
REQUIEM
FOR
TIBET

GEORGE N. PATTERSON

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Requiem: special Mass for the repose of the soul(s) of the dead.

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Dedication

To the Dalai Lama, in admiration of his sacrificial commitment to non-violence as a solution to the problems of his suffering country.

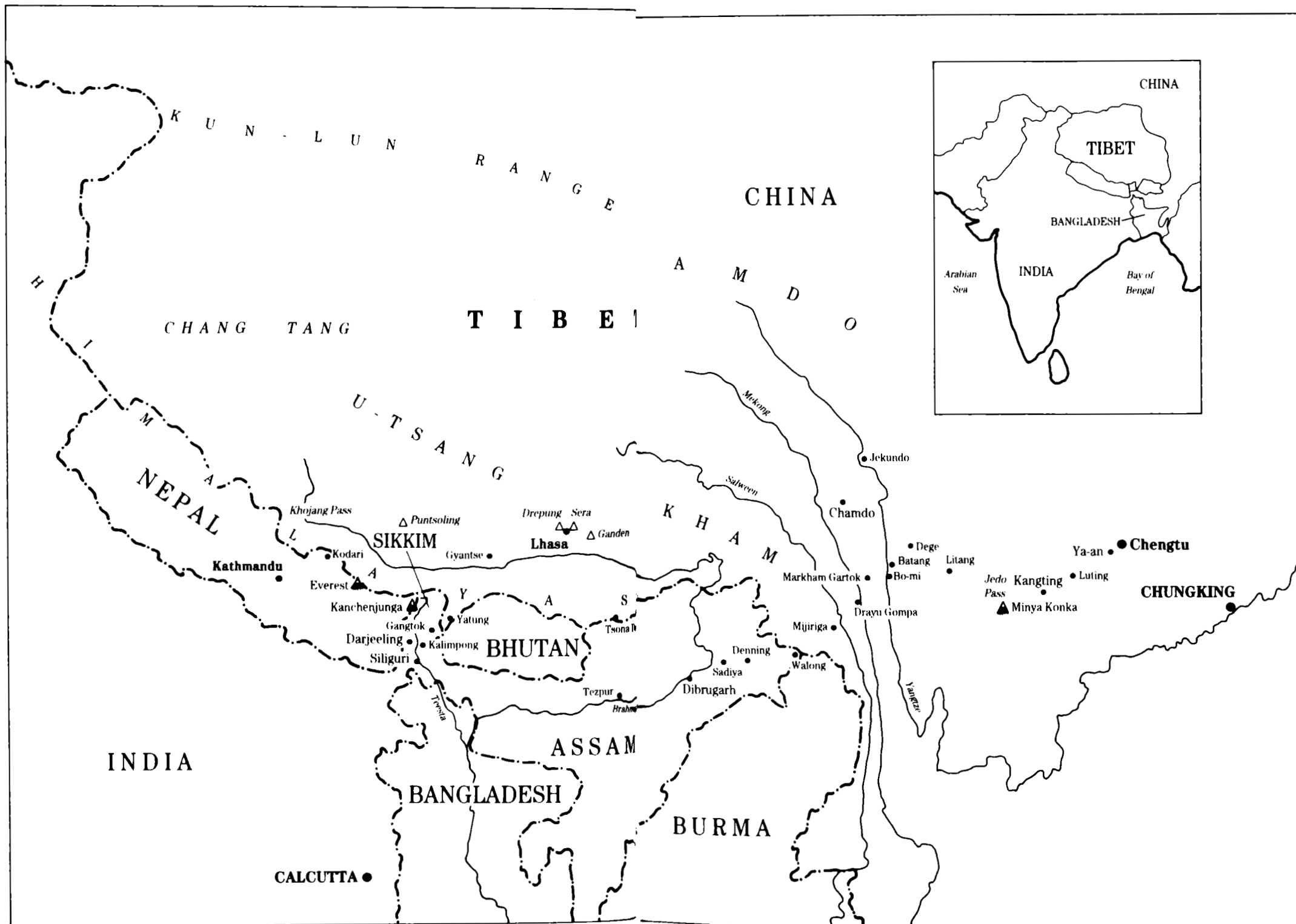
To Topgyay and Rapga Pandatshang, Khamba revolutionary leaders, and to Surkhang Wangcheng Galei, senior Cabinet Minister, who risked their lives in pursuit of a vision of freedom for their country.

To Tendar, Khamba guerrilla leader, in admiration of his sacrificial commitment in leaving the priesthood to take up the armed struggle on behalf of his country.

To the 1.2 million Tibetans who lost their lives in defence of their country, their culture, and their religion.

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All men dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity; but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible.

T. E. Lawrence

Prologue

My involvement with Tibet began in the little village of Laurieston, outside the town of Falkirk in central Scotland, in 1943. Until that time Tibet was only a geographical name to me, with vaguely exotic connotations.

My personal concerns at the time were strictly circumscribed by the demands of the Second World War. I was a tool-setter in an engineering works making armaments, working seven days a week and twelve hours a day, with an hour's travel to and from work. Within this environment I was frustrated by the spiritual demands of an expanding intellectual awareness in rebellion against the kind of world in which I lived, and against the political and religious establishments which I considered responsible.

At twenty-three years of age, and a member of the Christian sect known as the Plymouth Brethren, I had a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible, an ability to preach with some eloquence, a spiritual vision of considerable potential – and a deep conviction that there was something seriously wrong with me, as well as with the world in which I lived. For, although I knew a good deal *about* God, I had no direct personal experience of His existence.

It was at this point that I was confronted with Tibet. Whenever I was relieved of work or preaching commitments I was an avid reader, and a keen mountain-climber. The two interests coincided in books that I borrowed from the local public library, written by the mountaineers Eric Shipton and Frank Smythe, and by the central Asian explorer Sven Hedin, all of whom had a mutual passion for travelling and climbing in the Himalayan mountain region of north-east India.

I was absorbed in reading about their experiences in what was known as 'the Roof of the World', along a 1,000-mile frontier of the highest mountain peaks in the world. I certainly had no thought of God or religion as I read; yet out of the silence I heard a voice in my mind say clearly, 'I want you to go to Tibet.' My reflective calm disappeared.

After the initial confusion caused by sorting out thoughts, wishful thinking, environmental conditioning, inner compulsions and spiritual misconceptions, I was still left with the conviction that, somehow, an inner voice other than my own had articulated the command for me to go to Tibet at the will, and for the purpose, of God.

I concluded that I now had several other important associated decisions to make. If God had indeed chosen to intervene so conspicuously in my life, it meant that henceforth I could accept no lesser form of divine guidance. I

had been brought up to believe that divine guidance was obtained through a combined knowledge of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, the action of the inner working of the Holy Spirit, and appropriate circumstances. But my experience of this popular Christian formula had until now proved infuriatingly vague and unsatisfactory. In practice it could be manipulated to give credence and acceptance to almost any course of action. Now that I had personal experience of the Scripturally preferred method of direct divine communication between the Creator and His creature, every other implied method of perception must take second place.

My first task was to find out as much as possible about the land of Tibet. All I knew about the country, other than accounts of climbable mountains in the Himalayan and Karakoram ranges on its western and northern borders, was that it was a vast and inaccessible place. I now began a search for books to add to my knowledge, and to prepare me for a journey to Tibet.

To my surprise, I found that while a considerable number of books was available, not a great deal was actually known about Tibet. The scholars who had written about it, and the explorers who had travelled there, had either lived only in the border areas or had visited isolated parts of this vast country, and their conclusions were therefore often speculative and contradictory. Very few had ever penetrated into the remote inner cities or distant regions, and their often inconsistent accounts only added to the confusion.

All, however, were agreed that the country occupied by the Tibetan-speaking people was vast. The three provinces of Tibet incorporating 'Greater Tibet' encompassed some million square miles – an area fifteen times the size of Great Britain – with an unknown, but variously estimated, population of 3–6 million Tibetans comprising a variety of tribes. The inhabited settlements of mud-built cities and towns, or the tent encampments of wandering nomads, were located at an average of 10–15,000 feet above sea-level.

The habitable area was greatly reduced by gigantic mountain ranges, which split the country into precipitous ravines interspersed with great stony plateaux, snow or quagmire plains to the north and west, and indescribably beautiful forested and flowering gorges and valleys to the east and south. The whole country was rendered virtually inaccessible by the massive 25–29,000-foot Himalayan mountain ranges to the south and west, and by the similar Karakoram and Kun-lun ranges to the north-west and north; as well as by the smaller, but no less impressive, Minya Konka ranges to the east. Among these great mountain formations four of the world's largest rivers – the Brahmaputra, Salween, Mekong and Yangtze –

had their sources. It took six months for the Tibetan trading caravans to cross the country on its single trading route from Kalimpong, on the Indo-Tibetan border, to Kangting (formerly Tatsienlu), on the Sino-Tibetan border; and eight months to travel from Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, to Peking, the capital of China.

Two sayings, one Chinese and one Tibetan, gave an indication of the immense diversity of the land of Tibet. The Chinese saying declared, 'Every ten *li* [i.e. three miles] heaven is different.' The Tibetan saying was, 'To every valley its own dialect; to every lama his own teaching.'

The variation in temperature could be as much as 100 degrees between midday and midnight, with great boulders and trees splitting in the intense contractions of heat and cold. Rainfall was sparse, except in parts of the south and east of the country, and the 15–20,000-foot passes were often rendered impassable or hazardous by snow blizzards or ice-fields.

Despite these awesome physical barriers, all the foreigners who had visited Tibet, and who had lived to record their experiences, spoke with fascination of its people and life and customs. Great herds of yaks (like bison), wild asses and horses, antelopes, snow leopards, blue sheep, bears, wolves and foxes roamed freely over the *chang-tang*, or 'northern plains'. It was also said that there were vast deposits of gold and oil, silver and copper, iron, lead and uranium to be found in the mountain ranges; but the lamas had forbidden mining for these minerals, because it might offend the gods of the mountains.

As I read about Tibet in 1943–4, and contemplated the command to me to go to this country, my response was a mixture of bewilderment, fascination, excitement and trepidation.

What a country to be sent to – even by God! A place where there were countless benevolent and malevolent deities; where the decisions of the god-king had to be submitted to a spirit-possessed oracle, taking his instructions from demonic agencies; where the two religious leaders were used by the three great powers of Britain, China and Russia to further their own political and commercial interests at the expense of Tibet; where the people, with superlative courage and *élan*, continued to defy the most unscrupulous efforts to betray them and expel them into enforced oblivion.

How was I to get there? What was I to do if, or when, I ever arrived? I had rejected the institutional churches of historical Christendom. I had rejected the missionary practices of imperialist Christianity. I had no desire to set up Plymouth Brethren churches such as I had known in my own country, let alone in a hideously complex, lamaistically dominated land like Tibet. I was frustrated by the lack of spiritual power in the West, but was now being confronted by the most powerful spirit-controlled country in

the East. I was a nonentity from a small village in central Scotland being told by a newly discovered Jehovah to enter the most closed and complex country in central Asia. The challenge was mind-blowing – and intoxicating.

Requiem for Tibet

Your Young Men Will See Visions . . .'

My father was a miner in Number 23 Pit in Redding, three miles south of Falkirk in central Scotland. It was a small village, with the usual miners' rows of bleak and depressing red-brick, single-storey cottages, barely distinguishable from those of neighbouring villages. A few drab shops, two or three pubs that were only places to get quickly drunk, a cold and cheerless parish church, a miners' welfare hut, and a mission hall. What made Redding different from the other villages was the pit disaster that had claimed over 100 dead when the workings had collapsed and flooded. The disaster left an indelible mark on my father.

His mother, a local beauty, had married my grandfather, a tailor, when she was only sixteen. By the time he died five years later she had four children, three boys and a girl, of whom my father was the eldest. The beautiful young widow then turned to a wild life of considerable abandon, leaving the four children to survive as best they could. From his earliest years my father accepted the responsibility of looking after them.

When other children were sleeping, playing or attending school, he was delivering morning bread rolls and newspapers, running errands – and hiding his wages from his mother when she arrived 'home' without warning, looking for money or goods to pawn. Occasionally he had time to go to school, and when he did he showed such promise that the headmaster offered to pay his school fees. But my grandmother refused to allow this, and so at thirteen my father went down the pit to work at the coal-face.

It was inevitable, therefore, that he should become a Socialist, returning to the pits after a spell in the army. Conditions in the pits of Scotland, like those elsewhere in the country, bred Socialists. When many of his friends died in the Redding pit disaster he became an outspoken representative of the Miners' Union. To educate himself he attended evening classes at a local technical college. By his mid-twenties he was a mine inspector, and a Socialist orator of considerable reputation locally.

At this point an event occurred which was to change his life and that of many others, my own included. Some years later he put it into the words of a song, 'Sorrow of Satan', which became a great favourite among the miners' and family gatherings that he attended:

*One night I was walking along the main street,
To a villa my steps were directed:
Where lay on his bed, my chum almost dead,*

*In whom I was much interested.
There sat by his side one I used to deride,
Whose presence I'd previously forsaken:
He was one of the crew, whose numbers are few,
Who are saved – to the sorrow of Satan.*

And so on for several verses. In short, he experienced conversion to Christ through the sick friend's Christian visitor. Already a voracious reader, my father now devoted himself to study of the Bible and related works. Before long he was better known for his Christian open-air preaching than he had been for his Socialist activities. Many miners and others became Christians through his fiery messages – 'Turn-or-you'll-burn Geordie' he was called – and he exerted considerable influence on the local community.

The Christian church he joined was the Plymouth Brethren, meeting in a small gospel hall in the village of Laurieston, a mile outside Falkirk. The 'Brethren', as they were more commonly called, stood in the historical line of breakaway sects from institutional religion, and had acquired their distinctive name from the fact that one of the earliest and most famous of their churches was located in Plymouth; they called each other 'brother' and 'sister' as equal members of the Church of Christ, in recognition of the priesthood of all Christian believers.

I was born on 19 August 1920, at five minutes past five in the afternoon, the first of three children; my sister, Margaret, followed five years later, and my brother, Bill, in 1927. At the time we lived in one of a small row of cottages in the town of Falkirk. It was the standard 'but-an'-ben' – one room and kitchen – with the black-leaded grate and its iron pans dominating the small space, and an alcove opposite for the recessed double bed, under which was a 'hurley' for the children. The front room held a couch, a few chairs, a bed – and a large harmonium. The outside lavatory was shared by the neighbours, and personal bathing and washing had to be done in the sink or in a tin bath brought in from the wash-house.

Yet in this cottage my parents were able to entertain my father's eight-man male voice choir every week, as they practised at the harmonium for their Saturday and Sunday singing engagements. Every Sunday there was either a visiting preacher to feed, or one or more members from the church arriving for help or Bible study. My father was mostly on night shift at the time, with a meagre wage of two pounds two shillings and sixpence with which to feed and clothe his family. When he was first married he received four pounds a week, but because of his militant support for better conditions for the miners he was given less work by the pit bosses, fewer shifts, and his pay was reduced accordingly.

On many occasions, after the choir had been to practise and my mother

had fed them, there would be nothing left in the house for the next day. Then we either went hungry or, in some remarkable manner, a neighbour or a friend or church member would come along with some food, or a gift of money, entirely unsolicited. There were even occasions when my mother was stopped on the street by total strangers, who would give her food or money 'because of what your husband is doing'.

Ten years in this environment shaped my whole future life. When, years later, my intellectual and spiritual rebellion started, I recalled with sharp-edged clarity my father and mother going along the street to a Roman Catholic neighbour with nine children and no income and giving them the last food we had in the house. When my mother queried the wisdom of this my father replied, 'Never mind, hen [a central Scottish term of endearment], we can aye pray an' they cannae.' And, after telling my mother to set the table with knives and forks ('for a hot meal, hen?'), they prayed; sure enough, some time later there was a knock at the door and a messenger-boy arrived with a meat pie 'for Geordie Paitterson, the preacher'.

I was only three years of age when I first experienced personally this concern of others. I had developed critical meningitis, and Dr Hunter had finally told my parents that there was nothing more he could do to help and they had better be prepared for the worst. He added that even if there were a faint chance of my recovering, I might suffer irreversible brain damage, and so it would be better if I went quietly from the coma. 'You have plenty of time for mair,' he said gruffly, and not unkindly, to my parents.

A Brethren elder, Bob Easson, had been waiting in the front room for the doctor to finish his visit, and he came out when the doctor was about to leave. When he heard the report he asked if the doctor would mind him trying to do something for me with 'Professor Kirk's cure'. This was one of several forms of natural cure, such as homoeopathy, osteopathy and herbalism, practised by many Brethren. Professor Kirk's cure involved the application of hot- and cold-water compresses at various times to different parts of the body.

But whatever the method of cure, the fundamental belief was in the power of prayer. So, over the next few days and nights, while Bob Easson applied his compresses, he and other Brethren friends prayed over me. I finally recovered without any ill-effects, to no one's surprise except the doctor's; he warned my mother to be careful that I never receive any injury to my head.

It was such practical demonstrations of Christian belief and commitment that left a deep impression on me as I got older. Bible stories and bedtime prayers were not just legends and rituals, but real and relevant experiences integrated into one's daily life. Moses' conversations with God, regarding the problems of the Children of Israel in their wilderness

wanderings, were just as acceptable as Bob Easson discussing the problems of members of the church. David's adventures with Goliath and the Philistines, and his soaring imagination in poetry and music, were part of my everyday experience in the home, as I listened to discussions about management and unemployment, Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald, and the weekly choir practices. Later, it was easy to see why Utopian Socialism attracted so many of the best Nonconformist Christians, for as a vision and cause it paralleled in so many ways Abraham's Canaan, Moses' Promised Land, David's Zion and Jesus' Kingdom of God.

I was six years of age when I made my own commitment to give my life to Christ in such a vision and cause, as my mother told me the story of David and Goliath. That commitment is as clear today as the memory of the warm kitchen and the hot bath, out of which I had just stepped, as I told my mother of my decision. Young though I was, I knew it was not just a rosy or picture-book world that I inhabited, but one that was filled with hunger, poverty, oppression, bitterness and tragedy; for these were the daily topics of conversation in our home. I also knew it as a child knows such things, from having to put up with old, patched or second-hand clothes, to the mockery of jeering schoolmates, and from the experiences of other children in worse circumstances.

It was at this time that our own poverty reached an even lower level, during the period of the 1926 General Strike. My father, as union leader, was deeply involved in it and, at the end of the strike, disillusioned, he left mining and found a job as a labourer in a local foundry.

