nomadism were not entirely absent, the main economic occupation was trade and commerce. Most of the cultivators of Phari were *tralpas* (tax-payers) to the Tibetan Government. There were in Phari five different categories of *tralpas*, according to occupation. There were two groups of *tralpas* who paid *bochog* tax, two groups who paid *bere* tax, and one group who paid *khambu* tax. The amount of tax that was to be paid differed from one *tralpa* to another. The lowest kind of tax was known as "one-fourth" and "one sixth" and had to be paid in horses, grains and even in men who were recruited in the espionage system of the Tibetan government. These *tralpas* had to provide hay to the horses of the officials and government messengers, firewood to the district chief. For the taxes thus paid the *tralpas* had rights to government land. However the rights to government land could not be acquired easily and there were many difficulties involved. Thus to become a *tralpa* meant, contrary to social systems elsewhere in the world, a reputable status in society.

Since *tralpas* were people who had established land, houses, and property in Phari they were invariably involved in all the legal cases in Phari, either as guarantors of somebody's integrity or simply to help sort out disputes. Minor disputes were locally settled.

Big cases were referred to the government. The persons whose lawsuits were referred to the Tibetan government had to spend several years in Lhasa for their cases to be settled.

If the talks of the old people were to be believed it seemed that my father was well-versed in legal matters and skilled at fighting lawsuits. The *tralpas* or tenants on government land were probably among the oldest of the residents of Phari. Some had lived in Phari for many generations.

Apart from this the other forms of livelihood of the inhabitants of Phari were trade, selling *chang* and working as coolies; specialised trades were metal-work, carpentry, stonemasonry, brass-work, tailoring, *thanka* painting etc. These were the some of the social and economic groups in which the Tibetans of Phari earned their living. Naturally there were differences in income between the social groups, but no one in Phari could say that he could not earn his living. For example the lowest income group was the coolies. Even they earned, at the least, about Rs. 10 per day. Though there were varying rates of transportation, from a rough estimate, it can be calculated that from Yatung in the Chumbi valley to Phari the rate given to a coolie for carrying an average load was more than Rs. 20; on the top of this the stronger coolies, who could carry more loads, earned more. Those coolies, who were single and without dependents, if they lived economically, could make the earnings of three or four days carry them through for one month. And this was only a part of the economic prosperity of Phari.

Because of the expanding wool trade with India and Phari's favoured position in the wool trade route, the economic prosperity of the whole Chumbi Valley was particularly noticeable in Phari. And this economic prosperity of the people of Phari increased from month to month, from year to year. People started building new houses, new shops; new marketing centres literally sprang into existence overnight.

Commercial competition was stiff and tense. Phari's material prosperity was shown in the type of clothes and ornaments worn by its inhabitants. People wearing gold finger-rings, gold watches, gold bracelets and gold ear-rings was a common sight. Their clothes were made of fine materials like silk brocade, and the commoners could afford good woollen *chubas*. On special occasions and



when they were in a festive mood the Phari people decked up in their very best costumes. If a person in Phari was willing to work hard he need not fear of not getting enough to eat. On the contrary it had become a second nature of the people of Phari to spend lavishly a part of their income. During various festivals everybody in Phari, setting aside his work for a day or two, thoroughly enjoyed himself. To take an example, during the Tibetan New Year, the inhabitants of Phari people spent days and days inviting each other to lavish and extravagant parties. Perhaps the first month in the Tibetan calendar was a month of parties and enjoyment. So much so that travellers from outside had a saying: "The New Year of Phari makes one forget to return home".

In our part of the country there were seven monasteries, big and small. The most ancient monasteries were Korleb and Samdup Choeling monasteries. Besides these two celebrated monasteries, there were minor monasteries like Drathok-gang, Richung Pathok and Ngachen and Nga-chung temple. The inhabitants of Phari were as religious as Tibetans of other parts of Tibet.

What was admirable about Phari society was its religious harmony. There were no communal ill-feeling among the different sects. When a householder wanted to invite a monk for prayers in his house, he did not try to find out whether the monk belonged to the Geluk, Sakya, Nyingma or Kargyu sects of Tibetan Buddhism, but simply invited whoever was available at the moment. This harmony among the different sects was one of the characteristics of Phari, and I am proud of it.

The general impression of an outsider on Phari, the highest town in the world, would be that besides a meagre output of vegetables, Phari on the whole was barren, and very unproductive. However if an outsider not having much knowledge of Phari were to ask a man of Phari about the problems of living, the first reaction he would receive would be an amused smile. For the Phari people were all well aware of nature's bounty to them. In fact one of their proudest boasts was "Phari had everything except a piece of the broken sky".

Above all Phari was a commercial entre-pot. Through Phari passed the Indo-Tibetan trade routes and the trade route between Bhutan and Tibet. The traffic of yaks, mules, loaded donkeys and individual merchants was endless. The commercial items coming to Phari from interior Tibet were wool, different animal skins, butter, grain-oil, and flour. From among these a small amount was consumed in Phari while the rest were packed in thousands of loads and sent down to India. The items which came to Phari from India were rice, petroleum, tea leaves, sugar, cigarettes, different fruit, cloth, pots and pans etc. Apart from these, goods from Switzerland, Britain, U.S.A. and France were also sold in the market of Phari. The manufactures coming from the above countries also include wrist-watches, bicycles, record players, cameras, binoculars and fountain pens.

This commercial growth necessarily entailed an increased volume of traffic of muleteers, yak and donkey drivers. Ever since 1955 wheeled vehicles, both private and government, carrying commercial loads between Dromo in the Chumbi valley to Lhasa had increased. Because of the intense commercial activities and traffic in this region the comings and goings of muleteers and yak drivers, for instance, the grass for animals became more expensive than foodgrains. Since the commerce between India and Tibet was expanding and very profitable, the traffic of muleteers, yak and donkey drivers was dense. From Tibet via Phari hundreds of pack animals went daily down to India, and from India an equal number of pack animals used to come to Phari, bringing Indian merchandise. These animals came in groups and frequently there occurred "traffic jams" on high, narrow and dangerous mountain paths when two trains of pack animals coming from opposite directions collided with each other. This invariably resulted in the death of a few animals, pushed down the precipice. This in turn resulted in minor scuffles between muleteers or yak drivers, sometimes leading to death. These cases were dealt promptly in accordance with the law of the land.

Similarly, many pack mules and loaded coolies used to come to Phari from Bhutan. The items that came from

Bhutan were raw silk, bamboo-shoots made into pens in Tibet, rice, puffed rice, various dried fruits and spices. The articles needed by the Bhutanese were different animal skins, dried fish, salt, yak meat, dried liver and lungs of yaks. Since in those days there were no good roads to India from Bhuttan and no commercial relations with India much of the Indian merchandise needed by the Bhutanese were bought in Phari and taken to Bhutan.

The Bhutanese traders, while in Phari, enjoyed all the privileges enjoyed by the Tibetans and were treated as one with them. There was no restriction put on their movements and they could stay in Phari for as long as they liked. However, a few Tibetan idlers did make fun at any new passer-by and in this the Bhutanese often became the butt of the local gossip-mongers' jokes. The pricking of each other's susceptibilities between two friendly peoples is as old as human society and cannot be entirely avoided. But this is nothing when compared to the centuries of amicable relations between Bhutan and Tibet, a relationship cemented by ties of religion and culture.