A few years later we moved to nearby Laurieston – to two rooms and a kitchen – and we had hardly settled there when I almost lost my life again. I was eleven years old, and went out for a long bicycle ride with my cousin, Bob Reid. We had almost reached Bo'ness, beyond nearby Grangemouth, and were on the long, exciting, steep slope of the notorious Carriden Brae, when my cable brake snapped and I shot away ahead of Bob. The bike gained frightening momentum on the hill, and as I neared the bottom I saw that the Brae took a sharp left-hand turn around a hairpin bend. Just as I reached the turn a car appeared and, as I swerved to avoid it, the bike shot from beneath me and I slammed into the car at full speed, hitting the door with my head.

The car's handle smashed into my forehead and ripped off with the impact. I somersaulted over the top of the car and hit the wall on the far side of the road. When my parents arrived at the Falkirk Royal Infirmary they could not recognize me behind the bandages and bruises. Once again expected to die, I defied all the odds and recovered.

I spent several months in plaster, but the only permanent damage was a long, jagged scar on my forehead where the door handle had struck. There

did not seem to be any adverse effects, despite the doctor's earlier warning about knocks to the head.

Until the accident I had been a reasonably intelligent student, usually in the top three of the class; afterwards my marks and my place in the class markedly declined. My parents had sacrificed a great deal to send me to the best local school, Falkirk High, and this decline did not please them at all – especially my mother, who attributed it not to the accident but to the fact that I was more interested in sport than in studies. It was true that I was spending more time on football, but this was because I was one of the youngest players selected for the First Eleven. But when I had a series of bad reports, plus punishment for lack of attention and even falling asleep in class, my mother finally took me to see the doctor – with dire warnings of what would happen if nothing was found wrong with me. The doctor passed me fit, but just as I was leaving the room he asked me to tell him what was in his hand. Whatever I said, it was the wrong guess, and he called me back to read from a wall chart. He found that my eyes had been affected by the accident and no one had noticed this, which accounted for my reactions.

However, I was now rebellious at what I saw as victimization by teachers and parents, and instead of applying myself to catching up on my studies I decided to leave school altogether. I was thirteen, and would not be fourteen until after the end of the school term. My parents were very disappointed, especially my father, who had wanted me to have the education he had never had, but I was stubborn and left school that summer.

The family crisis was exacerbated by my youthful footballing skills. Children of Brethren parents in Scotland were not supposed to be allowed to play football – even school football – because it was 'of the world', and therefore sinful. Such friendship with the world showed enmity with God, it was said. My mother was convinced of this, but my father was not, and so I had been allowed to play – but warned by my mother that my developing skills were a sign of the devil's temptations and not of God's favour. However, my mother's grudging acquiescence to my playing did not extend to permitting my father to discuss with me the results of the school games, because she considered this 'encouraging George on the downward path'.

Although my mother's attitude was perhaps harsh and bigoted, I did not see it in this light, for I was aware that no other children of Brethren parents were allowed to play football; and that my father was having to defend me in many Bible discussions, where he came under attack for not obeying the Biblical injunction to 'keep children under control', and to bring them up 'under the nurture and admonition of the Lord'. I knew that

Bob Easson's grandson was not allowed to play football, although I also knew that he did so secretly without his parents' knowledge, keeping his football boots hidden outside the house.

This negative attitude was demonstrated in strong opposition to other forms of entertainment, such as cinema, dancing, wine-drinking, concerts of any kind – including classical music – and, more often than not, even to playing any musical instrument in church. Again, there was a paradox here, for many Brethren homes had pianos or organs, radios and television, and most members had no objection to their children learning to play some musical instrument (although most favoured classical music or, better still, hymns only). I learned to play the organ that had been with us since before I was born.

The main emphasis of Brethren practice was on Bible study and discussion. This was usually carried out at morning communion service on Sunday, with the 'ministry meeting' for believers following at 3 p.m.; then Sunday school or Bible class for an hour, and the gospel meeting for unbelievers at 6.30 p.m. During the week there was a prayer meeting for an hour, and another hour-long Bible teaching meeting. This standard pattern did not include the many family Bible studies that were conducted in individual homes, in which all manner of topics was discussed. Then there were Saturday special teaching conferences, Saturday youth rallies, and Sunday fellowship meetings for chorus-singing and for young people to meet one another.

Attendance at all, or even a mixture, of these activities meant a busy week, and once the rigid framework had been accepted it was a reasonably happy and, at times, intellectually stimulating way of life. Many individuals who could not even read or write at the time of their conversion, and who were nurtured in this setting, not only became literate but also able to expound the Scriptures intelligently and in depth for almost an hour at a time, listened to with great interest by a critical audience. Some even studied Hebrew and Greek in their spare time in order to be able to understand the text more fully; and, since anyone who had something to say was allowed to speak at public gatherings, many excellent orators emerged with an unparalleled knowledge of the Bible. The study of Biblical prophecy also required a wide knowledge of current affairs, so there was a fair standard of appreciation of contemporary issues.

To my father, Christ's teaching regarding seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness – food and clothing, in consequence, being of secondary importance – meant not having a bank account, living simply, and giving away what little was left over to those less fortunate than oneself. When he died at eighty he was still living by these principles, neither he nor my mother having a bank account. Their belief

meant literally taking no thought of tomorrow and not accumulating possessions.

Except for books, of course. Both by my father and by an uncle I was introduced to a love of reading and knowledge that was never to leave me. Politics, theology, history, travel, philosophy, adventure, fiction – I consumed books from libraries and second-hand bookshops and stalls as other children collected stamps. I could not learn enough. But my excitement did not come from the act of reading, or from the accumulation of esoteric facts, but from trying to fit the new items of information obtained from all these sources into a meaningful pattern of God's purpose in creation and His ongoing purpose in the contemporary world. Most absorbing of all, it came from deciphering God's possible plan for my own life.

My father's passionate championing of righteousness and justice, and his concern for the poor as taught by Christ, had made the Bible, above all books, come alive for me and had set my youthful mind on fire. What seemed, to other Brethren children, simply boring exercises in the endless memorizing of Bible verses, tedious meetings and lengthy home discussions on the typology of the Pentateuch (the significance of the ashes of the red heifer in the Tabernacle sacrifices), and dated Bible stories (Joshua making the sun stand still, Elijah slaying 400 prophets, Samson defeating the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass), became to me a fascinating world of practical politics and economics. Did the Jewish year of jubilee have anything to contribute to the twentieth century in terms of property and a just wage? Were revolution and imposed political solutions justified in the light of the actions of Joshua and David? Was theocracy a practical political possibility, as David had demonstrated in the first State of Israel?

But opposed to this majestic vision unfolding on my sixteen-year-old mind was another increasingly urgent reality. I felt as Archimedes might have felt, after his famous declaration regarding moving the world with an appropriate fulcrum and lever, had someone obligingly handed them to him and asked him to prove it. The theory was fine; the difficulty was to demonstrate the point.

If people's lives could be as dramatically changed as Brethren preachers taught – if prayers could be as efficacious as I had seen – why did so few people come to the Brethren meetings? Why were the sparsely attended meetings so ridiculously ineffective? Why was the excitement of faith so dissipated in me as I sat under the drone of sterile Bible exposition? Why did so few people seem to believe, or even act as if they believed, the words of hymns or the Scriptures? Why did it all seem, as Kierkegaard wrote, 'a monstrous mental delusion'?

At sixteen I had begun to preach in an extending circle of Brethren

churches. At seventeen I went to work in the famous Carron Engineering Works, as a tool-setter in the armaments section. I also had my first article published, in a Christian magazine, on the subject of 'Knowing the Will of God'. I did not consider this unduly precocious, for Karl Marx was also in his late teens when he wrote on a similar subject while at a Jesuit Theological College in Germany. But in an extremely Socialist central Scotland it was Marx's Socialist economics that were discussed and not his youthful Christian hopes – although I was experiencing the same frustrations with institutional religion as he had.

I joined the Youth Hostels Association and began hill-walking, and then mountain-climbing. The father of a former school friend had a riding stable and I took up horse-riding. These became matters of controversy among the local Brethren, as did my wearing of the kilt.

I found myself increasingly isolated, although I mixed easily with people and had a wide circle of friends, because I seemed to fit into no particular pigeon-hole. My deepening knowledge of the Bible and my ability to discuss issues articulately made me acceptable to the stricter Brethren traditionalists, whose chief aim was mastery of the Scriptures; but my climbing, riding and other activities brought me into disfavour with them. Then my intellectual curiosity, fostered by my reading, had no satisfactory outlet in Brethren circles.

The world beyond the village was large, exciting and challenging in a variety of ways that kept me awake night after night, as I read voraciously everything I could get hold of from the libraries. So while Paul and Francis of Assisi and Martin Luther appealed, so did Napoleon and Garibaldi and Marx – and Wilde and Chesterton, Belloc and Shaw. When every other person at a Bible study meeting was searching his or her mind for an appropriate verse to match that being expounded, my mind was throwing up a scintillating variety of quotations – some apposite, some outrageous – which, because they could not be used in accepted practice, left me frustrated and even more questioning, and with a wayward sense of humour.

What was to become of me? I felt growing within me, like Walter Mitty, an almost limitless capacity to be like one of the many literary, political, religious or social hero-figures of my reading, but also the ability to do something that was different, that was essentially *me*, for which I alone had been created. Yet the most I could be in Brethren circles was 'a leading conference speaker', or 'a foreign missionary', neither of which appealed as a goal in life. I did not know it at the time, but the issue was already being settled.

God Sends Me to Tibet

'Just you listen to me, my lad,' the doctor exploded angrily. 'You should be a jolly grateful young man that you're living at all. Eight months ago, by all normal reckoning, you ought to have died, and yet here you are still; but I can assure you that if you go on to the operating table in this frame of mind you'll never come off it alive. We must have your cooperation, and in your condition, if you haven't the will to live, then you'll die and that's all there is to it! You're the one who preaches that God has a purpose in every person's life, but I'm telling you now that if ever anyone has been spared for a purpose it's you. Three times in your life already I have given up hope of saving your life, and three times only a miracle has saved you. And for what? To die from an operation on your leg because you're tired of suffering? Just you snap out of it, if ever you want anyone to believe your contention that there is a purpose in life. Put your mind to it and I'll have you on your feet playing football or climbing your precious mountains as much as you like – or just don't bother and finish yourself off. The choice lies with you.' And, savagely pulling on his motor-cycling gloves, he stalked out of the room.

I lay gazing at the ceiling, jarred out of the woolly apathy that had packaged me for the past few months. The only interest that I had left was in the rise and fall of the agony that swept through me. I used up all the energy I possessed fighting off the waves of pain while my leg was being dressed by the district nurse, sweat starting from my taut body and soaking my pyjamas, and then lay in an exhausted haze until the next dressing.

Eight months before, I had come home from work complaining of a pain in my leg from an infected toe and some sickness, which had raced into septicaemia and a delirium of pain, to be followed by two unsuccessful operations on my increasingly suppurating leg. With the accusing words of the doctor ringing in my ear, I confronted the lack of integrity of my Christian commitment. Now that I was stripped of the intellectual gymnastics involved in comparing what others experienced or taught or wrote, and was facing the realities of personal suffering, I found myself not only lacking, but tottering on the edge of unbelief, as the doctor had so pungently pointed out.

Theoretically, I did believe that behind every life was a purpose. Theoretically, I believed it was possible for a person to discover that divine purpose. But now, as I searched my soul following the doctor's words, I had to confess that experientially I really knew nothing about it. Ruth-

lessly, and with a growing fear, I searched all my experience for something on which to base my belief, and found a little, only a very little, out of the mass of reading, discussion and activity, on which I could lay hold with personal assurance.

I knew the process of Christianity so well: the history of the great ecclesiastical controversies as well as the petty denominational squabbles. The memorable occasions when one sensed the tenuous fingers of divine majesty reaching into human affairs, and then the exasperation when some human littleness swept away the vision. I had known enough in the lives of my parents and others to warrant a belief in God and His interest in human affairs; and I had known enough in my own experience with a large number of professing Christians to doubt the existence of God at all. It all boiled down to two questions: if there was a God, was He really interested in every detail of my life? And did He really desire to control every action, so that I might experience 'the ultimate good'?

As my faith shattered to pieces around me, I had at last come to the point where I need not retreat or prevaricate. I had failed as a professing follower of Jesus Christ in not practising a day-by-day obedience to His control. What I did have was an assurance of His presence within me, according to the words of the promise: 'To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.'

The choice lay clearly before me: full submission to God for whatever His purpose was, regardless of what others might think or say; or a life without God, and without meaning. In short, to be a fool by God's standards; or a fool by man's standards.

I chose to be God's fool. As the poet of 'God's Fools', W. H. Hamilton, wrote:

*Let me stand with the conquered who assayed
A greater thing than sane men can imagine
Or pious hearts believe. Some love of Death
Seized all their being and hurl'd them against the World;
And mocking all intelligence they fell . . .*

The operation was successful and five weeks later I was up and walking about. I was determined that from now on everything that I was not certain came from God I would reject: no more booking of meetings to preach, without being sure that each meeting was where I was supposed to be that day; no more preaching, unless I was certain that the message for that particular group came directly from God. All my other activities I brought under scrutiny and spread before God for approval – including the tennis and football and horse-riding!

I was aware that all this had not constituted a 'call', in the accepted sense

of a rather vague spiritual experience ostensibly granted to priests, pastors and foreign missionaries. The words of the Apostle Paul, as taught among Brethren, were that there were two 'callings': one, the 'calling' which is his daily task; and the other, the 'call' which takes him out of the daily task for a special spiritual work. By this definition I was a tool-setter in an engineering works; and I had no experience of the latter calling, other than my preaching activities.

So it was natural that I should immediately think of 'becoming a missionary', for that seemed to be the generally accepted goal for someone wanting to dedicate his or her life to God's exclusive service. Yet I had received no explicit command from God to go abroad anywhere. For the time being, however, I was in no position to make any move, as I was confined to my job in the engineering works under wartime regulations. I had little time off, and when I had I took to the mountains.

My interest in mountain-climbing led me to read books on the subject, including those accounts of Himalayan expeditions by Shipton and Smythe, and by Hedin. As I read of their fascinating adventures, my mind wholly occupied with the problems presented by the great snow ranges and vast unexplored countries, that voice in my mind clearly stated, 'This is where you will go for Me.'

I had thought I was prepared for any eventuality, but when the challenge came I was found wanting. My first reaction was bewilderment, as I tried to make sense of the inexplicable intervention. If God was going to speak to me, surely it would be when I was on my knees, or in a special situation, or listening to some spiritual teacher; *not* when reading library books about physical adventure! Yet the more I considered the experience, the more I became convinced that the unusual method of intervention was 'God's call' to me.

My mind protested against the impossibility of what was being asked or implied in the episode. Tibet was the place I was to go to for God. Tibet, the forbidden land, of which so little was known. Tibet, closed to foreigners – even Sven Hedin had had difficulty in getting limited access, and he was a personal friend of Lord Curzon! Tibet, a buffer State, isolated by the political agreement of the three great powers, Britain, Russia and China. Tibet, in thrall to priests, jealous of their powers and unscrupulous in their methods of preserving them. Tibet, without roads or rails, banks or post-offices. Tibet, whose language was more difficult to learn than Chinese, and whose vast and savage territories were peopled by tribes whose dialects not even their fellow-Tibetans could understand.

It was sheer folly – but the foolishness of God, said the Apostle Paul, was wiser than men. And I had chosen to be God's fool!

The unexplored and unknown nature of the country would present

major problems for me in methods of sustenance and supply. There were no banks, so no money could be obtained; everything would have to be obtained by barter on the spot. There were no shops, except in the few remote towns, so no goods could be bought and everything necessary would have to be carried in. The few maps bore only occasional names of the more prominent places, and were useless for planned journeys; most of Tibet, as one writer entitled his book, was *Blank on the Map*. Even given the premise that one could get into the country, the next problem was where to go and how to exist when one got there.

As I reflected on the many apparently insuperable problems, I was filled – after my initial response of almost total pessimism – with a surge of excitement. God had said, ‘Prove all things; hold fast that which is good’; and Jesus himself had declared, ‘With God nothing is impossible; all things are possible, only believe.’

By the time the war ended, and I was free to leave my job, I had read most of the books written on Tibet and had some idea of what lay ahead. I concluded that some sort of medical training was necessary in such remote areas and, after making enquiries, I discovered that an excellent course was available at the Missionary School of Medicine in London. I applied, and was accepted for a year’s training in anatomy, physiology, medicine, surgery, dentistry and the use of anaesthetics. It was September 1945.

I decided to give away what money I had in the bank, and to keep only what I had in my wallet at the time I left Scotland – two pounds and seven shillings. If God expected me to survive in Tibet on faith and prayer, then He could keep me in Britain by the same means before I got there. I drew up a list of people to whom I felt God would have me give the money – some in difficult circumstances at home and some working as missionaries abroad. This left me without the money for my tuition fees, but I reasoned that on Jesus’ principle of ‘taking no thought for tomorrow’, God would look after that when the time came, as He had promised. If not, then the sooner I discovered there was some other meaning to this and other divine declarations, the better. It would be too late when I got to Tibet. What was it Robert Browning had said?

*Pure faith indeed – you know not what you ask!
Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much
The sense of conscious creatures to be borne;
It were the seeing Him; no flesh shall dare.*

My faith was put to the test right away. In giving away all my resources I had left myself without the fare to London in order to begin my medical

studies. That also had come under the 'take no thought for tomorrow' injunction, in my reasoning. But, as the day of departure drew near, the wisdom of the decision was called into question in my mind. Most people assumed I was 'going to be a missionary' and was taking appropriate training; those who knew me well also assumed that I was financially able to sustain such a programme on my own.

The night before I was due to leave for London (by bus, I decided fearfully, not having sufficient faith to believe that God would provide the more expensive rail ticket!) I was given a public send-off by the village church members and other friends. But when I went to bed I still did not have the fare to take me to London, and the bus left from Falkirk at six-thirty the next morning. What should I do? Ask my parents for the money, and admit to what I had done with my own? Or see if God was just testing my faith? I decided to gamble on God. I was God's fool, wasn't I?

It was dark, cold and uninspiring when I said goodbye to my parents the following morning and took the village bus into Falkirk. As I joined the queue for the Glasgow-London bus I was torn with indecision; part excitement as to what God was going to do to solve this problem at the very outset of my great adventure with Him, and part hope that I was crazy and would be saved from my own reckless folly by the failure of my faith.

With only a few passengers ahead of me boarding the bus, a good friend, who had spent the previous evening with me, rushed up to me and breathlessly handed me an envelope, saying, 'I'm glad I caught you. I should have given you this last night, but I was too embarrassed, as it didn't make sense. You have more money than I have, yet I felt God wanted me to give you this. I couldn't sleep all night for worrying about it, and I went early to your home and your parents told me you had gone. So, this is from God to you. God bless. Bye.'