In the same way, those Nepalese and Indian traders who had settled down in Phari could freely practise their respective religions. They had no restrictions whatsoever in following the dictates and demands of their respective culture. They could sell and buy whatever manufactures they found profitable. The Tibetan government had instituted no office for collecting taxes and none was collected from foreign traders in Phari. The foreign traders did not have to carry any passport, their freedom of movement was complete and unrestricted. The old Phari was a free and open town.

So in a way, I had lived in two worlds, the one was old and gone, the other, new and one which was coming into being. And I have no justifiable reason for describing the old society of Phari other than to tell the young Tibetans the old Tibet as I knew it in Phari. Added to this is another reason and one which is very personal to me. It is simply to remind myself and others of happy days in times of suffering and hardship.

## Life in New Phari

As soon as I got down at Phari, I went to the Chinese headquarters to show the card which was given to me in the "Support Agriculture" programme and have it changed into grain ration coupons. The secretary, *hru-chi*, inspected my "Support Agriculture" card and seemed rather impressed with it. He said, "I will contact the security office through the Dromo Hsien Party Committee and get your grain ration coupons made as soon as possible. Meanwhile for ten days you can buy barley and other grains with this card." Saying this he gave me a card which permitted me to buy ten *gyamas* of wheat and the card was signed by the secretary himself.

With this and with my little possessions on my back, I set my step towards home. I was dying to meet my mother and brother. But this feeling was temporarily overwhelmed by the emptiness that I saw all around me. The main road was empty and deserted, inhabited, it seemed, by a few stray cows and emaciated dogs. I did not see a single human being. Most of the houses, on either side, were locked with big, solid Tibetan locks, which were wrapped in *khata* and sealed. Later, I came to know that the owners of these houses had fled to Bhutan or India. The air of despondency that hung over Phari saddened me and it was with down-cast eyes I walked and soon reached the main gate of my home.

There I saw my brother coming to greet me. He was sobbing and breathing heavily and together we entered our house. My mother was preparing the welcome meal for me. We had been parted for many years. During this time immense changes had occurred that drastically reduced

our material circumstances, but the fact that we—mother and son—were able to meet again in this life time gave me deep happiness.

The next morning, taking the temporary grain ration card with me, I queued up in front of the ration shop. I had to wait for three hours before I eventually was able to buy the ten *gyamas* of grain.

In the afternoon I took a leisurely walk around Phari. Many of the Tibetan mansions owned by the old Phari ruling class had become dilapidated. Much of Phari was in desolation, and it seemed as if a big war had occurred in my hometown.

I had been away from Phari for six years, but the developments that I saw in Phari were neither substantial nor striking. The Chinese had built four lavatories. The PLA offices were in the big Tibetan mansions—the Reting House, the Pangda House, the Sandhu House—which had already been there before the Chinese came. During my four years of stay in Phari, the Chinese dug trenches in preparation for what they called, “the inevitable world war”. As for the constructions and developments that would truly benefit the Tibetan masses I do not remember the Chinese building anything as big as a bird’s nest. This must be because of the Chinese Communist Party’s anger at the Phari masses for their unrevolutionary act of fleeing from “liberation”.

When I was finally given my real grain ration card, the three of us in the family could buy 78 *gyamas* of grain in a month. I was put under the category of the strong labour force and could buy 30 *gyamas* of grain, my brother was considered an average labour force and could buy 28 *gyamas* of grains a month, and my mother, being old and weak and unable to work, could buy only 20 *gyamas* of grains a month. Besides this, we could buy 1½ *gyamas* of sugar, 1 *gyama* and 2 *srang*s of tea leaves, 2 *gyamas* and 4 *srang*s of either butter or oil, one litre of petrol, five packets of cigarettes, 6 boxes of matches (the cigarette smokers were entitled to three boxes of matches). In a year, an individual could buy 10½ metres of cloth. The others in Phari could buy their rations in the same fashion.

The strong field worker could buy 30 gyamas of grains a month, the average field worker 28 gyamas of grain and the weak field worker 26 gyamas. Those who were not included in the category of field workers, because of their physical disabilities, could buy only 20 gyamas of grains. A youth of eleven to seventeen years could buy 15 gyamas; from nine to 10 gyamas; and those below six 5 gyamas. Other miscellaneous articles included one litre of petroleum, three boxes of matches (if there was a cigarette smoker in the family, he was entitled to three extra boxes of matches). Besides this each individual of the family could buy  $1\frac{1}{2}$  gyama of sugar, 4 srangs of tea, 8 srangs of butter or oil (children below seven were not entitled to oil or butter). In spring and summer when the field work was most strenuous, the adults were given coupons which would entitle them to buy about  $\frac{1}{2}$  Kg of meat. On 1 May and in October on the occasion of the establishment of the Chinese Communist Government and during the Tibetan New Year, the Chinese gave the Tibetans a little more right to buy the small knick-knacks in the household.

If the above grain ration and others were not adequate, the family could do nothing. The Party did not come to its help. If the given ration grains was not adequate, then the family must eat anything that was available—radishes, potatoes, etc. If these were not found then the family members must stuff themselves with spinach or anything edible. Hoping that the Party would do something was suicidal. As such, ever since 1963, it was a daily scene to see the people of Phari with empty bags going from one house to another, trying to borrow some *tsampa*. The intense, earnest, activity of the Phari people daily going around with empty bags was given an apt term: “the tide of carrying emptiness.”

The reason for this phenomenon of “the tide of carrying emptiness” was simple. Those who had ground their *tsampa* in the water mills would lend some *tsampa* to those who hadn't. So those empty bags which were frequently seen all over Phari were simply to borrow *tsampa* or get the previously loaned *tsampa* repaid. If the visited family did not have any *tsampa* or grain left, there was nothing for

the empty bag to do but to return in emptiness. Very often it happened that one “empty bag family” was rather hopeful that the next door family had a sufficient stock of tsampa. So the empty bag was sent on its errand. But the next door family far from having “a sufficient stock” of tsampa had sent its own empty bag to borrow tsampa from the first family. Thus very often the two bags of emptiness clashed amid much embarrassment and awkwardness, signifying the hunger and emptiness of our own lives.

The case of the “two empty bags meeting” also happened to me once. At a time when we three in the family did not have even a spoonful of tsampa, I took my empty bag and went towards the house of my close and trusted friend Aka. When I reached his house, he was grinding some coarse, left-over barley in a small stone bowl. He said that he had sent his elder son Jigme to my and other houses to borrow tsampa. When Jigme returned home, his bag was empty. That day we had to go on empty stomachs and had no better recourse than to wait. But our waiting was like dung-collectors waiting for cow dung on hill tops (cow-dungs are normally not found on hill-tops).

However, even in our hunger and suffering, we remembered that our condition was better than those in the rest of Tibet. This was because Phari fell in the area termed as “The Ten Points for the Border Areas”, where things were a little better.

When plots of land were privately cultivated, *dzo*, oxen, and cows were also privately owned. A cow which was not covered by the ‘reform’ was left in our family. This cow we considered our best family possession. When the cow gave birth to a calf, it seemed as if heaven itself had bestowed a gift to us. The calf, when it grew up, greatly helped our family economy. The sticks and cow-dungs my brother and I could not carry, we put them on the back of our little ox. Even today I still remember the little ox who served us—literal serfs—so faithfully.

Everyone knows that since Phari is situated at a high altitude, its climate is cold and harsh. In this place of moody, violent climate, it is very rare to have no hail-storm in autumn. Before the ‘liberation’, there was no instance of

barley being grown in Phari. However after the “Democratic Reform” the Chinese attempted to grow barley in Phari and the slogan was “the Chinese Communist Party has turned grass fields into barley fields”. This feat was given wide publicity. The real picture, however, was that out of three or four years, only in one year the Tibetans could say that there was a barley harvest. In most of the cases, 80% of the barley crop was normally destroyed by frost.

But the Chinese told us “the Chinese Communist Party is going to wage war against the sky”. They commanded all the Tibetans to collect garbage lying around. Every Tibetan family was commanded to collect garbage weighing thousands of *gyamas* before the advent of autumn—the season of frost. Every day the secretary of the *Thomang U-yon Lhenkhang* (Mass Production Committee) sounded a gong and woke up the people to gather garbage and turn it into a sort of manure. This would be spread into the fields to protect the crop from frost. While I was there in Phari, the Chinese Communist Party’s waging war against the sky didn’t bring any result. To me the whole project looked like people trying to lasso the sky.

To my family of three members, the Chinese Communist Party gave a plot of land in which three bags of grain could be sown. Cultivation was our main responsibility and occupation. If in spring two bags of grains were sown, in autumn over nine bags came out of the harvest. This barley was termed, “Phari experiment barley”. One bag weighed 84 *gyamas*. Out of this about 157 *gyamas* were kept aside for the coming year’s sowing. The remaining 693 *gyamas* must last the family for around eight months.

Some did not have sufficient grain even to repay the seed-grains they had borrowed from others. Roughly it can be calculated that from a plot of land where one bag of seeds could be sown, five or six bags could be harvested. Only a few families could say that from one bag of seeds they obtained ten bags. From a year’s agricultural product only a few families could manage to make their grain last throughout the year. For this very reason the Chinese would say that the people of Phari were exempted from



taxes like “love the nation tax” and “surplus grain sales tax”, which were collected from the rest of Tibet. This magnanimous act was driven to us day and night. The Chinese authorities would never tire of telling us, “because of the Chinese Communist Party’s immense concern for the border people, you are exempted from love the nation tax and surplus grain sales tax. The Chinese Communist Party’s policy towards you is more relaxed. But you must make every effort to increase the agricultural output and pay up the love the nation tax and the surplus grain tax as soon as possible”.

Since the output from the fields was inadequate and could not carry us through the year, we had to find other sources of income to supplement our main source of livelihood. We had to have money to buy tea, butter, oil and other essentials. To earn the money, we had to do various part-time jobs like road construction, wood-cutting, transporting wood, picking medicinal herbs, knitting sweaters, collecting cow-dungs and selling them.

If a worker worked in the road construction, he roughly got a yuan and two motse. This wage rate was fixed by the government. The rate was divided into three categories according to the Marxist principle of “to each according to his ability”. The strong worker got one yuan and five motse, the average worker got one yuan and two motse, and the weaker worker got ten motse. Sundays and festivals were holidays without pay. However half the day of a holiday was spent in attending political meetings.

When my brother and I were working in the road construction we together used to earn 54 yuans and 7 motse monthly. About 47 yuans were spent in buying grains and the remaining 8 or 9 yuans were spent by our mother in buying other essential commodities.

Wood-cutting was mostly done for the benefit of the Chinese. The army vehicles used to transport army personnel and requirements between Dromo in the Chumbi valley and Phari. In the process, the army vehicle also used to transport wood. The fire-wood for the army mess was obtained from the very place in which the regiment or cantonment was stationed. In some areas there was insufficient

fire-wood. In such cases fire-wood had to be got from well-forested areas like Dromo and Kongpo. Similarly, the Tibet Military Region Development Army used wood for purposes of public development projects as well as for military and other purposes known only to the Chinese themselves.

The Tibetan wood-cutters felled trees, cut them into appropriate logs, packed them and carried them on their backs to the motorable roads where the logs were piled in neat rows. The Tibetans were paid according to the distance they covered from where the trees were felled to where the logs were piled beside the motorable road. The experienced wood-cutters used to collect an average of three yuans and four to five motse for working for ten hours. Those inexperienced, no matter how hard they slogged, would manage to collect with difficulty about two yuans for the whole day. For example, when I worked for a while as a wood-cutter, I managed to get on 46 yuans a month. This despite the fact that I worked strenuously for ten solid hours every day. Above all I must thank my lucky stars that I did not meet with any accident. The forests were thick and there were precipices everywhere. If a worker was not careful, he was sure to have an accident. There were incidents of wood-cutters meeting death by accident.

To those Tibetans who were hurt, the Chinese would give them a haphazard medical treatment and would send them home. No financial aid was given. This would invariably bring economic difficulties to the family whose bread-earner had met accident. To give an example, Gompo Tseten, who was a wood-cutter died of accident. The body was cremated and the expenses were collectively borne by the wood-cutters. The numbers of days Gompo Tseten worked for the Chinese from the start of the new term till his death went unpaid. Besides, Gompo Tseten's companion Cather Tsering's foot was badly hurt. Far from giving him the needed medical treatment, the army blamed him for the death of Gompo Tseten. Thus, the Chinese army tried to put the blame of the death of a Tibetan on the head of a fellow Tibetan. In a similar way when Jamyang, a fellow wood-cutter, broke his leg and was made invalid for the

rest of his life, the army did not make an attempt to look after or give provisions for his dependent wife and children.

Transporting wood came under the wood cutting business. Besides being transported in vehicles, wood was also carried by yaks, horses, mules, donkeys, oxen and coolies. Those part-time workers carted or carried logs from lower Dromo, Shar Singma and Thangkarphu to Phari and its vicinity. To transport a load of wood weighing 100 gyamas over this distance a worker got 6 yuans. A strong ox could carry wood weighing more than 200 gyamas. When I used to transport wood I normally packed our little ox with wood weighing from 160 to 180 gyamas. I carried around 25 gyamas. Thus if an ox and an able-bodied man worked strenuously every day, they could earn around 12 to 13 yuans. Cutting and transporting wood among the part-time jobs was the most lucrative. As such when there was less cutting and transporting of wood to be done, the Party would permit only the poor families to engage in wood cutting and wood transporting business. Such was the Party's concern for the poor.

Another part-time job, less lucrative but less dangerous, was picking and collecting herbs. The season for picking herbs was in autumn. The herbal plants that could be picked in Phari were *tsakar*, *hong-lin*, *yar-tsa gangu*. The price fetched by the herbal plants were: one gyama of dried *yartsa-gangbu* fetched 8 yuans, one gyama of dried *tsakar* fetched 6 yuans, one gyama of dried *honglin* fetched 8 motse etc. The above prices are the average the herbal plants fetched.