I climbed into the bus without time to say anything to him other than 'Thank you' and 'Goodbye'. But I had my fare to London. From then on such incidents, with variations, became commonplace. It was a glorious and unforgettable experience to rise morning by morning, sometimes with only sufficient money to pay my bus fare from my Hackney lodgings (also found by prayer and not by 'influence' or through manipulation) to the medical school. I had begun by living on the edge, and had been helped by God at an unbelievable last minute, so that each new experience became an exciting challenge to further acts of faith. Letters with money enclosed arrived for me at the school from total strangers, and gifts from embarrassed friends, payments for preaching engagements, even unexpected presents of money in my previously empty coat pockets hung up in church or restaurant. In such a variety of ways, without ever having to inform a single person of my need, and with no official organization or church

supporting me, I received all that was necessary to pay for my lodgings and tuition in a strange city. Tibet, I thought exultantly, here I come. I gave a detailed account of my experiences during this period in my book *God's Fool*, relating how my daily needs were met in miraculous fashion without anyone being aware of them.

Except on one occasion. I had finished a term at medical school and arranged to return to Scotland for the holiday, but I only had three pounds. This meant I could pay the landlady, or I could pay for a rail ticket, but I could not do both. I had no moral justification for withholding payment from the landlady, who had provided food and shelter for me for the past week, so I paid her. I waited confidently throughout the day for the appropriate gift to appear in some way, but as the time for the train's departure drew near I still had no money.

This time as I walked up to the booking-office of Euston station no Good Samaritan appeared. I counted my money and found I had enough to take me to Crewe on the Scotland train. During the journey I had time to reflect on what I was going to do at Crewe. Did my faith stop when the train stopped? Would some stranger come up the train corridor and give me money? Or would I fudge the issue and just give my name and address to the inspector when he came for my ticket, and pay later?

But this would be too obvious a way out, and my whole life was bound up in the principle of faith in God being a practical everyday possibility. So I got out on to a cold, bare platform and into the dispiriting atmosphere of a large railway junction at midnight. I had a cup of tea and a sandwich at the snack bar, then left the warmth for the cold darkness of the road north. Somewhere between here and there I had a rendezvous with God.

I walked through the night from Crewe to Middleton without the chance of a lift, stopped once by a suspicious policeman, who became fascinated with my story and informed me that for two shillings and sixpence I could always take a local train from Middleton to Warrington, where I would have a better chance of a long-distance hitch home. As soon as he said Warrington, I remembered that I had a good friend who lived there, David Haxton, with whom I had often preached in Scotland.

I arrived at his home at eight in the morning and he told me that later that day he was due to preach at a youth rally in Manchester, and would I go with him to share in the meeting? I had nothing else to do, I said, and would be glad to help. We stayed overnight with a friend, and when I finally left I had not only my fare to Scotland but my fare to China as well, from gifts that had been handed to me.

When I arrived home I found my mother very upset. 'Where have you been?' she asked. 'I have been telephoning everywhere to find you. Have you been walking from London?' she demanded. When I nodded, smiling,

she said, 'I knew it. I knew it. But what was wrong? Didn't you have your fare? How did you have no money?'

I had never told my parents of my decision to give away all my money, so they were understandably confused. My mother went on. 'It was all my fault. Someone gave me five pounds to send to you, and I never bothered, for I assumed you would not need it before you came home. Then Bob Easson came with another five pounds for you, and I began to wonder why people were giving money to you.' I explained to them, and told them that they must never feel any special parental responsibility to support me, for it would only confuse my own situation. This was between me and God alone.

In my last term at medical school I received official papers calling me up for service in the Forces. I had been in the restricted category of armament-making for the whole of the war, but was now required for military service. When I protested I was given 'conscientious objectors' papers' to sign. I filled them in unwillingly, pointing out that I had not claimed conscientious objection, nor was I doing so now. I had served my country in a capacity determined by them, I claimed, but was now no longer eligible. I was a servant of God from now on.

It did not go down too well with the authorities, and I appeared at a series of tribunals, and a final appellate tribunal, to be turned down. I was stunned. I had been so confident that God would miraculously step in to prevent this decision at the last minute that I was unprepared for the magnitude of the obstacle placed in my path – the Government.

I left the court and made my way towards Westminster Abbey, a favourite spot when I wanted peace and quiet in which to think. There was no one there when I arrived, and I walked down the centre aisle to a seat near the front, with the sound of my footsteps ringing sharply in the quietness. I did not notice the time pass as I reviewed my life, and sifted through my actions and beliefs, but gradually I became aware that the organist was playing a Bach Prelude and I let it lift my spirit with its soaring thunder. When the recital finished I felt washed of all doubt and, rising, I made my way out. In the aisle, under my feet, was the plaque ascribed to David Livingstone: 'Other sheep have I which are not of this fold . . . them also I must bring.' As I left the abbey the sound of the traffic was like the Bach Prelude in my ears.

When I received the call-up papers I filled them in and restated my objections, giving my reasons. At the medical examination I did the same, and received further papers asking me to state what I was doing, the nature of my studies, and how I was faring in them. I replied, once again stating that I would not be serving in the Forces but would go to prison instead, if that was the only alternative.

A few months previously I had met a young fellow of my own age, Geoffrey Bull, who at the time was awaiting demobilization from the Non-Combatant Corps, and who also intended going to Tibet. We had been introduced through a missionary to whom I had sent some of my money the previous year. We had met a few times during his leaves, and had discussed travel arrangements together. We had decided to go to Tibet via India, through Kalimpong in north Bengal, the beginning of the trade route through Tibet to China. But while I was praying on one occasion the voice of God instructed me, 'You will go to Tibet via China.'

It did not make sense. I knew no one in China (I had at least corresponded with missionaries in India). There was little information, and few books, about the Sino-Tibetan border. There were no language books at all on the Kham dialect spoken by the tribes in that area of east Tibet, and it meant that Chinese would have to be learned first, in order to travel the 3,000 miles from Shanghai to the Tibetan border. There was nothing reasonable at all about it. But I had learned quite a bit about the necessity of obedience to God in the past year, and so I wrote to Geoff with my decision. Next morning, before my letter could reach him, I had a letter from Geoff informing me that he could not go to Tibet via India, as God had told him to go by China!

It was an intoxicating time of discovery of a personally interested God to set against the background of the exotic history of Tibet. To the uninitiated it was just an interesting and pleasant experience, but to the *aficionado* it was a performance of gloriously integrated skills. It was like being the soloist with an orchestra playing a cosmic concerto composed and conducted by God.

I Arrive at the Borders of Tibet

I booked my passage to China via Shanghai, in a travel agency in London. It was a misty late afternoon, with the streets beginning to fill with tardy shoppers and hurrying-home workers. Everything seemed startlingly clear – the passing anonymous faces, the bustling traffic, the lights switching on one by one in the darkening evening – and yet it all seemed so unreal. For the passage I had booked to take me to a strange land, and an even stranger destiny, was under threat of termination by a disinterested secular Government.

A few weeks later I received word from the travel agents that I was booked to sail on the *Stratheden* from Southampton. While making preparations to leave I wrote a letter to the Ministry of Labour and National Service, advising them that I had been allotted a passage to China, and would they please inform me of my position. I received the reply:

Dear Sir,

NATIONAL SERVICE ACTS

... Would you be good enough to inform the Ministry whenever the Shipping Company notify you of the exact date on which you will sail for China. The position regarding your liability to be called up for Military Service remains as stated in our letter of 21st August ...

I took this to mean that if I were not called up before the ship sailed I could go right ahead and leave the country. A possible explanation for this I heard from my father. He had written to the Home Secretary without my knowledge, informing him of my situation, and concluding:

... Having read the Prime Minister's speech at the recent General Assembly, in which he stressed the paramount spiritual need of the present time, I make this request for the gracious exercise of your personal intervention to secure his exemption to permit the furtherance of his calling. Confident of your consideration and sympathy, etc. ...

Geoff had obtained some addresses of Brethren missionaries and wrote to them regarding our imminent arrival in China, as we anticipated that God would solve all problems.

Whatever the explanation for the Government's delay, I heard no more and sailed from Southampton in the winter snowstorms of 1946, arriving

in Shanghai in early 1947. We were met by Brethren missionaries from the mission area in Kiangsi province, and they made the travel arrangements for the small Brethren group of China missionaries returning to the Kiangsi capital of Nanchang. It meant a wait in Shanghai until places could be found on the crowded riverboats plying the Yangtze River to the nearest river port to Nanchang, a small city called Kiukiang.

I found it a traumatic experience, which – again – almost destroyed my already weakened faith in historical Christianity. The Second World War had ended after six years, but China had been at war almost without ceasing since the revolution of 1911. The city of Shanghai was swollen with millions of starving, homeless refugees, many dying on the crowded open pavements, and being carried away for anonymous burial in rubbish trucks. The endemic corruption which permeated the ruling Nationalist Government of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had spread like a cancer throughout the country, and the Chinese people were wearily and passively disillusioned with all military, police and civilian officials. The currency had lost all credibility and stability, and was out of control; inflation was rampant, making it necessary to carry a suitcase of the almost valueless notes in order to buy the simplest daily necessities. With the army, police and officials not being paid by the authorities, law and order had broken down and it was almost impossible to travel without being exploited, robbed or killed.

Against this appalling background of a nation in terminal crisis the older foreign missionaries were returning to their mission stations – either closed or plundered by the defeated Japanese during the recent war – seeking to find their scattered converts. To me, it seemed pitiful that 200 years of intensive Christian (both Catholic and Protestant) missionary activity should have had such meagre returns; and tragic that no lessons were being learned from a devastating civil war with Communism which signalled the end of imperialism and all its trappings. The new Labour Government in Britain was in the process of dismantling the British Empire – India was in the final stages of being granted her independence – yet here were foreign missionaries seeking desperately to reconstruct their puny little islands of ecclesiastical colonialism in a nation convulsed by nationalistic revolution.

Worse still, they continued to impose their imperialistic ecclesiastical divisions on the country in a system of ‘mission comity’. This meant an agreement between all Christian denominations, by which each was apportioned a given territory to practise exclusively their own form of denominational emphasis. No Methodist could infringe on a Catholic area, no Baptist on an Anglican area, no Pentecostal on a Brethren area, and so on.

The significance of this absurd travesty of Christian evangelical

testimony was brought home to me personally when the senior Brethren missionaries calmly informed Geoff and me that, because of this comity arrangement, we could not travel westwards to Tibet and would have to take over a Brethren mission station in their approved territory of North Kiangsi. We did not agree. But all it needed for us to be sent home to Britain was for the senior missionaries to report us to the ecclesiastical comity representatives who, in turn, would report our intransigence to the Chinese Government – which would withdraw our visas, issued under our implied acceptance of their imperialist conditions.

Yet all around us the country was grinding to a chaotic halt. The Communist armies, under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung, had overrun the whole of north-west China and were approaching the River Yangtze, which split the country into north and south on its journey eastwards to the sea. They were also approaching the Chinese capital of Peking, which would give them official control of the whole country. Entire regiments of the Nationalist armies were defecting and going over to the Communists every few weeks. The Government of Chiang Kai-shek had moved from Peking, in the north, to Nanking in the south, and then Chungking in the west – and there was now talk of it moving out of China altogether to the island of Taiwan.

In such circumstances it was easier to contemplate returning to Britain under a cloud of ecclesiastical disgrace than pursuing an elusive vision of an individual relationship with God, and a mysterious rendezvous with Him, which meant defiance of civilian and denominational authorities. All I had was a command from God to go to Tibet, with no idea of what I was to do when I got there. As I looked around me I could not accept that the spiritually impoverished evidence of 200 years of imperialist and paternalist ‘church-building’ would be of much use in a country like Tibet. It was ludicrous to contemplate.

Then I heard of Watchman Nee; or, more correctly, I met his brother-in-law, Samuel Tsang. He told us of an indigenous Chinese Christian movement, based on New Testament principles, neither initiated nor influenced by Western paternalist practices, which had begun some twenty years before and was now spreading across China. It was very similar to the Brethren movement in its early stages in Britain, and had even benefited from the writings and teachings of leading Brethren.

The association with Watchman Nee’s ‘Little Flock’ – as the movement had been named by others – then, and later in other parts of China, saved me from spiritual suicide and gave a new impetus to my Christian vision. Here were Chinese of all classes, with the same Bible as I had, with similar beliefs except for minor variations, who were doing in a collapsing nation what the Apostle Paul and his colleagues had done in the first century in the

dying Roman Empire. They had no seminaries with structured dogmas, no ecclesiastical framework, no theologically decreed ministers or priests, no denominationally divisive buildings, no inherited liturgical shibboleths.

They had gifted spiritual leaders who were pastors and teachers, evangelists and missionaries to their own people; national leaders who were gifted by God and acknowledged as such by spiritually perceptive congregations of believers. They had dynamic centres of witness in households, neighbourhoods, universities and work-places; and a consuming desire to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the cities, towns and villages of China.* They pleaded with Geoff and me to join them.

But we were committed to going to Tibet, and the Little Flock leaders accepted our vision and offered to help us on our way. This offer swept aside the threat of the senior Brethren missionaries to have us sent home, for it could not be upheld when it was Chinese nationals who were inviting us to travel across China in association with them. It also relieved us of the organizational requirements of having our foreign cheques exchanged by the Brethren treasurers, because the Chinese businessmen with the Little Flock groups had commercial associations across the country, and in Hong Kong. They offered an arrangement whereby we had a regular and stable currency exchange in the places we visited as we travelled westwards, and we were no longer at the mercy of the vagaries of astronomical inflation.

A few months after arriving in China we met a missionary from the China Inland Mission, Pearl Kraft, whose children were at school in central China, and she invited us to live with her and her husband. She and George lived in a mission station in the border town of Tatsienlu, now known as Kangting.

I was thrilled when she told us this, for it brought to mind the many books on Tibet that I had read over the past two years, in which Tatsienlu had played such a prominent part in Sino-Tibetan politics. It lay over 2,000 miles from Shanghai, hundreds of miles by boat up the turbulent Yangtze River gorges to Chungking, the recent headquarters of the Nationalist Government; from there to the ancient capital of Chengtu in Szechuan by plane; by rickety and crowded bus to Ya-an at the foot of west China's mountains; and from Ya-an to Kangting on foot for several days over bandit-infested mountains.

This fantastic journey could not have begun more inauspiciously. Before leaving Kiangsi we had to report to the nearest British consular office, which was in Hankow, the last stop before the ship entered the fearsome Yangtze gorges stretch of the river. It had cost us ten million dollars in the deflated Chinese currency to pay for this stage of the trip. In

*See my book *The China Paradox: Christ Versus Marx* (Word Books (UK), 1990).

Hankow the British Vice-Consul, Murray MacLehose (now Lord MacLehose), presented us with a serious warning regarding the deteriorating conditions, and informed us that he had been advised to tell all British citizens to prepare to leave the country shortly. I asked him what he would do if he were us, with our kind of commitment – and he said, laconically, he supposed he would go ahead. Our paths crossed many times in the years that followed, as his career took him to the highest positions in the Foreign Office, and we often discussed what might have happened if a different decision had been made by either of us.

The busy commercial Yangtze River port of Chungking, rising steeply out of the rushing, swirling waters, had been transformed into a besieged military city. The victorious Nationalist army, which had triumphed against Japan, had retreated to Chungking in west China and had made it its headquarters in the civil war against the rising threat of the nation's Communists. The narrow streets and steep stairways of old Chungking were crowded with military vehicles and soldiers, cynical foreign diplomats and scoop-hungry journalists, clamouring merchants and harrassed officials. Nobody had time for two itinerant missionaries seeking permits to travel westwards to Tibet; nobody would agree to discuss it, let alone issue the appropriate documents or stamps. Finally, after we had spent days in an office with a military officer who claimed he was a relative of Chiang Kai-shek, he impatiently stamped a travel document permitting us to go to Kangting.

We managed to get seats on a transport plane flying goods in to Chengtu. Once there we found that our friend, Samuel Tsang, had arrived to set up a church, and he was working from a chemist's shop as a base. Geoff decided to stay on in Chengtu for a few months in order to improve his Chinese and help Samuel Tsang, but I wanted to push ahead to Kangting and start on the Tibetan language as soon as possible.

I travelled the hundred or so miles from Chengtu to Ya-an in an ancient bus that was crowded inside and out. The first day's stage from Ya-an was over twenty miles, and I had to have coolies to carry my luggage. I had been warned by missionaries that the coolies would stop several times a day in order to smoke opium, as this was the only way they could survive in their job of carrying heavy loads over the steep mountain trails.

The Nationalist Government had made it a capital offence to grow, peddle or smoke opium, but it was yet another sign of the corruption at official levels that it still continued on a large scale throughout the country, particularly in the remoter areas, such as Szechuan, Yunan and Sikang in west China, where even the soldiers, officers and officials smoked and traded in the drug. The Governor of Sikang province, the notorious warlord General Liu Wen-huic, had allowed the roads built from Burma,

and those into Kangting, to fall into disrepair to ensure his own isolation from central authority, and to continue with his nefarious activities – which included opium-trafficking.

The major ‘normal’ trade over the trails leading to Kangting was ‘brick tea’ (*bod-jah*) for Tibet, packed into long bales of eight bricks per bale, with each bale weighing some thirty pounds; each coolie carried loads of ten to seventeen bales of tea on a wooden frame that stretched high above his head. It was a heart-breaking, nerve-straining job, and with food even in normal times in short supply, the coolies boosted their failing strength with regular doses of opium in quick smokes at wayside inns or dens.

The second day out from Ya-an took in a stretch of forty miles, and at the end of the day I was glad to share a bug-ridden wooden bench in a filthy, cramped room with a coolie smoking opium in a round-bowled, long-stemmed pipe over a small lamp.

The fourth day ended in Luting, the place made famous during the Communist Long March from Kiangsi to Yenan. The army of Mao Tse-tung reached this spot to find the Nationalist army in place on the far side of the Luting Bridge – a swaying, thirteen-iron-link chain with a wooden platform, high above the raging river. The Nationalists got rid of the wooden slats on the bridge, but the Communist soldiers swung hand-over-hand on the single chains, picked off all the time by the deadly gunfire of the Nationalists on the far side. It had happened only some ten years before.

The final twenty miles into Kangting were through magnificent scenery all the way. The boulder-strewn trail wound beside a turbulent river, which sometimes swept majestically in a smooth curve along the mountain gorge, then was forced by the narrowing sides and rocks into spray-tossing fury.