To pick the herbal plants, the pickers had to go everywhere, to the neighbouring places like Hamtho, Homme, Khangmar, Kala, Thochen, Gyiru, Khambu and other remote places. The pickers went in groups of three or four with one or two pack animals, and must spend altogether 10 to 20 days up in the hills. Adequate food provision had to be carried. Before the herb pickers started up to the hills they must report to the Thon-mang U-yon Lhenkhang (Mass Production Committee) and give a detailed description of the direction they would go, the number of days they would be away, and the names of their travel companions. After

the Thon-mang U-yon Lhenkhang (Mass Production Committee) had given permission to the *chue*, only then the group could start.

On occasions we could come down the hills with an assured state of mind, our animals well packed with huge stock of herbal plants. Sometimes, it would be the other way around. We came down the hills worried and agitated, for, despite spending seven or eight days up on the hills, we had found no herbal plants to pick. We came down practically empty handed, with only one or two gyamas of herbs. And we could have reasons to be worried, for where would the money come from to buy the coming month's grains and other miscellaneous necessities? It took very long to dry the herbs. While the herbs were drying, many families would have no money to buy tsampa, butter, and oil, tea and salt. So, many families in very desperate circumstance dried the herbs by the fire-place. Consequently the cadres of the Kho-drub Nyamle Khang (Co-operative Procurement Department) before buying the dried herbs would make a thorough check whether they were naturally dried or dried before fire. If it was discovered that the herbs were not naturally dried the Chinese cadres would make a big commotion. Far from buying the dried herbs, they would accuse the Tibetan sellers of trying to trick the motherland. The herbs would be returned. Having no money to buy grains and other miscellaneous necessities, the unfortunate families would have to drink boiled water.

Collecting cow-dung for fuel could hardly be considered a part-time job. It was collected by all Tibetan families, dried and used as fire-wood. No cow dung meant no fire for cooking whenever there was cooking. Besides for domestic use, the dried cow-dung was sold to the PLA mess and Chinese offices. One basket of dried cow-dung during the period when it was most scarce fetched about 2 yuans.

Knitting sweater was another source of income. It was normally done during winter when every hill and valley became covered with snow. Most of the knitting was done by the old people who were too weak to go out to do strenuous work. Knitting or any other work that could fetch money was done to cover the miscellaneous expenses for

tea, salt and other items. In the socialist happiness that Mao had bestowed upon us we had mouths without hands. If we did not want to starve to death, we had to learn any trade that would keep us going. Thus, one of the “blessings” of the socialist paradise was that it made everyone—from white-haired grandmas to children of six seven-learn the art of knitting.

Khodrubs Stores (Procurement Stores) divided the knitted sweaters into three categories, according to their quality. The best quality sweater was bought by the store for 8 yuan, the second best for 7 yuan and the average for 6 yuan. The wool for knitting sweater was sold by the same store. If a knitter sold two sweaters to the store, it in turn allowed the knitter to buy 2 gyamas of wool. One gyama of wool cost one yuan and six motse, and from one gyama of wool usually one sweater could be knitted in about four days. So the average daily income of a knitter was one yuan, 20 motse. The amount of daily income varied according to the given skill of the knitter; the fast knitters naturally had a slightly higher daily income, while the slow knitters slightly lower. But the knowledge that one could knit gave a person immense satisfaction.

As for myself, I did not know how to knit when young. But compelling circumstances forced me to learn the trade. Since I could knit one sweater within 5 or 6 days, I was in the low income group. However, the feeling that one could knit and had become the “bread-winner” of the family was highly satisfying. In my family the work of making of sweater was divided thus: mother cleaned and spun the wool, my brother and I did the knitting work. Within five or six days, because of the whole family’s united effort, two sweaters were knitted. In a month, we could knit about 12 sweaters and if they were considered in the second category, then we managed to get 84 yuans. Putting aside 19 yuans and 2 motse worth of wool we would use in our next round, the hard cash we got in our hands for one month’s knitting was 64 yuan and 8 motes. This amount could cover our miscellaneous household expenses for tea, salt, butter, sugar, cigarettes, matches, soap etc. However, if one fell sick or if the grain stock did not last, then diffi-

culties would ensue. Some families would have no money, whatsoever, even to buy vegetables.

Before the introduction of the "Democratic Reforms", the Phari market place was full of life and activity. There used to be many shops selling a variety of wares. This stopped after the introduction of the "Democratic Reforms". 1300 people were given 2 shops. These were Khodrubs Stores (Procurement Stores) and the Khothon stores (Supply stores).

The grain store had one worker, the shop which sold miscellaneous items had three workers, and the Khodrubs store (Procurement Store) had eight workers, two sellers, one chairman and another vice-chairman, the other four were cadres. The sellers and the Party member, chairman Wangdu, all three, separately, had fled Tibet.

The people of Phari when they had herbs and sweaters to sell, queued up the whole day before the Khodrubs Store (Procurement Store). When they had sold either their herbs or sweaters, they would immediately line up in front of the Khothon Store (Supply Store) with big bags in their hands. This was one of the common scenes in the new Phari.

## Compare The Bitter Past With Today's Happiness

In spite of their hard work the income the Tibetan families earned was very little. On top of this the Chinese introduced the so-called General Work Scheme, by which the Tibetans had to work without pay. They had to dig canals, dig earth and run water mills without getting any payment. To fill one's belly is one's own responsibility, but from the General Work Scheme, we got nothing. For example, for one whole month the people of Phari continuously dug and constructed the so-called Canal of Happiness. This was done without payment and naturally the Phari people fell into difficult days. The General Work Scheme is a scheme that goes against the socialist principle of "to each according to his ability" and against the Chinese communist principle that each worker shall receive payment according to his labour. The populace suffered, their little food stock diminished and their hunger increased. In desperation, they wrote verses about their sad plight. One of them composed in 1965 says:

Digging the Canal of Happiness brought sorrow on our  
heads,  
Directing the water from its source to the fields  
rinsed our stomachs clean,  
But the benefit from the Canal of Happiness went to  
the little black raven,  
To pay back the debt of gratitude to the Chinese  
Communist Party is your (raven's) responsibility.

Another song was composed when the Phari people had to





ploughs and sickle, and old Tibetan costumes were distributed among the people, but these were the very things the Chinese had no use for. Apart from this anything as small as a needle, if useful for the Chinese, was not given to the Tibetans. The priceless works of art and religion were confiscated by the Chinese officers and army and nobody had seen or heard about these works of art since. The poor Tibetans far from benefitting from the 'democratic reforms' were made into a herd of donkeys ruthlessly driven by the Chinese.

And such was the case. I cannot speak for the whole of Tibet, nor do I have the competence, but I can vouch for the veracity of their statements by giving Phari itself as an example and by what I had seen and heard when I was there.