In the early afternoon I turned a corner in the trail and there was the pagoda-shaped gateway of Kangting, the entrance to Tibet. There was snow on the ground, for not only was it winter but Kangting itself was about 9,000 feet above sea-level. Well-built streets led away from the curved-roof gateway into the town, solidly constructed two- and three-storey houses were evident everywhere, and the well-stocked shops were doing a thriving trade with colourfully dressed Tibetan traders.

I looked with keen interest at these people, about whom I had read so much, and immediately liked what I saw – tall, powerfully built men with bulky, sheepskin-lined gowns worn carelessly over one shoulder, embroidered knee-high boots, fur hats tilted rakishly on long plaited hair with ivory rings and scarlet wool or silk interwoven. The Tibetan women were gypsy-like in their laughing animation, wearing ankle-length gowns of sheepskin-lined coloured material covered with aprons of brilliant hues; their oiled black hair also braided with coloured silks and silver ornaments.

The town was located within the narrow confines of a steeply sloped valley, the rushing river dividing it into two separate sections of a few hundred yards on either side. Two strong wooden bridges linked the two sections. The mountains narrowed at the far, western side, leaving only enough room for the river and a single, winding trail snaking upwards to the distant, snow-covered pass into Tibet. Kangting lay in the narrow bowl of the towering peaks, topped by the snow-capped giants behind them.

The China Inland Mission compound was on the far side of the river, just beyond the Roman Catholic cathedral and compound. A half-dozen CIM missionaries lived there, but I was the personal guest of George and Pearl Kraft. They had lived in Kangting for ten years, studying the Tibetan language and working among the local Tibetans. Before that they had studied and worked with the Chinese. George was a tall, athletic individual with an impressive fluency in the Kham dialect of Tibet, and he found a good teacher for me. George reckoned from his own experience with both the Tibetan and Chinese languages that the former was twice as difficult to learn as the latter.

With George as my mentor I began putting in a steady twelve hours a day on language study, breaking off only to go with him on some of his preaching visits to the various caravanserais occupied by the Tibetan traders arriving from all over Tibet. There he would enter into good-natured competition with them in their 'games' of seeing who could pitch the heavy, skin-bound bales of brick tea highest up on the stacks; then, later, would sit down with them to drink the rancid, yak-butter tea and talk about their travels, their homes, their religion – and our Christianity.

This combination of intense, supervised study and practice steadily loosened up my first stammering use of the language, and I was soon able to hold my own in simple conversations. But George was a hard taskmaster, and soon he wanted me to preach a 'sermonette' in the CIM church. This was a frightening exercise in itself, but in addition we also had to go out in the street outside the church and persuade the promenading Tibetans to come inside and hear the message.

The nights in Kangting were always difficult and dangerous. It was only thirty years since the militant Khamba tribesmen had swept the Chinese from the area, threatening the territories of Szechuan further east, and the town had changed hands a few times since.

It was just twelve years since the popular Khamba chieftain, Topgyay Pangdatshang, and his scholarly brother, Rapga, had led the Kham revolt against Chamdo and Lhasa and had had to flee to India. The fearless, swaggering and roistering Khambas were now aware that the former bullying Chinese Nationalist officials were once again on the defensive, as their leaders planned to flee to Taiwan and were fearful of their jobs and

lives, and the tribesmen did as they liked in the inns, dens and brothels of the town. Every night the sounds of fighting and gunfire could be heard, and in the daytime there would be new reports of injuries and deaths.

It was reported that the two Pangdatshang brothers had returned secretly from their enforced exile in India, and were in residence in Kangting. It was also rumoured that there were 10,000 fighting Khamba supporters in and around Kangting who had come to meet them, and to discuss tactics in the light of the anticipated defeat of the Nationalists by the all-conquering Communists.

The night I was to preach my first ten-minute 'sermonette' I had been particularly successful in getting Tibetans to come in from the streets to the church. I had seen a large group of Khambas approaching with their distinctive swagger, led by a burly, impressive and well-dressed man. They looked like a group of wealthy traders and caravaneers out for a night on the town.

I politely asked the man in front, in my stumbling Tibetan, if he and his friends would like to come inside the church and listen to the 'Jesus doctrine' being preached. He looked at me with some surprise, but nodded his head in agreement and followed me into the church with his companions.

They sat through the hymns sung in Tibetan to Western church tunes, looking bored except for an occasional laugh; but no one in the group gave any sign of leaving as long as their boss sat still.

I had chosen as my subject the story of the Prodigal Son, and I launched myself into the almost-memorized sermonette. I noticed the grins of the Khambas, the normal sign of interest, amusement or puzzlement, and I acknowledged the friendly offer of a word or expression to help out when I got stuck. But overall I thought I had survived the ordeal fairly well.

It was only when I had finished, and was saying goodbye to the Khamba group, that the leader said he was very interested in the Prodigal Son's experiences. It must be a strange country and custom where a person could get drunk on tea, where a man wanted to leave his native place because he was forced to drink beer when he wanted to drink tea instead; and, when he got tired of drinking beer in a distant country, wanted to return home and drink tea. He grinned – and I realized that I had confused the Tibetan words for *jah*, 'tea', and *chang*, 'beer', in my sermonette, making a nonsense of the parable.

The Khamba trader laughed at my confusion, and asked how long I had been studying Tibetan. I told him only a few months. He said, generously, that I wasn't doing too badly, and then offered to teach me, if I visited him. He gave me an address where I could find him.

When he left, George Kraft came over and, after poking some more fun at my expense, asked if I knew who the well-dressed man was with whom I had been talking. I said I had no idea.

‘That,’ said George, ‘was Topgyay Pandatshang.’

It appeared that Topgyay Pandatshang was the Bonnie Prince Charlie of the Khambas, a passionately admired and idealized leader of all the Khamba tribes. The Kham and Amdo tribesmen stood in much the same relation to each other and to Lhasa as did the Scots and the Irish to one another and the Government in London some two centuries before. In Kham there were thirty-nine major tribes, and in Amdo twenty-five; and in almost 800 years, since Genghis Khan, they had usually been occupied in fighting each other, raiding each other’s property, territory or trading caravans – or in fighting the ever-intrusive Chinese.

Normally cheerful and friendly, frank and hospitable, they were prone to fight at the slightest challenge, courting death in the most reckless manner. This attitude arose partly from their natural courage, and partly from their belief in the efficacy of their religious charms, relics and observances.

They used rifles and revolvers in their battles, but preferred in-fighting with daggers or swords. They rode with superlative skill on their fast mountain ponies in waves of attacks on their enemies, disconcerting them with the shock of surprise, and then hacking their way through against incredible odds. They were excellent marksmen, brought up on regular practice from their earliest years, and their opening salvoes of rifle fire before riding out in ambush caused widespread death and panic.

Their leaders and chieftains were not like the weak, inbred, hereditary officials so common in central Tibet, but were men who emerged from the rank and file by nature of their courage, prowess and, above all, panache. They were proud, independent and very jealous of their tribal rights and privileges, ceding them to others only under the compulsion of defeat or the willingness of admiration. Topgyay Pandatshang had emerged as a charismatic leader of the Kham and Amdo tribes, and they looked to him to lead them to revolution and victory against both their own central and Chinese Governments.

Fifteen years before, the Chinese garrisons in Kangting had mutinied, and General Liu Wen-huie, the Chinese Governor of Sikang province, as the Kham region was designated by the Chinese authorities, put the insurrection down ruthlessly. A year later, in 1933, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama had died, and precipitated a struggle for power in the capital of Tibet, Lhasa, with repercussions reaching into the eastern provinces of Kham and Amdo.

Two Amdo tribal leaders, Geshi Sherab Gyaltso and Lobsang

Tsewang, organized a revolt among the Amdo tribes to gain more power from the faction-ridden Lhasa Government. In Kham, the two ambitious brothers, Rapga and Topgyay Pandatshang, of the greatest trading family in central Asia, organized a force of several thousand Khambas from among the various tribes and, in 1934, marched against the largest city in east Tibet, Chamdo, on their way to attack Lhasa. Rapga was the scholar and organizer, but Topgyay was the fighter and leader.

However, the monks of the Chamdo monastery chose to side with the Lhasa Government, and they betrayed the Khambas to the Lhasa authorities. They also informed General Liu Wen-huie, and the Khambas were caught in a pincer movement between the two forces and defeated. By a clever ruse the two brothers escaped the trap and, disguised in different ways, found their way to Hong Kong and India. With the imminent collapse of the Chinese Nationalist Government, they had recently returned to Kangting and their followers in Kham, and were said to be organizing another revolt against Lhasa and China.

This was the Topgyay Pandatshang whom I had invited in from the streets to hear me preach the Christian story of the Prodigal Son.

The Khamba Rebels

That meeting with the legendary Khamba chieftain was to change my life.

I took up his invitation to visit him, and in his home I met his wife and four children – and his equally famous brother, Rapga. Topgyay had been greatly intrigued by my attempts to preach the Christian religion in the Kham dialect, and he now took a personal interest in helping me to learn ‘properly’. In return, he requested, could I correct the English of those members of his family who spoke it?

Topgyay also found great amusement in helping my studies in Tibetan through the medium of highly dangerous political information. When he had visitors discussing plans for revolutionary action against Lhasa or China, he would make them go over what they had said to him, slowly, so that I could understand. Then he would ask me what I, as a Christian, would do in the circumstances. The Communists were atheists, he said, but he and I believed in religion and must withstand them, mustn’t we? His fellow-tribesmen looked only mildly puzzled at Topgyay’s actions, so they must have been accustomed to his puckish sense of humour. In any case, I was already finding out that among their many attractive qualities the Khambas had a Rabelaisian sense of humour.

One of the Kham chieftains who was a close friend of Topgyay’s was known as Kora Lama. As his name indicated, he either was a lama or had been – I was unable to find out because of the variety of different stories told by him or Topgyay to account for his name! He did not wear the normal ankle-length maroon robe of the Tibetan priesthood, with a saffron shirt; but a knee-length maroon gown, caught at the waist in a large pouch, with the gown pushed off the shoulder leaving the arm free to wield the sword easily, as was worn by all lay Khambas. He was a laughing, swaggering, roistering character, ever ready to party, race or fight; and he and his clan were among Topgyay’s greatest supporters.

I was with Topgyay one day, reclining on the raised dais of coloured carpets in his reception room and drinking hot yak butter tea, when Kora Lama entered the room in his usual breezy fashion and announced, ‘There is a foreign woman in town, and she is very beautiful, with a great body.’ This was indeed news, for the only foreign women in town at the time were the few missionaries, who could not be said to be beautiful, or to have great bodies.

Topgyay looked at me. ‘Do you know who she is? Is she from your country?’

I shook my head. 'I do not know of any new foreign people in the town.'

Topgyay clapped his hands and a servant appeared. It was Nyima Tsering, one of the captains in Topgyay's army, a deadly rifle marksman and noted hunter, but getting old now and retained more as a trusted personal servant than a soldier.

'Two foreigners, a man and a woman, have arrived in the town recently,' Topgyay said to him. 'Find out who they are, where they come from, and what is their business here at this time.'

Nyima Tsering put out his tongue and sucked in his breath noisily, in the Tibetan sign of respectful acknowledgement of an order, and withdrew backwards from the room.

Some time later he returned to say that they were *Fa-kuo* (Chinese for 'French'), and the man was a doctor who had been sent for by the Catholic hospital to operate on one of the nuns, who was very ill. The woman was his wife's sister who was visiting China, and she had come with him on the trip to Kangting just to see the country. They had been robbed between Chengtu and Kangting by bandits of all their possessions, except for the clothes they wore, and that was why the woman was dressed in a man's trousers, pullover and Tibetan boots.

'Is she good-looking?' Topgyay asked non-committally.

'She is surpassingly beautiful, and she has a good body,' Nyima Tsering replied unsmilingly.

Topgyay dismissed him with a smile and a nod, and looked knowingly at Kora Lama and then at me. Kora Lama lay back on his elbow on the dais, with a wicked smile. He looked from Topgyay to me, then said cryptically '*Eh-neh*. Well?'

Topgyay looked thoughtful. 'Is France a great power in the world?' he asked me after a little while.

I struggled with my limited vocabulary to explain where France stood in the sphere of international politics.

Topgyay broke into my tortuous explanation. 'Does France have ambassadors in China, like Britain and America?'

That I could answer. 'Yes,' I said. 'An ambassador in Nanking, and consuls in Peking and Chungking and other places. Why?'

Whatever thoughts he had he was keeping to himself, and instead of replying he and Kora Lama launched into a discussion on the varying conceptions of beauty among different people. For example, Westerners liked prominent noses and breasts; while Easterners liked flat noses and were not too interested in breasts.

A few days later I arranged a party at our home, and among others I invited Topgyay and Kora Lama. Without informing them I also invited

the French girl and her doctor brother-in-law, whom I had met. The brother-in-law developed an acute attack of dysentery and could not come on the night, but the French girl was delighted to come on her own to meet 'real Tibetans'. I told her that most of the foreign women coming had agreed to wear Tibetan dress at my suggestion, and if she was agreeable I could borrow an outfit for her too. She was happy to do so, and at the party I kept her away from the door while the guests were arriving. I wanted to get my own back on Topgyay and Kora Lama for all the pranks they had played on me.

When they arrived I took them round introducing them, and when we came to the French girl their faces were a study, which I openly enjoyed. They had obviously been planning something during their earlier conversation, but it had eluded me and I had now emerged a step ahead of them.

Topgyay's nephew, Rapga's son, spoke fluent English and he was with them and interpreted for them during the evening. I noted with growing suspicion that both Topgyay and Kora Lama were showing an unusual amount of interest in the French girl and guessed that they were up to something. They were the wildest spirits in a wild frontier, and she was openly captivated by their interest.

'You did not tell me that this gentleman is the leader of all the people in this country,' she said to me, starry-eyed, as I passed them on my way to the kitchen, 'and that this other gentleman has many men with guns to guard a caravan.'

I looked at Topgyay and Kora Lama, and they stared back at me with contrived innocence, but with unlimited mischief deep in their eyes.

'The young woman,' Topgyay said to me in Tibetan, 'said that she would like to see Tibet while she is here, and so I have offered her horses and soldiers if she wants to take a caravan into the mountains.'

I guessed where he was leading, so I replied smoothly that it was very kind of him but it was unlikely that she would be able to get away on her own with her brother-in-law sick.

The next day, however, Topgyay sent for me about mid-morning, and when I arrived at his home I found him and Kora Lama in great delight over something.

'We have decided that it is about time you had a woman,' Topgyay said emphatically to me. He and his friends had been fascinated to learn that I was still a virgin at nearly thirty years of age, and that I had been in Tibetan territory for almost a year without having had a woman of any kind. Did I not like oriental women, they asked? Or was I afraid of getting syphilis from them (a high-risk factor even among Tibetans)? Was I looking for high noses and prominent breasts?

'You will never have another opportunity like this to get a foreign

woman,' Topgyay went on. 'You tell me your religion permits you to marry a woman, yet you have refused my offer of a Tibetan woman of your choice. Now this French girl has come.'

I tried to interrupt, but he held up his hand.

'Wait! It is very easy to arrange. She is not married, I have discovered; she is twenty-one, her brother is ill and cannot travel, so I have arranged for her to go with my wife and me on a hunting trip into Kham, taking you with me as interpreter. After a day or two my wife will become ill, I will return to Kangting with her, but we will insist that you and the girl carry on. Kora Lama will go with us, and he will see to it that you have plenty of time together. Afterwards' – he grinned, and shrugged his shoulders expressively – 'you can marry.'

Kora Lama's eyes, slanting devilishly upwards from his great nose, gleamed with merriment. He obviously approved of the plan.

I grinned at the incorrigible pair of friends, as I knew something they did not. 'It was nicely planned,' I said with mock regret, 'but I am sorry to tell you that the French girl left this morning. They had a wireless message from the French Consulate late last night urging them to return to Chungking immediately as the Communists were approaching the city, and they left for Luting this morning.'

Topgyay looked at me closely and must have decided that I was telling the truth, for he clapped his hands impatiently. When Nyima Tsering appeared he shot out a string of orders, and the retainer sucked in his breath as they registered. He left the room quickly, and a few minutes later I could hear his voice shouting commands in the courtyard outside the window, and the clatter of men getting horses ready to depart.

Topgyay lay back on his carpeted dais and smiled. 'I have altered my arrangements,' he said. 'I have told Nyima Tsering to take what men are available and to cut across the mountains to head off the French girl's party before they reach Luting. They will then attack the girl's party as if they were the usual bandits, and the French girl and her relative will suspect nothing, for it happened to them on the way here. Only this time my men will take the French girl, and leave the relative, and she will be taken to a place in Kham which only you will know. He will hold her there, and I have told him that you will come for her after several days. You will be able to "rescue" her, for you are the only one who knows where she is. Even if you delay, the French Ambassador will wireless here, I will be asked officially to help, and I will say that you are the best person. You will be a hero, and she will have to marry you – even if it is only to save face!'

Nyima Tsering had seventeen men and horses ready to leave before I finally managed to persuade Topgyay that successful marriages were not made that way in the West, despite what films portrayed. He reluctantly

called off the plan, and the French girl never knew how close she had been to the adventure of her life.

My celibate state was a source of great interest and amusement to the Tibetans. They were openly promiscuous in their own relationships, whether local custom required polygamy or polyandry; and their women had far more freedom than Chinese women. So long as it was discreet, it seemed, any male or female Tibetan could indulge in any relationship. In the bitter cold climate of Tibet, all residents and travellers slept together in the one room, or tent, around the fire, which was kept going all night. Except for the wealthy, there were seldom beds of any kind, and the long gowns were simply ungirdled at night as coverings, with men and women sleeping side-by-side around the fire. But the monks, who were supposed to be celibate by religious decree, were notorious for their homosexuality and pederasty. All of this made my celibacy a regular topic of discussion.

It was a situation which gave me a great deal of thought. While in China one of the leading topics of discussion among indigenous Chinese Christians was how to apply Christian teachings regarding Biblical monogamy to a society where concubinage was legally recognized and widely practised. If a Chinese Christian put away his concubines, they had no protection and were forced to become prostitutes, an unacceptable 'Christian' witness. Now, here in Tibet, a different custom of sexual freedom was recognized, and my Christian celibacy was likely to be misunderstood as the homosexual bias of the monks.

My own conviction regarding celibacy was that it was the highest spiritual value in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. I accepted the Apostle Paul's evaluation that 'an unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs – how he can please the Lord; but a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world – how he can please his wife . . .' It had raised problems in my life at different times, but nothing compared to the problems – and temptations! – that were now being presented to me in Tibet. The shrewd Topgyay sensed this, I gathered, and exploited the circumstances whenever they arose with great gusto.