Phari had more than 3000 houses. From these the properties of about 500 families were confiscated at the time of the democratic reforms. Besides the things mentioned above, the Chinese confiscated things like motor cars, watches, various Indian manufactured goods and cloth materials of varying quality. Even sugar, foreign cigarettes, oil and grains found in the well-to-do families were not spared. The poor Tibetans did not even get a few crumbs of the edible things carted away to China. The material possessions and priceless works of art and piety painstakingly made and collected by the Tibetans generation after generation was emptied and carted away. The Tibetans were skinned dry and had nothing left for themselves but their miserable bodies. The outside world generally think that the 'democratic reform' have benefited the Tibetan people. But the only democracy in the reforms was the right of the Chinese masters to 'liberate' the Tibetan people of their wealth, works of art and priceless religious relics.

Before the "liberation", the basic economic activity of the Phari people was trade and commerce, and the commercial activity was diverse and varied. After the introduction of the democratic reforms, the economic activity of the Phari people was limited to sowing seeds on barren, hostile fields and doing whatever part-time jobs the Chinese gave them. Besides these they had no alternative job

opportunities in which they could profitably engage. No matter how hard they worked in the above mentioned jobs the returns were always small. This state of affairs was bound to progressively decrease the living standard of the Phari people, and it did. The people were reduced to worse conditions than the beggars and vagabonds of old Phari and this could hardly be tolerated by the “liberated Tibetan masses”. Human beings unlike animals have the power and intelligence to know good from evil, happiness from sorrow. Accordingly many of the inhabitants of Phari placed their hopes on neighbouring countries where there was freedom and happiness.

The number of Tibetans fleeing Phari to the neighbouring countries increased, many fled to Bhutan. From 1959 to the end of 1962, the number of Tibetans who fled Phari is around 8,000. Tibetans still left in Phari is around 1700 (1977). From the number left in Phari, about 300 Tibetans from Phari were scattered in different prisons all over Tibet.

The number of Tibetans fleeing Phari naturally incensed the Chinese overlords. They took preventive measures. The Tibet-Bhutan borders was heavily sealed and the hard policy implemented throughout Tibet was slightly relaxed in the border regions and Phari.

The above is the general material condition of Phari upto the time of my escape. The Chinese rule that I experienced in Phari was ruthless and thorough. There was much crudity in it too. But the indoctrination which the Chinese injected the Tibetans with was different, generally being crude but having elements of remarkable sophistication and thoroughness. The Tibetans coined a catchy and apt phrase to describe the policy of indoctrination. The Red Government of the Chinese Communist Party under the leadership of Chairman Mao Tse-tung, “mentally killed the people and the emptiness that thus resulted was received with enthusiasm” by the Chinese, and it was literally that.

The Tibetans that were left in Phari were ordered to attend endless political meetings.

In these marathon political meetings, the Tibetans were subjected to the same old critique of the old Tibetan society. and tirelessly reminded of the happiness brought

to them by the “liberation”. The Chinese forced the people to criticise the old society and speak of “the countless who died through cold and starvation”, of the deserted houses, “the tortures inflicted on the serfs by the ruling class”, and of “people’s conditions being worse than that of animals”. In this fashion the Chinese attempted to create shadows where there were no objects.

The people were commanded to say and think that, because of the Communist Party and Mao Tse-tung, they were daily living in happiness and material prosperity. However, the actual picture which I saw in Phari was far from this rosy picture. What the Dalai Lama said in 1975 on the occasion of the 16 Anniversary of the 10 March uprising, I feel, is very much the truth. The minimal requirements of and basic to the so-called new society is freedom of expression and movement and adequate living standard for the people. This is considered the essentials of a new society by every average educated person in the world. As the Dalai Lama has said, no matter how much the Chinese try and say that the Tibetans in Tibet are truly happy, untruth cannot forever hide truth. In the surrounding darkness of ignorance, the flame of truth will shine and never be blown out.

One of the tactics of the Chinese Communists is to propagate reality into something resembling an illusion or a dream. The Chinese Communists have the remarkable habit and tact of hiding the truth and making black appear as white. These were the tactics practised on us, and majority of the patriotic Tibetans did not like it. They voiced their resentment in no unclear terms and the “new society” was bitterly criticised. Frequently the Tibetans were called to attend such meetings as “Compare the Bitter Past With Today’s Happiness” and the “Struggle between the old and new”. In these meetings the Tibetans either in veiled, subtle meanings, or openly, expressed their feelings and the following are a few of them.

In the “Compare the Bitter Past With Today’s Happiness” meeting, Ngodup said, “Throwing away all the dirt and rubbish of the old society, we are implementing the ‘three cleans’ of the new society. On the one hand we make the

outside clean by not wearing any dirty bourgeois clothes. On the other, we make the inside clean by eating little. Thirdly, the new society is so good that even without people it remains clean”.

Drakpa, the blacksmith, said: “The liberated masses stood up but they fell down again. On the backs of the prostrated masses, the Chinese Communists Party walked. People’s bones and ribs broke and they had to scream in pain”.

Old Gyalpo said: “The Party is so good that drops of blessings falling from it are going to flood our houses. Nowadays during the “Compare the Bitter Past With Today’s Happiness” meetings three things were let out. Eating the tsampa destroyed by frost, the people let out loose stool; eating rotten radishes, the cattle let out stool; remembering the bad old days, the people let out tears.”

In these meetings one of the hard-hitting criticisms leveled against the Chinese Communists and the ‘new society’ was from Amdo Lobsang Wangdu. When he was persistently told to open his mind, he said: “ ‘I do not like to tell the Owl’s Six Lies’. The Compare the Bitter Past With Today’s Happiness meetings are an opera and drama staged for us”. The ‘Owl’s Six Lies’ is a Tibetan proverb. It happened this way. In one of those bygone good old days, a man met an owl and spoke to it.

The man asked: “How did you get that flat head of yours?”

Owl: By receiving too many blessings from lamas.

Man: But how is it that you are hard of hearing?

Owl: Because religious teachings are too much for my ears.

Man: How did you get yellow eyes?

Owl: By eating too much butter.

Man: But how is it that your limbs are thin and full of chaps?

Owl: Because in my life I haven’t had the chance to eat any good, oily food.

Man: Why do you sit all alone in the day in secluded, isolated corners?

Owl: Too much of moving does not benefit me.

Man: But then how is it that in the night you don't sleep and fly about everywhere?

Owl: That's because I have to order my large retinue of servants.

This is the tale of the Owl's Six Lies. The moral of the story is that not one of the owl's first and second statements tally. So the Tibetans generally liken the Chinese Communist policy to that of the Owl's Six Lies.

## 1965 War Preparations in the Tibet-Sikkim Border

During the Sino-Indian conflict in 1962, and again in the border crisis in 1965, there was massive movement of arms and ammunition into Tibet from China. All transportation was provided by Tibetan men and animals, commandeered by the Chinese authorities. Old roads were repaired and cannons etc. were taken on hill-tops and arms were transported to strategic places, all by forced labour.

In September, 1965 an endless line of Chinese army convoys passed through Phari, down south to Dromo in the Chumbi valley near the Tibet-Sikkim border. During the day arms and ammunition, horses and army food supplies were transported. But during the night, after 12 p.m. (Peking time), only soldiers were transported in trucks. Altogether for three successive days and nights the endless line of army convoys did not break off even for a moment.