'You and I are very like each other,' he would say, 'although I am Tibetan and you are British, and you are Christian and I am Buddhist. I can see you like the things I like, and do the things I do. So I know you like beautiful women, and do not care for men or boys. If they also like you, what is wrong with enjoying each other?' That required a command of the language I did not have, and I was glad to retreat into a proclaimed inability to express myself adequately, in order to give myself time to reflect.

It was invaluable having the experienced George Kraft as a mentor. He had spent so much time among the Tibetans, and was obviously respected by them for his knowledge of their customs and language, that anything he

had to say had to be taken seriously. He sometimes found my radical spiritual ideas hard to take, but he was always understanding and sympathetic, and I valued his advice even as I gently mocked his orthodoxy. He could see the ending of missionary work in China as the Communists advanced; but he found it difficult to recognize, as I did, that indigenous Chinese Christians, such as Watchman Nee and Samuel Tsang, without the aid of foreign missionaries, were the future of China.

When Topgyay discovered that I had some medical knowledge he asked me to treat his own and his family's ailments, brushing aside my suggestions that he would get more expert treatment from the Chinese town doctors or the French Catholic nun doctor. He didn't want them for several reasons, he said, and he wanted me. Shortly afterwards there was a measles epidemic in the town, during which many children died. I was able to treat and keep alive all the children in the Pandatshang household – family and servants – and after this it was casually assumed that I could treat everything.

This increasing involvement with the Pandatshangs meant that I was with them almost every day, eating meals, meeting visitors, attending new patients. It also meant that my language progressed rapidly, as I was forced to use it constantly in a variety of situations. What I did not know some English-speaking member of the family would help out by explaining, and there was always the scholarly Rappa to explain the most difficult usages. He had read widely in Tibetan, as well as Chinese and English literature, mostly of a political nature, and he had translated the works of Dr Sun Yat Sen and Karl Marx. It was Rappa who guided me through the complexities of Tibet's national and regional politics, and its monastic and family conspiracies.

But it was Topgyay who was the charismatic leader of the Khambas. The tribesmen loved his reckless and swashbuckling ways. No challenge, whether political or personal, was too great for him to attempt. If he heard that an individual was an expert marksman with rifle or revolver, or rider of wild horses, or fast runner – messengers vied with each other in attempts to break standing records when delivering important letters – Topgyay would create an occasion to match them, occasionally taking part himself.

It was this attractive combination of whimsical humour and provocative recklessness which led him, when we went out on picnics over the 15,000-foot Jedo Pass into the grasslands of Kham, to involve me in the rifle-shooting and horse-riding competitions with his leading marksmen and riders. I had never shot a gun before, but he insisted that I must learn if I was to live and survive in Tibet. His own children learned to ride and shoot as soon as they could sit on a horse and carry a gun. I had ridden horses in Scotland, but here in Kham I had to learn to ride wild horses with

the world's best horsemen, descendants of Genghis Khan. The Khambas loved it, entering into Topgyay's ever more outrageous proposals for me with joyous abandon.

It was through my involvement in horse-racing that I obtained a Tibetan servant, in the feudal tradition of being bonded like a 'blood-brother' in my service. I had been visiting a village in a remote valley with my language teacher, and some kind of celebration was taking place. In the usual demonstration of Khamba hospitality we were invited to join in the festivities. At the end of the feasting a shout went up that it was time for the horse-racing, and there was a rush to get the horses.

I had no useful animal of my own, so I was content to watch the various races. I was greatly taken by a young rider, in his teens, who was riding a small black pony that was dwarfed by the larger horses and older riders. But when it came to the race he flashed past the others in a display of reckless riding that had the crowd yelling their heads off. He was a relative of my teacher, I learned, when I spoke admiringly of his riding abilities, whose father and mother were dead, and he was one of the finest riders in Kham. My teacher was his foster-father, and the young rider's name was Lobsang Sherab, or 'Loshay' for short.

Perhaps because of my expressed interest, my language teacher asked if I would take him on as a servant, in Tibetan fashion, which meant providing no wages, but food, clothing and an occasional gift. In return, Loshay would look after me in every way, and all my goods would be like his own, and my person like his own person. When the time came when he was no longer required by me, I would return Loshay to his family.

When Topgyay later saw Loshay with me he asked me who he was, and how I had acquired him. After I had explained, Topgyay called him over to enquire about his background. Topgyay was amused to learn that Loshay, young as he was, had already travelled to Lhasa. He told Loshay that he was to learn how to be a good servant from Topgyay's own servants, and to look after me as he would his own brother.

I learned to use rifle and revolver, shooting at still targets and at moving wild game. I learned to ride without hands, swinging left and right on a madly galloping horse while dipping earthwards to pick up stones on the ground, using my knees only to grip the horse. I learned to ride up and down steep, narrow trails in mountain races, where nerve as well as skill was necessary to stay alive, as the mad Khamba riders drove their horses past each other on precipitous ledges above sheer drops of thousands of feet. I learned Tibetan phrases beside camp fires, and then used them in my church-preaching, to George Kraft's horror – discovering too late that the Khambas had, with diabolical intent, taught me their choicest oaths in place of intensives.

I loved it all: the uninhibited teasing and generous friendship of the Khambas, the physical challenge and intoxicating enjoyment of the mountains and valleys, the customs, the spiritual mysteries of their arcane religious practices, the tantalizing excitement of their political conspiracies. I felt I was not only being led forward by the people, like an explorer into an unknown and fascinating country, but was also being led by my God into a unique experience. For I was always conscious that it was God who had brought me here, and that somewhere ahead I had a momentous rendezvous with Him. Meanwhile, I was having to adjust considerably my Western preconceptions in the light of new and challenging circumstances.

Every few months George Kraft and I would take a small caravan into the mountains of Kham beyond Kangting to preach to, and medically treat, the sick Khambas. We would arrive at remote villages in the mountains, or grasslands, and tell the curious villagers what we were there for; they would bring out their sick and I would treat them, while George chatted about their problems. Then, when all had been treated, we would sit around the fire, inside or outside the houses or nomad tents, and we would tell them about Christianity and answer their questions.

Seen from a distance both villages and nomad encampments were like scenes from a medieval landscape – the stone-walled houses with their flat roofs and parapets, and the cluster of sprawling, black or white, yak's-wool tents; the grazing animals and barking dogs; the magnificent setting of green grassland and forest, blue skies and snow-white mountains, transported us into the past. The sense of unreality disappeared on entering the villages and encampments, and on meeting the people.

A high stone-and-mud-built wall surrounded each house, forming a courtyard holding stacks of wood, drying dung and tethered animals. The whole of the ground floor of each house was used as a stable for animals – yaks, horses, goats and pigs – with the hens and dogs having the run of the house. Upstairs the families ate, slept and did everything else in one large room taking up the whole of the first floor; except for one or two small rooms, more like cupboards, holding multifarious odds and ends. In the centre of the main room there was always a large open fire-pit of spent ash and a constantly burning wood or yak-dung fire, surrounded by a flat, narrow, raised ledge for the ubiquitous bowls of tea. There was always a pall of smoke in the room, as the single hole in the roof was kept small to keep out the bitter cold.

In these dark, and always welcoming, rooms and tents I treated the sick Tibetans, who would have died excruciatingly painful deaths otherwise, for their own lamas could only give them medicines superstitiously made from their own urine and faeces.

In a nomad tent I found a woman in a horrifying condition, lying on a

stinking pile of yak's skins. Her lower abdomen, rectum, the inside of her legs, and genitalia were a mass of running, suppurating pus. She had just given birth to a child in this state, who, with a three-inch length of umbilical cord still tied with a dirty piece of rag, was covered from head to foot with the same suppurating sores. It was syphilis, of course, and the woman's two husbands – neither of whom knew who was the father of the child – were also suffering from an advanced state of the same disease.

As I sought to clean up the mess I retched time and again, and eventually had to rush outside to vomit. The woman was in agony, lying on her lice-ridden, blood-and-pus-soaked gown, groaning in pain, her head thrashing from side to side, yet murmuring her gratitude in gasps of '*ka-tru, ka-tru, thank you*'.

She managed to sleep that night for the first time since giving birth to the baby, and four days later was able to sit on a yak as they left for their village in the mountains.

She was luckier than another patient who was brought to me. She was a young girl, escorted by several burly Tibetan relatives, whose face was covered with a dirty rag. When they laid the girl on the floor I removed the blood-stained rag and saw that she was only a child of about nine or ten years of age, and her face was a bloody mess.

At first I thought she had been shot, or kicked by a mule – common enough accidents – and then, out of the din of clamouring voices, I made out that she had been mauled by a mad dog. I had no further time for talk then, as I went to work on her torn face; but, after I had patched it up as best I could and had given her a sedative to put her to sleep for some time, I discussed the matter with those who had brought her. The dog which had savaged her was not just a sudden attacker, but had been around for some time and had savaged others. When I asked in amazement why none of the men – all conspicuously armed with guns and swords – had killed the mad animal, they told me that the local lamas had said it was wrong to kill and that no one had dared to disobey.

The next day we visited the monastery and tackled the lamas. They had also stopped the local villagers from using DDT, which I had provided to limit the devastating effects of an outbreak of lice-borne relapsing fever. It was forbidden to kill lice as well as mad dogs.

George pointed out that, at that very moment as we talked, in the kitchens of the monastery the lamas were cooking huge slabs of meat for their meals. A great deal of voluble casuistry was used to get out of that charge, describing how the butchers were in a low position on the Wheel of Life and the merit they obtained by slaying the animals for the use of the lamas was accredited in their favour. Butchers, mad dogs and lice all had souls and were on the upward path to enlightenment, they argued. I said that

in that case they would not be asking me for medicine for stomach pains, because my medicine killed the worms which caused their condition.

Later, they showed us round the monastery. In the main hall there were huge floor-to-ceiling golden idols of Buddha and his eight disciples. The walls were painted in brilliant colours, portraying mythical and historical events in the lives of Buddha and others. Behind glass-fronted cases were row upon row of yellow, silk-covered Buddhist Scriptures, in front of which burned hundreds of butter lamps and food offerings.

We passed out of the main hall into a smaller, darker annexe. Here all the idols were either black or blue-faced deities, the scrolls on the walls filled with Dante-like representations of hell in the squirming, tortured bodies at the hands of leering demons. The smell of incense hung heavily and sickeningly in the room, the far-off beat of a drum and sonorous clang of a gong, and the clatter of struck cymbals, stirring the already quickened pulses into coiling fear. There was too much of something here that upset the Western-educated equilibrium and clamoured with silent menace for recognition and submission. The externals were beautiful, but they covered something that fantastically dilated the eyes, shortened the breathing, and flickered the nostrils in unease.

Outside, distant thunder growled and the late afternoon sun slanted up the valley, tracing the lovely pattern of light and shade on the surrounding forested mountains, and the air was heavy with the promise of rain. But it was a natural heaviness, and would cleanse, and afterwards the sun would shine again and everything would live.

We had a last call to make at a house in the village. As we climbed to the first-floor living quarters we could hear the sound of regular chanting by droning voices. When we entered the room we were back with the Dante-like representations we had just seen on the monastery scrolls.

Around the walls of the room were squatting about a dozen old women, and one old man, chanting some incantation, then dropping into the recognizable, monotone *Om Mani Padme Hum* magic prayer-formula of the Tibetans, accompanied by the unceasing, mechanical telling of their 108-bead rosaries. Although their eyes were open they gazed unseeingly in front of them, and paid no attention to George and me as we sat down on the floor beside them to wait for them to stop.

They had put themselves into a trance with their incantations, a common practice, and although their bodies moved rhythmically sideways, like pendulums, to their chant, they were not conscious of anything happening in the room. The room itself was already in the half-darkness of late afternoon, and the last rays of the dying red sunlight highlighted the wrinkled faces and shrouded figures. The atmosphere was oppressive, with the immanence of something evil clamouring for admission, much as we

had experienced in the hell-like annexe of the monastery.

I glanced at George and saw that his eyes were closed and his lips moving in prayer; but whether it was silent or audible, it was impossible to tell in the incessant din of that confined space. I joined him in prayer, finding it difficult in the atmosphere of massed demonic antagonism being generated. The voices rose and beat against our ear-drums in a maddening, increasing tempo. 'Greater is He that is in you than he that is in them,' the words of Jesus leapt into my mind.

I was now praying aloud in opposition to the spirit forces arrayed against us, and suddenly there was a break in the incantations around us. George immediately went forward on to one knee in the centre of the floor.

'You are praying to your gods, aren't you?' he asked. Then, without waiting for a reply from the slowly recovering Tibetans, he went on, 'So are we, but our God' and he was away on a description of the difference between the destructive powers of their gods and the saving power of the true God. It seemed incredible that the room, which only a few minutes before had been like some antechamber of hell, should now be gripped by the Spirit of God, yet it was so.

George finished, and automatically the old man began again – '*Om Mani Padme Hum*' – but his voice faltered and died away into silence. The women got up and began bustling about, making and pouring tea while I attended to their various ailments.

George almost lost his life on our way back from the trip. He had developed a very bad case of flu which, at 14,000 feet, rapidly increased to pneumonia. I told the muleteers to drive hard for Kangting in order to get him down to 10,000 feet and proper treatment.

We were descending out of the cotton-wool clouds wreathing a pass, and were crossing a green stretch, when George's horse suddenly floundered. With a wild shout he hurled himself sideways and backwards from the saddle on to solid ground. But even in that short space of time the horse was already up to its belly in the soft, sucking mud of a hidden quagmire. The muleteers quickly grabbed its ears and tail and hauled it to safety. We made it to Kangting, and George recovered, while I caught up on what had been happening in our absence.

From my various experiences, and with my increasing facility in the language, I was beginning to obtain an intimate understanding of the complex issues and interacting events and circumstances involved in the destiny of Tibet. Behind Topgyay's extroverted dynamism, and Rapga's introverted scheming, there were shrewd and calculating minds with a sensitive understanding of their people. In addition to a close involvement in the lives of all Khambas, they were aware of the weaknesses of a distant and feudal central Government in Lhasa; they were also aware of a

degenerating Chinese Nationalist Government in Chungking; and, finally, of a ruthlessly ambitious Communist Government-in-waiting moving inexorably on to Peking.

Topgyay and Rappa knew that they were now balanced precariously on a political razor's edge in Kangting. They were on the limits of Tibet's eastern border, and their older brother, Yangpel – who had inherited the great trading house of Pandatshang from their father, who in turn had been given favours by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama – was in Lhasa, the capital.

Rappa, as second brother, had since his exile once again become embroiled in national politics while living in India, forming a 'Democratic Reform Party' with the former favourite of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Kumpul, until the British-Indian authorities expelled him because of his outspoken demands for the independence of Tibet – but including the overthrow of the existing feudal Government in Lhasa. He had gone from India to Nanking in China, and there tried without success to negotiate Tibetan independence with the Nationalists. While there, however, a Tibetan trade delegation arrived – in which his older brother, Yangpel, was a member – led by a Tibetan called Shakabpa, and Rappa persuaded them against any collusion with the Nationalists. For this, Rappa had had to leave Nanking, and had come to Kangting to join up with Topgyay.

Topgyay was the youngest brother, but the one recognized as 'Pandatshang' – the family representative – by all the Khambas. By skilful negotiation he had been able to return to east Tibet after his abortive revolt, and even have Chiang Kai-shek offer him the courtesy title of 'Colonel', responsible for mobilizing the Khambas to fight against Japan. It had never happened, of course, but Topgyay had used his official designation and official respectability to build up huge supplies of arms. These he had obtained either directly from official Nationalist sources, or unofficially from the massively deserting Nationalist regiments in west China. With time, he had built up a powerful base in Kham, which was now a threat to the infamous warlord Governor of Sikang, Liu Wen-huie, who was unable to do much about it because he himself was deeply involved in selling his opium stocks for vast personal profit, and was seeking to buy himself out of his difficulties with both Nationalists and Communists.

In this explosive situation both Chinese merchants in Kangting, and the Tibetan traders arriving from India and Lhasa, wanted Topgyay to step in and take control of the Sikang province from General Liu Wen-huie. The Khambas were confident that they could defeat the demoralized, unpaid and ragtag soldiers of the discredited governor. But Topgyay and Rappa were also closely following events further afield in Chungking, Yenan, Lhasa and the West.

Rapga pointed out that only a year or two before, in 1947, there had been an attempt to replace the Government in Lhasa. The regent, Reting Hutukhtu, had retired for a period of meditation to his monastery and left the running of the country to another priest-official, Takta Rimpoche. When Reting had completed his period of religious contemplation, and had wanted to return to his position again, Takta had schemed to have him arrested and killed. The monks of Sera monastery, who were in favour of Reting, revolted against this plot, bringing the whole of Lhasa into a state of fear and panic, because no one trusted the remaining officials and army. The Government had bombed Sera monastery, and meanwhile the former regent, Reting, was put to death on the orders of the usurper, Takta. Most of the Sera monks had fled to China.

But Topgyay and Rapga continued their discussions with Kham and Amdo leaders regarding setting up an 'East Tibetan Government' in Chamdo, the possible capital and administrative centre. They would open up a new trade route, to replace the present six-month Kangting–Kalimpong journey, by going straight from Chamdo and Batang through Markham to Zayul and Sadiya on the Assam–Tibetan border in the south. This would have the two-fold effect of neutralizing and impoverishing Lhasa, leaving it to exist as a religious centre.

It was Rapga who pointed out the feeble intransigence and refusal to cooperate that they could expect from the Lhasa Government. After the Burma road had been cut off by the Japanese in 1943, the Chinese Government had planned to build a Chinese–Indian highway through Tibet. However, neither Britain nor Lhasa favoured such a proposal, and after extended discussions the Lhasa authorities had decreed, 'It conflicts with the Buddhist belief of the country to permit a work of such a kind.' When the Americans tried to get permission to build the road in 1943 they were also refused.

Rapga went on to tell them how the Indian Government at the Asiatic Conference in New Delhi in 1947 had displayed a huge map of Asia, in which Tibet was shown *outside* the boundaries of China. And in 1948, when the members of a diplomatic mission had been invited to see a film entitled *Kashmir*, Tibet was again shown outside the boundaries of China. On both occasions China had protested, but India had ignored the protests.

Rapga reckoned that they had one last chance before the Communists came to power in China. When that happened the new Communist leaders would see to it that a feudal Tibet and a tribal Kham would not survive.

However, while the Kham and Amdo leaders were still deliberating, news arrived that, on 8 July 1949, the *Kashag* – the Tibetan Cabinet – in Lhasa had decided to get rid of all Chinese officials in Lhasa, including

those working in the radio station and hospital and the teachers of the Chinese primary schools in Lhasa and Gyantse. The Lhasa Government also took over the Chinese radio station and sealed all its equipment. They forbade any Chinese to send telegraphic messages, even through the Indian wireless service. By 20 July all Chinese officials had left the country.