Shieu, the Party secretary of Phari *chue* district and Tri Thong-yon, the commander of the PLA stationed in Phari area, called a people's conference. They told the Tibetans gathered there, "The Indian expansionist have eaten 24 *hsiens* of our land. Not satisfied with this the expansionists have chased and driven away from the territory of the People's Republic both men and animals. Indian soldiers have crossed the border into our territory and are spreading both rumours and false maps. Recently Hindu soldiers have slipped into Yatung (Dromo) to spy.

"So far the Central Government has followed the policy of patience and acted with the future in mind rather than for temporary territorial gains. Why do you think the PLA unilaterally withdrew in the 1962 border war when the

whole of India lay open before our forces. We were far-sighted and followed the policy of patience. But then our policy of patience has been contemptuously ignored. We must point out that this greed for expansion on the part of India is wrong. We, the People's Liberation Army, have fought countless battles and never lost. This is because we follow the correct military tactics laid down by our leader Mao Tse-tung. We not only have the complete loyalty and support of the 600 millions of the motherland, but, also, the forward-looking and progressive peoples of the world are standing behind us. Everyone must have faith that the ultimate victory in the defence of our motherland is with us.

"Tomorrow at three the war will be fought. We must transport the arms and ammunitions and be in the midst of the fight. Tonight around two a few empty vehicles will come. You must register yourselves and be prepared to go in the vehicles." Thus were the Tibetans ordered to join the "war".

However many of the Tibetans in the meeting made various excuses. Some said that their parents, wives or children were seriously sick and no one was looking after them. Some said that their families were completely impoverished and they must first grind barley to make *tsampa* to give to their hungry children. As soon as the barley was ground they would be ready to render whatever services necessary. Again a few said that they did not have any provision. They must first wait until the department stores opened and do a little shopping.

These delaying tactics were in vain. Far from believing in these excuses put forward not one Chinese was faintly sympathetic even to listen. That night Phari was filled with the cry and wail of aging parents, wives and children. And in the morning the able-bodied Tibetans whose names were registered by the Chinese were put in trucks and driven down to Yatung. Similarly from all over Tibet many Tibetans were sent to Yatung in trucks. During this time Phari itself became a sort of a storehouse for arms and ammunition and horses. Every available empty house was filled with boxes of bullets as high as the hills. The Chinese

army barracks were filled to capacity and about three thousand PLA soldiers had to get shelter in individual Tibetan houses. This situation economically benefited the six hundred Tibetans left in Phari. They got the left-overs of the Chinese army food. Ordinarily the Tibetans had nothing but *tsampa* to eat. But now left-overs like rice, tin-mo (flour dough) different vegetables and different types of meat were distributed in large basins.

Many Chinese army horses were also brought to Phari. At first these horses were given the "Phari experiment barley". Far from eating, the "barley", when the horses were smelling it they did not smell it for long. So the horses were fed on actual barley, bags and bags of it daily. In the stables mixed with horse droppings and urine there were barley grains left, uneaten. These were happily picked up by old Tibetans and children, and ground into *tsampa*. The *tsampa* was eaten with evident relish. So the universal wish among the Tibetans was: "Rather than be human beings and Tibetans at that, it is better for us in the present situation to be born as Chinese horses".

After about three months of worry and apparent restlessness the first batch of Tibetans sent to the borders started returning. The people sent from Phari returned in December. They said that at first they were stationed in the Chumbi Valley. While there for several nights they had to transport arms and ammunition from one pass to another. The passes were Nathu-la, Jelep-la, and Dhongkyula.

After this it was announced that there would not be any fighting. At the same time orders were given that new roads leading from Nathu-la, Jelep-la, and Dhongkyu-la passes were to be constructed. Day and night the Tibetans were forced to construct the urgently needed roads for the military convoys. Unlike other road construction works, no pay was given, apart from the little supply of *tsampa*, tea and butter.

And the little food supply that was given to the Tibetans was given without any concern for the health of the labouring Tibetans. The ration that was distributed among the Tibetans was confiscated from one of the Kargyupa monasteries of Dromo which had stored up in its cells centuries-old



butter. Many Tibetans died of food poison while many others suffered prolonged illness.

In 1963 the Tibet Autonomous Preparatory Committee and the Tibet Military Region headquarters jointly issued two reports which contained seven and five points for the Tibetans who had fled to foreign countries. These were stuck up in big-character posters on house-walls all over and were propagated all along the border region. Some of the points were: those Tibetans who returned to Tibet would be given prizes, enquiries would not be made into their past; private property brought by them would not be confiscated; there would be freedom of worship. For several years there was massive propaganda on these points. The relatives of Tibetans who had fled abroad were told: "to try your best to bring back your relatives is your responsibility. If they continue to reside abroad they are making their house and family dirty. More than this they are making the future of their relatives in Tibet insecure.

"We have a Chinese proverb: the lama might escape but his monastery cannot. Similarly some of your family members might have escaped but you are under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party". By such means the Chinese tried to frighten us. They told us that under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party we had happiness and freedom; that the labouring class had become the masters of the country; and that each individual family was prospering. Through *Radio Lhasa* the Chinese maintained a steady stream of propaganda barrage, and spelled out the rewards for those refugees who returned home. These are the Chinese standing promises to the Tibetan refugees if they returned, freedom of religious worship, respect for Tibetan culture and heritage, non-confiscation of private property, no enquiries to be made into past 'black deeds', and work and rank to be given according to ability.

My argument is this, instead of waiting for the Tibetan refugees to return to Tibet why not implement the above promises now? For the above promises and sentiments were completely non-existent while I was there in Phari. I am sure that it is not necessary for the Tibetan refugees

to return to Tibet in order that the Chinese fulfil their promises. If the Chinese are sincere in what they say they must convert their words into action, their promises into fulfilment.

But this is not so. Even if some of the Tibetans now living in free societies were to return to Tibet the Chinese would go back on their words. New charges would be framed against them; they would be condemned as “the capitalist-roaders who opposed the Cultural Revolution” and would be surreptitiously clamped into jail. This is in accordance with the Chinese Communist Party’s policy of smiling abroad and frowning at home.

While I was still at Phari an ironic situation arose. It was not without its tragedy. The person who wrote the “Seven and Five Points on Free movement” was Choephel. He was a teacher in the primary school. In 1966 he was accused of being a “Bhutanese spy” and under gun-point was forced into a truck which drove him to Shigatse. His wife Dronkyi suffered a prolonged period of illness and eventually committed suicide by hanging herself. Choephel’s mother and his daughter, about fourteen years old, managed to escape into Bhutan and are still there.

From this story alone, we can draw ample lessons. We know that the returning refugees would not be given the freedom promised to them. How is this possible? Even the progressive activists were not given the much flaunted liberalization but had to meet the fate “death maketh house empty”. Till now the Chinese have been unsuccessfully wooing the Tibetans in exile in free countries to return to occupied Tibet. But these are empty words falling on deaf ears; the Chinese are trying to lasso the sky.

Simultaneously the Chinese have gone on an intensive campaign to seal off the borders. But these attempts would not deter the Tibetans who would risk their life and all to reach a free soil. Since the end of 1966 from Phari alone about 200 Tibetans have escaped. From these bare facts the truth-loving people of the world can know the suffering and hardship that is going on the other side of the Himalayas.

After my escape I heard from those who fled from Phari

after me about the establishment of the commune system in Phari. The people's communes were introduced in some villages in China in 1957 at the command of Mao Tse-tung. The commune was originally the merger of a few agricultural co-operatives in which land was held in common with equal distribution to all. Even if the people in the commune worked hard for more than 350 days in a year the workpoints each of them got was little. It was like bees collecting honey with no benefit to themselves.

Though the commune system has been praised by a few outside visitors as a great social experiment, its introduction in Phari brought nothing but hardship to the people. People's initiative was cut down and they had to conform to one uniform pattern of thought and action. The communes are an effective means of social, political and economic control; the resources of Phari came under the tight control of the Chinese masters. In which free democratic country is there such a thing as the communes, a social phenomenon that cuts at the very roots of human dignity?

In some socialist countries there are varying stages of agricultural co-operatives. However, nobody has ever heard about the establishment of people's communes in these socialist countries. The commune system is Mao's idea, a new prison to cage the people under his rule. The nearly one thousand Tibetans left in Phari are living with this prison wall fenced around them. The little possessions the hard working Tibetans acquired and were not taken away from them during the democratic reforms were now held as public property, and had to be handed over to the commune. The items included were land, cattle and agricultural implements like plough, even hens were to be contributed to the commune.

More importantly the establishment of the communes brought the Tibetans under more effective Chinese control. Throughout the year with a few precious holidays the Tibetans were made to labour. Every day they had to get up before the break of dawn and work till one absolutely could not see in the dark. The Tibetans were made to work in the field, in the factory, in the grassland to herd cattle and were told to work in various other capacities. And this

was not all. In the night the Tibetans had to attend marathon lectures where Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung thought was tirelessly preached. They had to join in the criticism campaigns against Lin Piao and Confucius and air adoring opinions on the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariats.

From outside, the commune system might appear fascinating. From within, the communes, as the Tibetans who have been through put it, are a literal hell on earth. The basic purpose of the communes was to solve the food problem in China. Whether the commune system has solved the food problem in China itself, I am in no position to know. But in Tibet and in Phari the establishment of the communes made the suffering of the people greater, the Chinese gained greater control over Tibetan economic resources and could direct these where they pleased.

## Escape to Bhutan

After 1959 the Chinese assumed direct political control of Tibet. This brought much hardship and suffering on the Tibetan people. Against their will many Tibetans left their homeland and fled to neighbouring countries. The six million Tibetans in Tibet also harbour the same desire. Given an opportunity they too would find a road to freedom.

As for myself, ever since I came back from China I had no desire to be a running dog of the Chinese. I had every hope that one day I would be free, and longed for that freedom. And there are many reasons for this. In a way this book itself is a testimony why the Tibetans, instead of welcoming their “liberators” with open arms, flee from them. Following are some of my reasons why I sought freedom and exile rather than to live under the Chinese.

The deepest aspirations of every Tibetan is freedom from Chinese domination. The Chinese have tried to stifle this sign of “local nationalism” by killing hundreds of Tibetans at one time, as in the March 10 Uprising. Power was grabbed from the hands of the Tibetans and they were not even given a dog’s importance. They had to spend their whole lives obeying the orders of the Chinese masters. If any Tibetan exhibited the slightest signs of Tibetanness viz., worshipping or praying, showing respect for Tibetan culture, and undue respect for lamas etc., he was at once condemned as “reactionary”. He had to adorn a dunce hat, be ridiculed in public, locked in jail or send to labour camp.

In 1965 the Tibetan Autonomous Region was established. The extent of autonomy enjoyed by the Tibetans could be measured by the absence of Tibetans in positions of power. In all the offices of the Tibet Autonomous Region people holding positions of power were Chinese. It is possible that there might be one or two Tibetans whose names are included in the list of the power wielders in Tibet. But this is only a cover-up, a window-dressing. These Tibetans would have to do whatever the commanding finger of the Chinese directed them to do; they cannot really see to the welfare of the Tibetan people as a whole.

The discontentment harboured by the general Tibetan public was best expressed in the 7000 words memorandum handed over to the Chinese authorities by the Panchen Lama. Four important points in the memorandum were 1) educated and learned Tibetans should not be ill-treated, (2) the old, sick, invalid and children of Tibet must not be allowed to go hungry, (3) the destruction of Tibetan cultural heritage, religion and Tibetan learning be stopped, (4) after the establishment of Tibet Autonomous Region all power must be handed over to the Tibetan cadres.

This was how the Panchen Lama directly challenged the Chinese, and this was naturally not liked by them. All sorts of rumours were fabricated and spread about him. He was accused of 'ten big crimes'. How the Panchen Lama was ridiculed, subjected to thamzing and given harsh, brutal treatment is known to everybody. It might be possible that if a Tibetan became a running-dog of the Chinese he would be able to carve out a small future for himself. But one thing is clear: if a Tibetan wholly and squarely worked for the welfare of his people, he would be at once eliminated by the Chinese. What matters and what is important is that no Tibetan has the smallest political power in his hands.

With the introduction of the Democratic Reforms all the economic resources of Tibet that were movable were carted away to China. This became one of the sore points and greatly increased Tibetan discontentment against the Chinese. From 1963 to 1964 the socialist education cam-

campaign began. The campaign consisted of the three antis—anti-black marketeering, anti-corruption, and anti-obstruction to socialism. In this campaign Tibetan merchandise, capital, pack-animals, carts, and vehicles that a few rich Tibetans possessed were all confiscated and the Tibetans were truly reduced to a proletarian level.

In 1966 when the power struggle between China's rulers was at its highest pitch Mao Tse-tung launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. One of the off-shoots of the Cultural Revolution was the campaign termed as "the destruction of the four olds". Priceless works of art, literature, and religious relics and works that were the model of Tibetan artistic perfection and achievement were taken out of the Potala, and the various monasteries and temples and destroyed with a wanton disregard for artistic and cultural value. The sculptures were burnt, idols and religious relics made of clay were either thrown into rivers or destroyed on roads and people had to stamp on them. Idols and images made of gold, silver, brass and precious stones and metal were taken to China and eventually they found their way in the markets of Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo where antique-collectors from the West bought them for exorbitant prices. A rough estimate of the foreign exchange earned by China from the sale of Tibetan religious and art objects is more than 80 billion American dollars. Similarly art and religious objects, ornaments, *thankas* and precious stones found their way from Tibet to Nepal and once again the Chinese are able to earn a formidable foreign exchange. The Chinese never tire of condemning the religious objects and relics as the product of dark, mouldering superstition and blind faith. But certain Chinese stomachs are definitely getting fat on them.

More than this anything which distinctly sets the Tibetans apart from the Chinese like their culture, custom, language, and Tibetan thought pattern were condemned as the poisonous weeds of the 'four olds'. During the Cultural Revolution the Red Guards caught hold of old men and women and cut their long plaited hair and forced them to adorn the Chinese boiler-suits, and were told to act in the new revo-

lutionary way.