This was shattering news to the Kham and Amdo leaders, for it was a move they had not anticipated and they thought that the Indian, British or American authorities must have inspired it. If this were true, then it placed their planned revolt in a quite different perspective; for, instead of being an internal affair against weak and divided reactionary factions, they might find themselves confronting a powerfully supported Lhasa Government. They were not alone in this belief, for a leading Chinese general, Yen Hsi-shan, issued a statement in which he implied that the drastic measure was probably not taken by the Lhasa authorities of their own volition.

At the same time, in Kangting, General Liu Wen-huie was reported to be planning an attempt to annex Szechuan province from the Nationalists ahead of the Communists' arrival; and to hand it over to them when they did arrive as a peace-offering on his behalf. To do this meant withdrawing the bulk of his troops from Sikang – and leaving it to the Pandatshangs. The remainder of his troops, together with the armed police, now unpaid, took to looting and raiding the towns and villages of Sikang to the east of Kangting.

In the midst of plots, rumours and riots Topgyay calmly announced a party to be held at some hot springs just outside Kangting, at a place known as Erh Dao Chao. It was to be a weekend affair, and he took over the springs and all the buildings to house his guests.

Geoff and I were invited, together with all the top Tibetan officials and traders and Chinese merchants, and we saddled up our horses and joined the gaily outfitted company winding its way through the valleys to the village to the north-west.

After we had settled into our rooms, and had been served with tea and sweetmeats, a rifle-shooting competition was announced and everybody streamed to a spot where a target area had been cleared on both sides of a rapidly flowing river. The contestants stood in a clearing on the village side of the river and shot across to targets erected on the far side, where Topgyay's soldiers waited behind huge boulders to check the scores.

Topgyay led off with his three bullets, the number to be allotted to each person, and when the echoes of his shooting died away, his soldiers signalled a score of forty-one out of a possible sixty. The next person to shoot, a minor Chinese official, scored a zero.

Whether it was the angle that was difficult, or the strong wind coming up the narrow valley and off the river that was hard to gauge, no one

seemed to know; but Tibetan after Tibetan, many of whom had reputations as crack marksmen, registered a zero. Jigme, Topgyay's eldest son, who at thirteen years of age had defeated the best of the Chinese, American, British and Canadian soldiers who had visited the area in the past, now scored only a paltry four. Rapga, who in his younger days had amused himself by shooting eggs out of the hands of servants, scored a zero. Kora Lama, with casual *élan*, scored thirty.

Then Topgyay turned and offered Geoff and me a choice of guns to shoot next. Geoff followed the others with a zero, and the Tibetans waited with interest to see how I would fare, for they knew how Topgyay had been encouraging me in a variety of situations. I chose a Remington rifle, tested it for weight and balance as I had been taught by Nyima Tsering, and gauged the angle from sight to target and the force of the wind. Then, sighting carefully, I fired my three bullets. The signallers came out, took down the target, and waved three red flags and four white – thirty-four. I was second to Topgyay, and that was how the contest finished.

When we returned to the hot springs a gargantuan feast had been prepared, for which a number of yaks and pigs had been slain. By the time the main dishes, and then a multitude of subsidiary dishes, had been consumed, very few were able to give of their best in the Tibetan singing and dancing that followed. Everyone, whether they had a melodious voice or not, had to sing a song from his or her own country, or part of the country, and this included Geoff and me. Naturally, I sang the Scots' national anthem, 'Scots wha' hae', to the amusement of the Tibetans and the total bemusement of those who thought they knew the English language.

The rest of the time was spent in playing mah-jong and in other forms of gambling. In between there was feasting, and soaking in the hot sulphur springs, and groups of individuals gathered in corners to discuss the local and national situation.

On our return to Kangting two young Chinese evangelists had arrived. Geoff and I had met them on our way through Chengtu in 1947, and – to the surprise of everyone, Chinese, Tibetans and Christian missionaries – John Ting had come on to Kangting to conduct evangelistic services in the China Inland Mission church with great success. This was a return visit with his Sino-Tibetan colleague, Wang Ming De, and the evangelistic services were even more successful in numbers of converts than before. It was unheard of in a hundred years of missionary activity in Kangting.

By mid-1949 the political situation in Kangting was so serious that the people pleaded with the Pandatshangs to take over control of the town and province in the interests of law and order.

Topgyay and Rapga were too astute to make such an open commit-

ment, but they agreed to be responsible to some extent, if the Chinese merchants would agree to pay the police. This new danger worried General Liu Wen-huie, and he dispatched a colonel and a detachment of troops from Szechuan to Kangting to head off the anticipated Pandatshang takeover, and if possible to arrest the Pandatshang brothers.

Suddenly, without prior warning, the Communist authorities announced in a radio broadcast from Peking that they had reached an agreement with 'the four leaders of the East Tibetan Revolutionary Group', and that Kham and Amdo were now incorporated in 'the East Tibetan Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China'.

In his victory proclamation of 1 October 1949, the Chinese Communist Chairman, Mao Tse-tung, made no direct reference to Tibet. He declared that 'the war of the people's liberation' had been 'fundamentally won'; and that 'the reactionary rule of the Nationalist Government had been overthrown'. But although he did not mention Tibet specifically, Mao declared that the Chinese People's Republic 'would wage the war of liberation to the very end . . . and liberate all the territory of China'.

All the foreign missionaries, Catholic and Protestant, were leaving Kangting. The visits of interested and interesting Westerners ceased: André Migot, the French explorer, had come, gone into Kham, been robbed, borrowed some clothes from me, and departed; Leonard Clark, the ubiquitous American OSS agent, had turned up, and then vanished; Doak Barnett, the American scholar and writer on China, had long gone.

Topgyay asked what Geoff and I intended doing. He then went on to suggest that, if we wanted to remain in the area, we would have to anticipate leaving Kangting and travelling with him and his family and followers further into Kham, where they could gain more time or, if necessary, make a more successful stand. He, personally, would like us to go with him, for various reasons, not the least of which was my useful medical knowledge if there should be any fighting. I agreed that we would like to go, but said that before we left I wanted to risk another trip to Chengtu in Szechuan for medical and other supplies.

We had received word from Samuel Tsang that he had cheques deposited with him for our use to the value of 25,000 million Chinese *yuan*, and we could have goods for this amount if we could come and fetch them. Fortunately, right at that time I was called in to treat an influential Chinese official, an aide to General Liu Wen-huie, and when I had successfully stitched up his gaping head wound he asked what he could do to help in return. I told him about our need for supplies from Chengtu, and he arranged for us to have an armed escort to take us there and back.

At the time Kangting, and the rest of Sikang province all the way to the Szechuan border, seethed with revolt. It was estimated that thousands of

bandits, deserters from the Nationalist armies and police, were marauding between Kangting and Chengtu. Kangting itself was bereft of supplies, prices of food had soared astronomically, all banks and most shops were closed, and it was only a matter of time before the Communists – or the Tibetans – took over.

I thought battle was joined one night soon after we had returned safely with our supplies from Chengtu. There was a sound of gunfire, and shortly afterwards a rush of footsteps and a battering on the door of our house. It was two of the Pandatshangs' men, and they urged me to come quickly as one of their friends had been shot and seriously injured.

When I got to the caravanserai I found a powerfully built Khamba with half his face shot away. It transpired that he had not been in a battle but had been cleaning his automatic revolver, without first checking to see if it was loaded. He had accidentally pulled the trigger and put three bullets through his skull, removing his nose and one eye. When I examined him to see if the bullet was still inside, his friends pointed to the ceiling, where a large hole showed where it had gone. I had to improvise building a new nose from the remaining shreds of skin, pulling them over a piece of rubber tubing, and cleaning up the gaping wounds in eye and head. We left him alive and grateful, if not comfortable, after five hours.

Geoff and I prepared our own caravan for departure. We had accumulated fifty loads of goods, including seven boxes of medical supplies, each weighing seventy pounds. We had copies of the Tibetan Bible, silk and brocades, and brick tea for trading. All of these were being sent ahead with the Pandatshang caravans and muleteers to their home in Bo-mi in Markham district, south of Batang, deep inside Tibet. We were to follow later with the Pandatshang family and our smaller personal caravan when the time was right. Topgyay had kept only seventy hand-picked Khambas to remain with him, but he was supremely confident that he could handle any situation that might arise until reinforcements were needed.

It was a dangerous game to play in the circumstances, but one which reflected Topgyay's reckless character. The decision to move was made suddenly, as expected. News was received from Lhasa that an American, Lowell Thomas, had arrived in Lhasa with official offers of help for the Tibetan Government from the United States. At the same time, news came from Chengtu that it was a Colonel Fu – the man who had led the Chinese army against the Pandatshangs fifteen years before – who had been ordered to go to Kangting with orders to arrest or kill the Pandatshangs if they showed signs of leaving the town.

Even at that, Topgyay could not resist a flamboyant gesture. When Fu arrived in Kangting, Topgyay invited him to a feast at his almost denuded home. During the feast Topgyay blandly informed Fu that he intended

leaving Kangting the next day. It was a masterpiece of timing, for Fu had not had time to get his forces together on a scale necessary to take on the Pandatshangs, and he dared not challenge the wily and powerful brothers and the Khambas without a carefully prepared plan.

Kangting was tense with expectation from dawn the next morning, as all over town people debated whether Fu would risk a confrontation. He had several hundred troops to Topgyay's seventy Khambas, but he also had a bitter memory of a time when a thousand of his best troops – not disaffected irregulars such as he now had – had been defeated by Topgyay's ninety-eight Khambas.

The area around the Pandatshangs' home was packed with Chinese and Tibetan onlookers when Geoff and I arrived for the departure in late morning. For once no one paid any attention to us. We were wearing woollen Tibetan gowns, which were more comfortable than Western clothing on the trail, and we had to lead our horses with great difficulty through the packed crowds.

If any fighting was to be attempted it would have to be done outside the town, for no one could move to advantage in this crush. Every eye was fixed on the doorway for Topgyay's appearance. Servants came out first, leading the children: Jigme, the eldest son at sixteen; Abu Chungwa, the youngest at seven; Amo Chewa and Amo Chungma, the daughters of six and three.

Each member of the family, as they appeared, was draped around the neck with a ceremonial white muslin scarf, the customary greeting of the Tibetans; and as Rapga came through the door he was almost buried under the mass of people presenting him with scarves. Finally, Topgyay appeared and there was a loud murmur from the crowd – the nearest the orientals got to a cheer – and he disappeared from sight, hidden by people and a mountain of scarves.

His Khamba escort cleared a way through the crowds to his famous pacing mule and, with a wave of his hand, Topgyay signalled the riders to move off. It was a miracle that no one was trampled on, for the narrow street was jammed from side to side down its whole length, and the horses and mules were keyed up with the excitement.

All the servants and muleteers as well as the Khamba escort were armed, and the red, green and yellow 'prayer-flags' fluttered from the barrels of their rifles, giving a brilliant flash of colour to the riders as they wove their way through the drably dressed townspeople. Stirrups and silver god-boxes (intricately designed and worked metal containers, holding prayers and/or relics of specially empowered monks or oracles) glinted in the winter sun; claret-coloured brocades of robes and orange silk shirts, heavy yak-skins on powerful shoulders topped by braided hair or rakish hats, loomed

up and passed; and still the caravan of riders moved unendingly through the crowds.

There were hundreds of riders, like bobbing coloured corks in a dark sea of people, as we left the town. We were well up in front just behind Topgyay, and were in constant danger of being unseated as he swung his arm, scattering silver Chinese dollars among the beggars, who dived beneath the horses' bellies in their mad scramble to get at the money. All along the way Topgyay received white scarves – silk ones from the officials and the wealthy, muslin ones from the poor – and occasionally he would lean forward and drape them back over the people who had given them, in reciprocal greeting.

Then, near the western gate leading out of the town, a figure emerged from among a large detachment of soldiers – it was Colonel Fu. A ripple of excitement ran through the crowd, stifling into an electric tension as the two men met, Fu on foot and Topgyay on his mule. Fu smiled and said something, then called an officer to come forward. The man had a scarf in his hand and Topgyay swung from his saddle easily as he dismounted to receive it.

There was a rising murmur of conversation among the crowd when they saw that the crisis was past, and Fu and Topgyay walked ahead of the bunched riders to the airfield just outside the town. Here, after a great deal of bowing and smiling, while the rest of the caravan milled around watching with interest, they parted and Topgyay led the way from Kangting.

The winding trail to the 15,000-foot Jedo Pass was a twisting thread on which were strung the black beads of the yaks and the coloured beads of the riders, several hundred animals in all. Less than half of them would be going the whole way; the others were only a courtesy party to see Topgyay off, as was the custom.

Away to the south a snow-covered mountain range, topped by the serene 25,000-foot Minya Konka, reared majestically towards an incredibly blue sky. In some of the depressions the bluish surface of glaciers stood out against the pure white of drifted snow. Underfoot snow and ice lay in the shade, crackling beneath the horses' hooves, although the sun beat down warmly on our shoulders. Huge boulders filled a river on our left and turned it into a foaming fury. The lower slopes of the mountains all around were heavily forested with a variety of deciduous and coniferous trees, with here and there a splash of colour from some wild flowers.

Four hours after leaving Kangting we reached the hamlet of Jedo, just under the lip of the snow-covered pass. This was a regular stop after leaving Kangting, as it gave the muleteers the opportunity to redistribute any awkward loads before the long journey ahead. It was also popular because

of its hot sulphur springs, where the water was warm enough in the open pools to make bathing pleasant even in Arctic temperatures. It was an unforgettable experience to lie back immersed to the neck in steaming water with an uninterrupted view of snow and ice-covered mountains reaching from one's toes to the distant horizon.

Chinese Moves in Tibet

We had all brought large tents of various descriptions with us, as this was customary when travelling in Tibet, but there was no suitable camping area for such a large company of people at Jedo, so it was left to some to find what accommodation they could in the limited number of houses in the village.

We lodged with the Pandatshang family in the largest house. It was only a rough structure of crude wooden planks nailed on to an uneasy framework of posts, and the rooms were divided from each other by flimsy wooden partitions. Each room contained two bunks, four wooden planks on two trestles. The kitchen was immediately underneath our room, and volumes of smoke from the open fire passed through the wide cracks in the floor and kept me awake, listening to the barking of the dogs outside, long after the Tibetans had quietened into sleep.

The next morning was ice-hard. The muleteers had been up before dawn, getting the cumbersome yaks loaded and on their way before the main party was up and about. There was great bustle and confusion and good-natured joking as saddles were slapped on frisky animals in the early morning cold.

When everybody was up and gathered around the fire, the previous night's festivities continued, as the friends from Kangting who had come to escort the Pandatshangs paid their final respects in food and drink and gifts. This was a time for the observance of friendship and custom, and not for the whispered conspiracies of the past weeks and months.

When we had eaten, and everyone was lounging easily around the outside fires and milling horses, there was a stir of interest as a peculiar figure was seen stumbling down the trail into the village. It was an old man, dressed in a monk's filthy maroon gown caught carelessly at the waist with a piece of old rope. He wandered among the fires and groups, gazing at everyone with unseeing eyes, his mumbled words falling from slobbering lips.

The Tibetans stared at him in awe, for, they whispered to me, this was a formerly famous lama, a *chod-gye*, or oracle, and he was still held in reverence and fear although he was now obviously mad. He sat down beside a fire, and those who were seated stood up in respect. Topgyay ordered food to be given to him. The old man looked at it blankly, and then, muttering all the while, picked up a handful of rice and let it dribble between his fingers to the ground without attempting to eat it.

Some of those watching said, 'Look, he is feeding the gods we cannot see'; while others stretched out their hands to receive the dribbles of rice. The old man only smiled his empty smile and picked up more rice and *tsamba* – the barley flour staple diet of the Tibetans – and passed it around the people now crowding around him to receive the food made 'sacred' by his touch. Then, as abruptly as he had arrived, he left, still muttering and dribbling at the mouth, scattering imaginary handfuls of food as he went, stumbling up the trail to his remote cave in the mountain. The spirits he had served so faithfully were now exacting the price for providing arcane knowledge and power in the past, robbing him of mind and body, and would shortly – Faust-like – claim his soul.

The old man was one of many such feared and worshipped oracle-mediums who dominated the lives of Tibetans everywhere. When I first arrived among them I thought, as did every visitor to Tibet, that it was the monasteries and the monks who played the leading part in the lives of the people and their daily rituals.

When I had first entered their homes and nomad-tents, their villages and temples, I gradually became conscious of a strange dichotomy in domestic and public worship. On the one hand, there was the expected prominence of the idols of Buddha and his many disciples, and the *thanka*, or scroll, representations of the same; and, on the other hand, there was the unexpected presence, and even predominance, of the 'guardian deities', the scowling, ferocious, black-featured and malevolent idols and scrolls, with the greater worship and offerings presented to them. This dichotomy was extended into the ecclesiastical structure of the commonly practised religion, for where the monks carried out orthodox rituals in the temples, the monasteries and the family gatherings, there were others – not always monks, and not even always men – who were far more popular and influential in the villages, towns and cities because of their demonstrations of tantric, or black magic, powers.

The monasteries dominated the normal religious and secular lives of the Tibetan people. Following the conquest of Tibet by Genghis Khan in 1206 and his enforced sovereignty and colonization of Tibet, predominantly in the south-eastern part of the country later to be known as 'Kham', the country – including the martial Khambas – became more religious.

Genghis Khan invited the powerful Tibetan abbot, Phagspa, from Sakya monastery in west Tibet, to come and teach Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia. Phagspa was later appointed spiritual guide to Kublai Khan, and made priest-king over the thirteen districts making up the three Tibetan provinces of U-Tsang, Amdo and Kham. From that time Tibet was ruled over by the Sakya priests as a theocracy, through the hereditary succession of Phagspa's family; and their obsessive interest in Mongolian

shamanism and Indian tantricism was communicated to the rest of the country. This precipitated inter-monastery disputes and battles, and orthodox Buddhism almost disappeared.

But in the fourteenth century a great religious reformer, Tsong-ka-pa, was born in north-east Tibet. He revived the multi-corrupted Buddhism in a purer form, insisted on the celibacy of the priesthood, forbade the drinking of alcohol, and curtailed the proliferation of demon deities, which had invaded the religious practices, and the superstitious worship devoted to them. His followers became known as *Ge-luk-pas* – ‘those on the way to virtue’, or, more commonly, as ‘Yellow Hats’ – to distinguish them from the earlier tantric *Nying-ma-pas*, or ‘Red Hats’.

These two ‘schools’ of Buddhism dominated Tibetan thought and practice, and gave birth to the distinctive ‘Lamaistic Buddhism’ of Tibet. From the early inheritance of the Bön demonism, and later Mongolian shamanism, together with the imported Indian tantricism and indigenous folk beliefs, there emerged an immensely complex religion and philosophy with its own rich and subtle dialectics and metaphysics; a vast pantheon of deities and innumerable rituals, a comprehensive psychology linked to demanding techniques of meditation and yoga, and a labyrinthine cosmological system and practice of esoteric divination.

In the ‘religious laws’ it was declared that there was a distinction between ‘ordained monks’, subject to domestic discipline, and ‘tantric monks’, subject to the unregistered demands of the spirit-world. The *tantras*, which distinguished the ‘tantric monk’ from the ‘ordained monk’, had historically in India and Tibet provided limitless material for esoteric and ‘magical’ practices of all kinds, so that the tantric monk who could produce rain, or heal diseases of people or animals, or provide miracle charms to prevent wounds or even death in battle, was more revered than the ordained monk who simply chanted Buddhist texts.

The *tantras* were difficult to learn, as they had to be communicated by a proven initiate to a trusted student. They had been derived from the early Buddhas and their divine attendants, conceived in stylized and symbolic names and designs, as coherent expressions in an esoteric pattern or mystic circle, known as the *mandala*. This mystical pattern symbolizing divine initiation – usually drawn on the ground with coloured flour, or printed on cloth or paper, for the purposes of the initiatory rite; although it could often be assembled as a wooden, or even golden, structure, and even as a complete initiatory temple – served as a means of ‘enlightenment’ to the initiate, who was placed in the centre of the *mandala*.

The ultimate initiation occurred when the aspirant was able to invoke a spirit-deity to occupy a dead body during the *bardo*, or purgatory, celebrations, and then enter into a physical and/or sexual contest with the

reactivated corpse in what was called the *ro-lang*, or 'corpse-raising', ritual. If the student initiate had properly learned the lessons of his master – 'the right truth' – then he would be able to overcome the reactivated corpse and no one would ever know that the incident had taken place, except in the demonstrations of the initiate's increased powers; but if he was unprepared, then his grotesquely mutilated body would be found later beside that of the deactivated corpse. The final 'truth' in the mystical conjunction of all these 'other-world' forces was a mystery known only to master and student, and the cost in cash and commitment and consequent physiological and psychological trauma to the initiate was enormous. It was accepted that the majority of those most deeply committed to the practices ended their lives prematurely, physically and mentally destroyed. The old man who had entered our camp at Jedo Pass was one of those in the final stages of disintegration.

However, the two-fold enlightenment obtained through a combination of knowledge of selected demonic powers and commitment to them through meditation and trances, was considered worthwhile because of the phenomenal corollary of subsequent ability to harness and perform supernatural powers, and the immense prestige, awe and influence which they generated. The mystic powers were passed on to believers by laying hands on their heads; initiates could consecrate *thankas* representing deities; or could 'empower' statues or god-boxes, in which were placed mantras, or relics, or charms similarly blessed; or they could name children, delineate auspicious days for weddings, or trading, or travel, and so on.

By the eighteenth century the *Ge-luk-pas*, or 'Yellow Hats', became the dominating school in Tibet, typified by an emphasis on philosophy and theoretical discussions; while the *Nying-ma-pas*, or 'Red Hats', who were characterized by an emphasis on the arcane meditation and occultic psychic experiences, were influential only in these spheres of expertise. There were occasional attempts by emerging religious leaders to reconcile both systems, but these were never successful.

Although the great Tsong-ka-pa was a reformer, he was neither king nor 'Dalai Lama'. The line of Dalai Lamas did not begin until the end of the fourteenth century, and the title of 'Dalai Lama' was not created until the sixteenth century. It emerged in curious fashion out of this complex interplay of central Asian religion and politics. A descendant of Genghis Khan invited the leader of the *Ge-luk-pas*, Sonam Gyatso, Abbot of Drepung monastery in Lhasa, to visit him in Mongolia in 1578. The Tibetan abbot was able to persuade the Mongols to abolish their notorious blood-sacrifices and to accept Buddhism as their preferred religion. In return, the Mongol Altan Khan invested him with the title 'Dalai Lama' (*dalai*, meaning 'ocean' in Mongolian, was a translation of the Tibetan

gyatso in Sonam Gyatso's name), and this became an inherited practice. In fact, Sonam Gyatso was recognized as the *Third Dalai Lama*, the title being conferred retrospectively on Gedun-trup, the favoured disciple of the reformer Tsong-ka-pa and founder of Tashilungpo monastery, as the First Dalai Lama; and Gedun-Gyatso, Abbot of Tashilungpo, Drepung and Sera monasteries, as the second reincarnation.

This concept of reincarnation had emerged only about the time that the First Dalai Lama, the Abbot of Drepung, died; and it became a requirement that his successor should be a reincarnation of his spirit. Until this time it had been a common belief among the Tibetans that they moved up and down a spiritual scale according to the merits or demerits of their lives; or, even, by reason of possible holiness, passing into 'Buddhahood' and returning no more. It was, therefore, an innovation that a person could waive his 'right' to Buddhahood and return to earth to help others still struggling on the upward path. This meant, of course, that the claimant's spiritual authority was increased tremendously through self-abnegation; but there was no attempt at the time to extend his increased spiritual authority into the secular sphere.

It was the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, or 'the Great Fifth' as he became known, whose restless and forceful personality carried him into participation in the secular field. He used the increased influence of his office to persuade Gushi Khan, the Mongol leader, to support him in his ambition to control the whole of Tibet in the *Ge-luk-pas*' cause in 1641. One of the first actions of the Fifth Dalai Lama of all Tibet was to take a census of the monasteries, and to regulate their revenues and taxes. Through this and other means he established the dominance of the *Ge-luk-pas*, and he emphasized this ascendancy by extending the building of his own palace, the Potala, in Lhasa, and by building new monasteries on mountain-tops instead of sheltering in valleys.

It was also the Great Fifth Dalai Lama who initiated the new office of 'Panchen Lama' of Tashilungpo monastery. As with the Dalai Lama, prior to this appointment there had been no mention of any reincarnation of the Abbots of Tashilungpo. However, the Great Fifth had a revered teacher, Lobsang Chokyi Gyentsen, who was Abbot of Tashilungpo, and he was declared an incarnation because of a timely and fortunate 'discovery' of hitherto 'hidden texts'. This was followed by 'historical research' and Lobsang Chokyi Gyentsen was subsequently declared the 'Fourth' Panchen Lama, the incarnation of *Amitabha*, while the Dalai Lama was the incarnation of *Avalokitesvara*.

From that time onwards the elder of the two hierarchs, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, always initiated the other. This created considerable confusion, because *Amitabha* was the 'father' from whom *Avalokitesvara*

was said to have sprung; and in whose presence *Avalokitesvara* took his *bodhisvatta* vow to help all human beings – and Tibet in particular. In other words, the Panchen Lama, while historically second in rank and precedence, was automatically the Dalai Lama's superior in Tibetan theology – a relationship that was to cause endless squabbles and political conflicts over the years.

In the eighteenth century it was reckoned that there were some 3,000 monasteries and temples in Tibet, with 300,000 monks under the control of the Dalai Lama; and 327 monasteries, with more than 13,000 monks under the control of the Panchen Lama. In the capital itself, the three great teaching monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Ganden housed more than 20,000 monks in a city of 40,000 people. Between them they formed a powerful ecclesiastical and bureaucratic presence from Lhasa throughout the whole country.

To sustain this vast bureaucracy the monasteries collected taxes directly from the people in the places where they were located. All the land in Tibet was divided between the monasteries and the nobles. The monasteries were exempt from providing taxes and services to the Government, but nevertheless they levied them on the people of their districts. They added to these revenues by trading through monk-stewards, by money-lending, and by collecting money for rites performed inside and outside the monasteries and temples. Rich monks owned property, and had poor monks for servants. There were also 'athlete' monks for games, and 'warrior' monks for fighting.

In the nearly three years I had spent living in east Tibet I had been educated by Topgyay and Rapga Pandatshang, and their friends, in the complex manifestations of Lamaistic Buddhism – both good and evil aspects. The scholarly Rapga, who had translated some of the works of Karl Marx into Tibetan, was stringently critical of many of the practices of the priesthood; while the extrovert and sardonic Topgyay was scathingly humorous regarding the pederastic sexual habits of the majority of the priests, and bitterly sarcastic about the greed of the monasteries. Both Rapga and Topgyay had different, but equally radical, plans for getting rid of the extortionate and exploitive practices of the ecclesiastic hierarchy dominating Tibet.

I was able to understand the intellectual mechanisms of it all, and their use of symbols, from my past reading of Freud and Jung. I was baffled by the spiritual significance of all the factors involved. There were times in historical Christianity – especially in the Middle Ages – when the occult played a large part in current theology, but there was little in the twentieth century to help with the answers. Where did my God fit in with all this obfuscating tantric ritualism and occultism? I was bombarded with

manifestations of spiritual power that were completely beyond my understanding.

It reminded me of the words of one Tibetan: 'This is a government of the gods, by the gods, for the gods.' As we rode steadily at a plodding pace across the vastness of Tibet, the conversations between the members of the caravan usually included some mention of the miraculous in their daily lives. Even when the discussions were political there was always the consideration that the powers of the gods could be invoked on behalf of Tibet against the atheist Communism of China. I was reminded of the equally inflated expectations of Christians in Britain, extolling an all-powerful God while living circumscribed or defeated lives. And yet – there could be no denying that there was evidence of some unique powers all around me. I had a lot of thinking, and investigating, to do. I dug out my Bible and, as the horse plodded steadily onwards, immersed myself in a study of spiritual power.

I was surrounded by a people who had a history of 2,000 years of devising a complex system of divine and demonic guidance. There was the top-level guidance required to find the new reincarnation of the Dalai Lama after one 'retired to the heavenly fields'. Then there was the guidance sought through tantric oracles; the drawing of lots; mathematical divination; *mandalas*; trances and visions. Guidance was also sought for travel, trading, naming children, holding weddings, health, investments, choice of spouses. They even sought guidance by writing down the negative and positive aspects of any pending decision, putting each paper in separate balls made of barley paste; then the balls were put into a wooden or silver drinking bowl and, after a time of personal or group prayer, one of the balls was selected and the negative or positive decision made according to the choice. Thus surrounded by expert practitioners of divine and demonic guidance, all concerned with the destiny of their country, I had to find my own revelation of the will of God for me.*

I had time enough. Topgyay had said that it would take us a month to reach his home in Markham from Kangting. It was not just the length of the journey, or the fact that we would have to cross thirteen passes over 15,000 feet on the way, for he wanted to talk with tribal leaders and village headmen *en route*. Also, he had sent messengers to Amdo and parts of northern Kham, such as Dege and Gantze, asking for representatives to come and meet him, either on the way or in Markham.

Each day we travelled slowly, strung out in a long, colourful line, across mountains and plateaux, some of which were familiar to me from previous visits. On all sides extended barren, stony stretches, giving way at intervals

*See the conclusions in my book *The Power Factor* (Word Books (UK), 1987).

to equally spacious grasslands rising to dark, jagged mountains crowned by giant, snow-peaked ranges. The trail led through huge forests above saucer-shaped valleys, where the luxurious grass was carpeted with gentians, primulas, asters and other flowers in glorious profusion.

Occasionally there was a village, from a distance looking like some sprawling feudal castle in medieval Britain, on a smaller scale. Usually of two storeys, each house had walls about two feet thick, built solidly from stone and mud, the floors and flat roof being of smaller stones and mud to give a smoother finish. The roof had a low parapet, and often a built-up verandah or small room on top, giving it a battlemented look. Tall walls surrounded the houses, forming courtyards for the animals, stacks of wood, piles of drying dung, and the inevitable snarling Tibetan mastiffs.

Every day scouts rode out ahead to patrol the high points, searching for roving bands of Chinese deserters, or even dangerous groups of bandits who might swoop down fast on the caravan, shooting first and finding out too late who we were. One evening, while we camped out on a high outcrop above a wide sweep of the river, I watched fifty-five yak-loads of arms and ammunition being ferried over to join our caravan. Topgyay informed me later that he had thousands of these loads in various places in Kham – including monasteries.

On the sixteenth day out from Kangting we made preparations to enter Litang, one of the highest towns in the world at an altitude of 14,500 feet. It was bitterly cold when I crawled out of my sleeping-bag to take the bowl of butter tea which Loshay – the ‘blood-brother’ servant provided by Topgyay – had ready for me. Fires blazed all around the camping place, and the servants and muleteers saddled or loaded animals, then returned quickly to the blaze to thaw out frozen fingers. More than one looked longingly at the towering peaks where, first, the rose colour, then the yellow of the sun crept slowly and tantalizingly downwards with the promise of heat for cruelly cold bodies.

We had passed through one gloomy valley and were well up a second before the sun finally touched and caressed the whites, reds and greens of our clothing, the dull blue of the rifles, and the silver and gold of the god-boxes, glinting on the movements of the gaily saddled horses and pacing mules as they passed and re-passed each other on the way to the summit. Away ahead the flat plateau that was Litang – the ‘Nickel Plain’ – shimmered in a heat haze.

As we rounded a bend in the trail there was a thunder of hoofs, a cloud of dust, and several galloping riders swirled up in a confused mass, their horses rearing to a slithering halt. The leader was a giant of a man in a huge yakskin gown, Gyabon Bundi, one of Topgyay’s famous captains. He produced the usual ceremonial scarf and garlanded Topgyay, who returned

it to him, then passed up the line of bowing, respectful riders on either side of the trail.

More and more riders were now arriving in a constant stream and, as we left the mountain trail for the flat plain, the single file of our daily riding pattern disappeared, as riders known to each other bunched together talking animatedly. The horses caught the excitement of the new arrivals and pulled restlessly at the bit, and the speed of the party increased perceptibly. Some of the more high-spirited horses had to be brought round in a wide circle and back to join the main group, so restive were they to get away and gallop over the flat plain. The riders were not averse to this restlessness, and used it to exhibit their skills as horsemen with a nonchalant and apparently effortless control.

A collection of filthy, square-built mud houses, looking like a neglected archaeological site, appeared and this was pointed out as being part of the old town of Litang, which had been devastated in an earthquake the year before, claiming over a thousand lives.

We finally reined to a halt on the outskirts of Litang proper, beside a large, solidly built house of the usual Tibetan design. Servants were running all over the place, leading in horses or driving off the pressing, curious onlookers. The Pandatshangs were to have the upstairs as their quarters, while Geoff and I had the ground floor, where the space usually occupied by animals had been cleared to make room for stacks of tea-bales, with spaces between where we could place our beds.

When we joined Topgyay and the others he informed us that the house was the one in which the famous Sixth Dalai Lama had been 'reincarnated'. He pointed out five lumps of wood, two large and three small, hanging above the outside door; these, he said, indicated that five other incarnations had been born in this house, two great and three lesser in rank and importance.

It was strange in the sunlit silence of that afternoon to listen to the quiet voice of Rapga saying that the last time he had been in this house was in 1934, when he had passed through Litang from Markham to exile in India, after their defeat at Chamdo.

And now here we were again, on the eve of another revolution, returning along familiar trails. The three weeks of travelling had brought an impressive array of men and munitions, with exciting possibilities of success. So Topgyay decided to wait for a few days in Litang, within reach of news from down country, and then begin the last stage of the journey to the mountain retreat of the Pandatshangs in Bo-mi.

We had been invited to a feast shortly after our arrival, and after a quick wash-up and change of clothing started for the town, followed by servants, bodyguards and a crowd of townspeople. The path from the house to the

town lay across a wide, open space, on which an incredible sight met our astonished gaze – incredible even for Tibet, and even more so for Litang, one of the largest and most sacred monastery-towns in the country.

At intervals of every fifty yards or so there was a small camp of nomads, with a series of rough wooden frames pitched around their black tents. On these were hung the steaming carcasses of freshly slaughtered yaks. Thousands of crows were perched on the cross-pieces, picking at the carcasses, while overhead huge vultures circled on a slow wing-beat. Everywhere scavenging dogs tried to snatch at entrails, while one or two more audacious than the others tried to drag away the huge yaks' heads that were lying scattered on the ground. Nomads, stripped to the waist, were covered in blood, steaming in the cool of the afternoon; and crowds of porters, men and women, were lined up with baskets to carry the meat away to the monastery.

For it was the monastery that had ordered the slaying of the animals to supply the monks with meat for food, and also to stock up against future profitable trade. Three hundred yaks were being slaughtered every day, and the butchering had already gone on for several days. Rapga and Topgyay said nothing as we walked through the carnage, but they shook their heads disapprovingly; until one sight was too much, and Rapga whipped out his camera to photograph a maroon-clad monk carrying a yak's head in one hand and a large lump of meat in the other. The monk looked up and saw Rapga pointing the camera at him, and he quickly dropped the yak's head and meat and guiltily ran into a nearby tent to hide himself.

About 200–300 yards beyond the nomads' tents the path turned to the right, below a slight overhang of rock, on which lay a pile of *mani* stones and prayer-flags, and then rose sharply to enter the main street of the town. The street was wide, about forty feet from side to side, the northern end facing us terminating in the Chinese magistrates' *yamen*, or offices and quarters. The houses on either side of the street were all one-storeyed and flat-roofed, and they were built in a continuous block from the top of the street to the bottom. The doorways led straight off the street, and nearly all of them had two or three steps down into the room.

Through a gateway to the left of the Government offices could be seen the market-place of the town. Here the 'road' was simply an alleyway some ten feet wide, with small, busy stalls and shops lining each side for over a hundred yards or so. There was a surprising variety of goods for such a remote place: coloured silks, carpets, saddlery, religious paraphernalia, exquisitely worked silver ornaments from the famous workshops of Dege, flour, sugar, matches, household utensils – and, of course, butchers' shops with freshly slaughtered meat. At the end of the street there was another gate, leading into the famous monastery, larger than the town itself.

As we passed through the gate we had to step around a dying horse, its ribs showing, its bloated belly heaving in agony, its eyes opaque with approaching death. No one would kill it to put it out of its pain, for the lamas said that it was a sin to kill. Yet, 500 yards away, 3,000 yaks had been killed on the orders of the same lamas; and the meat was being carried into the monastery through an alleyway not five yards away from the dying horse.

The great paradox confronting me here in Tibet was similar to that confronting me in Britain and the West: the principles of spiritual power declared by professing believers were undeniably attractive and persuasive – but they did not seem to be effective in radically changing people and circumstances. Isolated instances of impressive phenomena could be demonstrated by both Western Pentecostal preachers and Tibetan tantric oracles, but there was little evidence of any transforming spiritual change in the lives of people or in their social practices.