Tibetan history, works on the spread of Buddhism in Tibet and works on Tibetan medicines were condemned as remnants of blind faith. Even innocuous objects like drawings carved on rocks and walls, incense-bowls on house-tops and prayer-flags were not spared by the revolutionary wrath of the Red Guards. The ultimate aim is to destroy the Tibetan past. In this respect the traditional Tibetan proverbs, figures of speech, similes and Tibetan folk songs were banned. Everybody had to speak, as far as possible, in the new revolutionary language. The songs had to follow the standard of "The Modern Revolutionary Model Opera" which was replete with quotations from Mao. No Tibetan was permitted to speak of there being freedom and happiness in old Tibet. If a Tibetan was heard in the unrevolutionary act of praising the 'dead past', he was liable to incur such punishments as subjection to *thamzing* and being put into prison.

Simultaneous with the campaign to undermine Tibetan culture and religion the Chinese made serious attempts to gain tighter control of the Tibetan economy. In both towns and villages food grains and other essential commodities were stringently rationed by the Chinese. In the villages and in the nomadic communities the Chinese introduced what was termed as "work committee". This committee had normally ten to twenty members; half were Chinese cadres and half were Chinese spies. The work committee's primary task was to keep a strict check on the agricultural and dairy produce. This committee decided the amount of "love-the-nation tax" and "surplus grain tax" that had to be given to the Chinese. Better the harvest, the higher the "love-the-nation tax" that had to be given. Whether the Tibetan agriculturists liked it or not the best two qualities of grain were taken away by the Chinese.

Same was the case with the Tibetan nomads. Perhaps the Tibetan nomads had the toughest time. They worked even in very bad weather. But a substantial portion of the fruits of their hard work were taken away by the Chinese in the form of such sweet-sounding names as "love—the



nation nomad tax” and not content with this the Chinese made the Tibetans work from morning till night. In fact when they want to exhort the Tibetans to work still harder they tell their favourite story of Yuikung, the foolish old man who moved a mountain. The Tibetans must be unafraid of both hardship and death. They must inculcate the revolutionary spirit. The interest of the country must be put foremost, common or community interest second and if there were any private interest it must at all costs be sacrificed for the sake of the two big interests. Hardship must be turned into glory and sorrow must be recognised as happiness. Trenches much be dug deep; the whole country must be made into a store-house, and war preparation must be made. Under all these sweet-sounding words the Tibetans were made to work like slaves.

If the much publicised and propagated “liberation of the Tibetan people” means only this, what basic difference is there between “serfdom” and “liberation”? All the Chinese pep phrases such as “the sacrifice of private interest for the greater national interest”, and “trenches must be dug deep, the whole country must be made into a store-house, and war preparations must be made” are nothing but verbal covers for their expansionist aims. The only aggressor in Tibet is China. Otherwise which country? I have suffered under the Chinese. The suffering that I underwent in Tibet under the Chinese is permanently imprinted in my mind. Sometimes, while in Tibet, this resentment was unconsciously exhibited in my manners and facial expression. And this was not true only of me but of many others as well. Our unconscious resentment alerted the Chinese cadres and they would keep a vigilant eye on us. Our daily activity was supervised and recorded: each one of us was watched, the people with whom we talked, whether we stared long at a particular Tibetan while working and tried to communicate silently or whether we smiled at another Tibetan. We did not have the slightest chance and opportunity to express our real and genuine feelings; we were all pressed under a big, huge ‘red’ boulder. In such an authoritarian society it is impossible to refer to human qualities like sympathy, patience, peace, truth, and

freedom. Even casual unimportant conversation between family members is becoming difficult. If the Chinese catches a Tibetan referring to things like patience, sympathy and truth in his speech, he would be at once condemned as a "reactionary" opposing the revolutionary thought of Mao Tse-tung.

The spring of 1966 was auspicious and memorable. That was the time when the good news was whispered among the people of Phari that Tenzing Dolma all by herself managed to escape. This was indeed a welcome news. Since 1962 many Tibetan fleeing to the neighbouring countries were caught. When the news of Tenzing Dolma's escape first circulated there were doubts expressed as to whether she would succeed. I was myself in doubt whether an escape was possible and discreetly sought further news of Tenzing Dolma. A few months later Phari was again stirred by the sensational escape of Phari's black-smith, Chukya who led twelve other people. This news fired my hope. I felt as if a new road was lying ahead of me, and that so many years of longing for freedom could now be realised. I became overwhelmed with happiness. This was an opportunity that would never come again. Considering all the possibilities of being caught and the ensuing consequences, I decided once and for all that we must escape.

On the night of 26 August, 1966 at about eleven we made our escape. Each of us, my mother, brother and myself separately left our house. We headed towards the hills, south-east of Phari. On the morning of 27 August when the sun's rays struck the peaks of Chomolhari we reached at the top of Selung pass. Around eleven we reached the Bhutanese border and were led by the Bhutanese border office at Chelsa. We were kept there for a few days.

The happiness I felt when first setting foot on a free country will never be expunged from my memory. Looking back I feel that I have not taken the wrong road. The decision to flee was a right step. I am now living in a free, democratic society. In all likelihood, though we faced much hardship and suffering, our escape from Phari would not be remembered and sung by posterity. Nor were we

heroes: we did not fight any battle and win. However the fact that we were able to escape to a big, free country and earn our living according to our own desire and capacity gives us reason for satisfaction.

*Forced to flee from my highlands  
Is this life's deepest sorrow.  
The flow of tears of memory  
Is unstopped by this tale's telling.*



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This is the story of the birth of Tibet's new generation.

Tsering Dorje Gashi was born in 1941 in Phari, a Tibetan town not far from the borders of Bhutan. Till the age of fifteen he received a traditional education. In 1956 Tsering Dorje, along with thousands of other youths of Tibet, was sent to China for new education. At the Peking Institute of National Minorities Tsering Dorje learnt Marxism, the Chinese language, and the history of the world communist movement, in short, the ABC of the new society and age in which he found himself.

On his return to Tibet in 1961, Tsering Dorje's initial euphoria over the vision of a new man and society quickly evaporated before the hard reality of the new Tibet he saw and experienced. In Lhasa he worked for almost a year in the *Tibet Daily* press. It is his experience of hearing the golden Chinese promises in China and seeing the poverty of their performance in Tibet that led to his disillusionment and his subsequent escape.

Above all the story Tsering Dorje has to tell is a personal one. We meet his kind and deeply religious mother, whose faith in her country's religion was as deep as her concern that her son received a proper education in order that he got on in the wide world. We come across Amdo Gyakok, a nationalist Tibetan student who courageously spoke up for Tibet and who, in numerous mass meetings, was *struggled*. We meet the beautiful, aristocratic and nationalist Thangmey Kesang Dikyi, who surely must be Tibet's first "liberated" woman in more than one sense. In the background we see the emerging new Tibet, whose grim features Tsering Dorje has described with honesty, insight and so undauntingly.

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