The ordinary Tibetan, carrying a god-box with a powerful charm-relic to protect him, would carefully pick a louse from his hair and gently lay it on the ground so that its life might be spared, for it could be a human soul in a different, but lower, state of the reincarnation process. But he would then turn to pick up his rifle and start oiling it lovingly, in preparation for fighting and killing his fellow-Tibetans.

When I spoke to Tibetans about this, they saw no contradiction. Acts of spiritual power, they said, were for the tantric practitioners to exercise on request when necessary, and had to be paid for in goods and worship by the supplicant. But personal desires and ambitions had to be fought for and taken by force. All that was needed was to make sure that the gods were placated, so that they were on your side when the action took place.

When I persisted and asked them why, for example, they were mobilizing armed forces to withstand the atheist Chinese Communists, and not harnessing the spiritual power they believed in so deeply in defence of their passionately held pacific Buddhism, they looked at me as if I was mad. How could spiritual belief stop the Chinese, let alone Communists, they asked? I pointed out my personal dilemma: this was what they professed to believe throughout Tibet, as shown by the practices of their tantric monks, and by their everyday action of carrying god-boxes to stop sword-cuts and bullets!

Our Litang abbot host was an interesting character, a Chinese and not a Tibetan. Rapga informed me quietly that his name was Liu, that he had been a major-general in the Nationalist army, but had given up everything to become a lama. He must have had considerable influence with the Sikang governor, General Liu Wen-huie, or someone even higher, for he had been appointed head of not only the prestigious Litang monastery but

also of all the monasteries in Kham. This use of influence to gain high position detracted considerably from the sincerity of his renunciation, and the Tibetans suspected him of being a spy.

He was tall and thin, with a narrow, inscrutable face, and was typically Chinese in speech, manner and gesticulation, although dressed in usual Tibetan lama fashion. The other guests were magistrates of Batang, Litang and Nya Chuka. There were over twenty dishes in the feast, and with an appetite sharpened by the monotony of trail diet, I contributed little to the bland social conversation and concentrated on eating.

The days that followed were filled with a round of feasts and discussions, as messengers came and went with reports. Jekundo, an important small town in Amdo province to the north, had fallen to the Communists, and this meant that the Khambas were cut off from some of their allies there. It came as a surprise to the Kham leaders, for they had expected the Chinese Moslem generals in north-west China to make a committed stand against the Communists, in view of their religious beliefs. But they, too, were steeped in the endemic corruption apparently afflicting all Nationalist leaders, and were swept away by the moral judgement of Communism, and the Chinese People's Army poured through relatively unopposed to the Tibetan border in the north. Jekundo was only fifteen days' journey over the mountains, and the news was that the Chinese were calling on all local Tibetan leaders to surrender.

Topgyay weighed the situation coolly and carefully and decided to wait for a few more days in Litang. He reasoned that he could always leave for the mountains to the west beyond Litang at a moment's notice, and that although there were Communist spies in Litang, there were not enough of their supporters to stop him.

One day it was decided that we would visit the hot sulphur springs in the vicinity of the town. They were about an hour's horseback ride away, and a small party was formed. While waiting for the horses to be saddled, Topgyay called me over to look at a horse in a nearby courtyard. It belonged to a lama, he explained, but it had the reputation of being a 'killer', even 'demon-possessed', and no one was prepared to ride it. It was said that he, Topgyay, was the only one capable of riding the horse, but he had declined, since he had been out of practice at that kind of skill for some time now. I gazed at the magnificent, rearing animal and its white eyes and striking hoofs, and found myself asking Topgyay if I could ride him. He refused at first, then with the slow, reckless smile that I had become used to, said, '*Dri-ge-ray*. All right.'

Everyone stood back as I approached the grey terror, which retreated as I drew nearer, its eyes rolling and its ears laid back. With the halter stretched taut, and unable to retreat further, it suddenly turned and flashed

out with its hoofs and I had to slide nimbly aside to avoid them. The movement brought me close to the horse's neck and I remained there, circling as the horse circled, speaking quietly and soothingly. I noted out of the corner of my eye that someone was untying the halter and I reached out my hand to take it, still moving with the horse but drawing the halter tighter.

The horse's ears gradually flickered upwards and then, as I lifted my hand towards its neck, they flattened again. With my fingertips I slowly began stroking the arching neck, travelling further with each stroke until I was moving near to the spot where the reins and halter lay. Picking them up gently, I continued stroking with the other hand, and at the same time eased my left foot off the ground into the stirrup.

The silence could almost have been cut as I tensed and swung suddenly up and across the saddle, settling myself for the battle. The grey began pitching immediately, throwing its head high in the air and then plunging downwards as it tried to hurl me from the saddle. It was like a bolt of chained lightning as it curvetted about the compound, its legs – like steel springs – hurling it upwards each time it touched the ground, scattering the watching crowd.

After a short time testing the horse's mouth and my seat in the saddle, I took it through the gate of the courtyard on to the plain outside. There it became almost frantic in its attempts to break away, go wild, and gallop. Already the crowd had lost its initial fear and was shouting and whooping in encouragement, but I held the grey down to a jolting trot to give me time to establish some control.

The others were now mounted and came out on to the plain near me in a fast canter, and the grey went away in a bucking spree in the excitement, its nose almost sweeping the ground in its attempts to get free. The jolting drove the hat from my head and I automatically made a grab for it with my left hand. It was my undoing.

The grey rocketed away in a thundering gallop over the undulating plain, weaving crazy patterns as it sought to throw me off. The wind sang in my ears as I exerted all my strength and skill to bring it under control, but it had a mouth of iron and I began to feel my legs grow numb. At an altitude of 15,000 feet I knew that such exertions could cause immediate blackouts, and it could only be a matter of minutes before I was thrown and either dragged or kicked to death. With the thought came the determination to have one last attempt at breaking the horse.

I had gone round in a wide circle and was now almost back among the other riders again. They had pulled their horses to a stop as they watched the exhibition; both man and beast were under scrutiny by the ruthless standards of Tibet. As I swept past them in a cloud of dust and stones I

went almost as savage as the horse. When it threw its head down, I broke the movement with a jerk and wrenched it up again. When the head came up with the flailing forefeet, I beat it down by bringing my whip down between its ears. When it sprang to the left, I wrenched the reins and bridle to the right until its body curved in a semicircle and it had to move crabwise; and when it swung to the right, I did the same to the left.

We were like a couple of mad things, and I was covered from head to foot in a bloody froth blowing backwards from the horse's mouth. Then, miraculously, I was moving along with the others, the horse still quivering and breaking into an occasional flashing gallop, but always coming round in a wide circling again at my prompting to join the others.

We were now almost at the hot springs, situated in some low foothills, and I decided to test its stamina by putting it at the steep side of one shoulder of the hill ahead. It responded like a flash of lightning and was away before the others could draw breath. I let loose a wild Tibetan 'yee-hee' and the staccato beat of its gallop increased into a thunderous roll. I was almost drunk with the speed and power of the animal under me, and it was still straining in a gallop when we topped the ridge and dropped down on the far side, and I had to fight it to a standstill when we arrived at the springs.

As we lay and soaked in the hot springs the performance of the grey horse was the sole topic of conversation. I lay back with my eyes shut, aching in every bone and muscle, my body quivering with the strain and reaction, my fingers raw flesh where the reins had burned and skinned them, while Topgyay urged me to buy the horse. He knew the owner couldn't ride the horse and that he was afraid of it; Topgyay also knew he could get a bargain price for it, so why not buy it? I would never have a chance like this again, for a Tibetan never sold a horse if it was as good as this one. The lama would sell it now only because of its widely known reputation, and, if it did kill someone, he would be held responsible.

I wanted the horse, but I was sore and exhausted and knew that it would take weeks of such riding before it could be brought under proper control. The thought in my present state was almost too much for me. I finally agreed that if I could ride it back again to Litang without being unseated I would buy it at whatever price Topgyay fixed.

It was agony on the return journey. The grey knew it was on its way home and refused to stay with the other riders and I had to fight it all the way, but I stayed on. I had to be helped from the saddle when we arrived, but my reward came when Loshay whispered that I must buy the horse, that there was none like it, and that I was the master. He had been one of the most insistent against my trying to ride it before we left for the hot springs, and he was reckoned to be one of the finest horsemen in Kham.

Before we left Litang we almost had a murder on our hands. Loshay came to me one afternoon to say that one of our silver-embossed tea bowls had been stolen and could he have permission to see if he could find it? It was an awkward situation, for we were the guests of the Pandatshangs, and Topgyay's servants, and our own, were the only ones in the house. It followed, then, that it was likely that one of his servants had taken it, and the punishment for thieving in Tibet was severe.

Shortly afterwards there were sounds of shouting and quarrelling outside and Topgyay went outside to find the cause. We found a bloodied Loshay being held back by some of his friends, and discovered that he had exposed the man he had suspected. Feigning a friendly gesture, he had put his arm round the man's shoulder and then slipped it inside his gown and discovered our bowl.

It was a dangerous move, for had it not been there Loshay would have been guilty of false accusation, another serious offence; but the man had reacted by whipping out his short sword and going for Loshay. Loshay had fought back with his own dagger, until both had staggered into the nearby stream and lost their weapons. They had carried on fighting with whatever came to hand, picking up stones or pieces of wood, until Loshay had been battered to the ground, blinded by blood. Fortunately, his reaching hand found a yak's horn and he struck the thief on the forehead, almost splitting his skull in half. The man had staggered away, and Loshay had been picked up by his friends.

The thief was a servant of Topgyay's, so we went to report the matter to him. He heard us through in silence then shrugged his shoulders, saying that it was all right. Loshay had been within his rights, according to Tibetan custom; and, as he had found the man with proof of his thieving on him, Loshay was at liberty to kill him if necessary.

That night, as I sat thinking on a hillside above the camp, darkness stole down on an unforgettable scene. In the flat clearing above the sweep of the river, a minute came in the vast amphitheatre of mountains, several fires blazed, around which Tibetans worked, or lounged, or talked. Line upon line of yaks and horses were tethered on one side, and in a wide semicircle on the other loads of boxes, tea and ammunition were stacked to form a windbreak. The haunting notes of a Tibetan song hung in the still air. Far off a dog barked occasionally. And the moon with divine artistry etched the whole scene in silver and black.

Next morning we were up before dawn, and by mid-morning we were on our way. Two giant, pyramid-shaped peaks stood sentinel on the pass as we approached in order to exit from the Litang plain, forming a dramatic frame for a magnificent panorama. Visibility was perfect, and range upon range of snow mountains stretched away into the deepening blue distance,

crowned by a magnificent towering virgin peak blindingly reflecting the rays of the sun. Below, fold after fold of valleys cradled the dark greens and blacks of forests, and away to the left a blue lake lay quietly sleeping.

We stayed the night with a nomad chieftain and his people, sharing the fresh yoghurt and meat so hospitably provided, and leaving early the next morning. The deeper we penetrated into the mountains, the wilder and more glorious the scenery became. Undulating grasslands covered with flowers, barren plateaux with no scrub for miles, forested valleys with flashing silver streams pouring into deep turbulent rivers, all slid past the seemingly tireless Tibetan horses. With scarcely a house to be seen in all the remoteness, it always came as a shock to turn a bend in the trail and find a group of horsemen approaching to greet or join us.

Lamas from near or distant monasteries on fat, sleek mules, intricately worked gold god-boxes gleaming dully against the deep maroon of their robes; wild nomads on shaggy ponies, unkempt and dirty but impressive in their massive yakskin gowns; silent, dangerous-looking men on restless horses, dressed in silk shirts, fine cloth gowns and polished riding-boots, with rifles and crossed ammunition belts – all appeared at intervals along the trail, coming forward, presenting scarves and presents, talking in low voices with Topgyay and Rappa for a few hours, then disappearing again into the maze of valleys.

Our caravan now consisted of almost 300 riders, moving swiftly ahead of the slowly plodding yaks. On the day of our expected arrival in Bo-mi we had scarcely ridden out of the valley where we had camped for the night when more groups of riders began to appear and join us. Topgyay now dismounted each time to receive the scarves and gifts, for these were close friends and followers who were remnants of his formerly defeated army.

We were like a small army of our own as we crossed over the ridge on to a high, bare plateau and moved towards a large white tent and a crowd of people. This was the official reception from the Bo-mi people and an occasion for more tea- and beer-drinking, for shouted and excited welcomes. It was the last meeting before the last pass, and as Topgyay waved everyone to mount there was a mad race for the summit.

It was an unparalleled opportunity to establish a reputation for rider and horse, as there were representatives from all over Kham in the party, and whoever excelled in the race would be talked about at every household and camp fire throughout Tibet for months to come. At the same time the great number of riders made the race to the summit infinitely more difficult, for there were now hundreds of horses passing and re-passing on narrow trails dropping away thousands of feet to the river far below.

I was somewhere about two-thirds of the way behind the leaders when the break for the summit came. Topgyay got no special privileges in a race

of this kind, and he had to move ahead on his pacing mule by skill, like everybody else. He lifted his hand in acknowledgement as I passed, and then Loshay was yelling, 'Ride', swinging his hand forward.

I urged the grey with a flick of the reins and felt the powerful muscles beneath me gather and stretch. The trail had narrowed, and the ground banked steeply on the right with about twenty riders strung along the middle ahead of me, watching for any move on the part of others to overtake them. With a sudden kick and a lunge I threw the grey up the banking in a quick gallop, and before the others could move to block me I slithered past them in a cloud of dust. It acted like a signal, and every rider settled down low in the saddle to meet the challenge.

I had timed my burst well, for there was an open stretch ahead, dotted here and there with low scrub; and with the grey moving in an easy, weaving gallop I passed rider after rider while they hesitated over whether to accept the challenge at this pace or dismiss it as reckless showmanship.

Soon I could see no riders ahead at all, and I wondered whether I could have passed everyone already, but some of Topgyay's soldiers, who were not joining in the race, shouted to me that there were others in front. The horse responded to the touch of my heels and leapt forward again, the spurts of stones from its flashing hoofs starting small landslides down the mountainside. It was crazy riding, slithering on loose sand and rocketing round bends at full speed, but the excitement and intoxication generated by these mad horsemen from the roof of the world were infectious and no odds were calculated.

The trail opened out into a wide hollow, just below the summit, and here about twenty riders had dismounted from their heaving, sweating horses beside a group of nomad tents. They greeted me boisterously as I rode up, and invited me to dismount and accept the nomads' hospitality of tea or yoghurt as was the custom. While drinking, some others arrived, until there were about forty riders. When all were finished there was a shout and a rush for the horses.

The horses, refreshed by the short rest, were more excited than ever, and I had difficulty getting back on to my rearing grey. When I did, several riders were well on their way, thundering down the valley towards the narrow trail leading on to the shoulder and final stretch to the summit. Only one horse at a time could cross that shoulder, and whoever came out there first had the race in his pocket.

It was about 500 yards to the start of the narrow ledge leading upwards to the shoulder, and the forty riders were already bunched dangerously, some stirrup to stirrup, as they rode like men possessed to be first on the narrowed ledge. There was only one way to get ahead, and that was to do the same as I had done further down the trail; to send the grey up the far

steeper slope at the inside of the trail at a hammering gallop and hope that its speed, like a motor-cyclist on a 'wall of death', would help keep its balance.

It was too fast and too exciting to feel danger of any kind, and a yell ripped out of my throat as the grey, slipping and sliding as I hurled it forward, slithered down the incline just in front of the nose of the leading rider where the trail narrowed. No one could possibly pass me now, and I came out on top of the shoulder with a clear run to the summit. As man after man slid off their steaming horses they came across to gaze at the grey, now quietly nibbling at the grass, their voices subdued in awe at its performance.

After the others had caught up, and the race was discussed, we descended for about two hours until the valley widened and we reached open fields where people were working. When they saw us they left their work to join us, shouting to those they knew. Over a narrow wooden bridge spanning a brawling stream, and we were among crowds of people standing on each side of a chalked pathway leading to a large white house beside the river. As we entered the compound, scores of people rushed forward to catch the bridles of the horses, the riders dismounted, the escort and soldiers wheeled away and disappeared into the village on the other side of the bridge, and we had arrived in Bo-mi.

The house was built like a fort, square, thick-walled, broad at the base and tapering towards the roof, where multicoloured prayer-flags fluttered in the afternoon breeze. The door into the house was a massive two-leaved affair opening into the compound, and we passed through into the cool darkness. The ground floor was a storehouse of sorts, the whole of the first floor a huge kitchen and servants' quarters, and the second floor was the living quarters of the Pandatshang family. There was the usual main living-reception-dining room, but in addition there were several other rooms leading off the main room, which Topgyay told us were bedrooms. Along the whole of the south wall of the main room were set removable latticed windows, with thin white muslin cloth instead of glass, which could be lifted out to let in the sun and allow the family out on to the verandah. Through the open windows could be seen a superb view of forests and mountains and the tumbling river splitting the valley in two.

Inside the main room there were the usual long, low daises, thickly and richly carpeted, and the long ornamented tables set at intervals before them, on which were set the hammered silver-and-gold bowl holders for the ever-present Tibetan butter tea. On the walls heavily embroidered tapestries and religious *thankas* hung side by side with Chinese calligraphic scroll paintings. The floors were of polished wood, and the ceilings were supported by massive, red-and-gold and blue-painted ornamental pillars.

As we took our places on the daises to drink the tea, Topgyay apologized for the crudeness of the building, which he said he had designed himself during his early turbulent years of fighting.

After we had talked awhile a meal was served, and then we went outside to walk around the village. The valley had been uninhabited when Topgyay first arrived on his fighting retreat from Chamdo fifteen years before. He had cleared away forests, built houses for his men, and scoured the countryside for wives for them, and then had slipped away into exile.

Because the white house was packed with the Pandatshang family and servants, Topgyay decided that until a house could be built for us we should live temporarily in a 'log cabin', about twenty feet by twelve, on the flat roof of a house nearby. It was a stark but solid structure, with adequate protection against cold, wind and snow. The fireplace was the usual open space in the middle of the floor, and with no chimney or escape route for smoke, except for a small space in the roof. On either side of the fire were two small pallets on which Loshay now spread out our sleeping-bags for beds. However, Topgyay insisted that we should have our meals with his family in the white house until our own place was ready.

A Mission for the Khamba Rebels

The valley in which we were now living with the Pandatshangs lay about two days' easy riding to the south of Batang. This spot had been chosen for reasons of security, but it was also beautiful, like so many valleys in *Medo Yul* – 'the land of flowers' – as the Khambas called this part of their territory.

This was one of the few regions of Tibet in which there were regular seasons of rain; and this, with the very warm daytime temperatures, produced great crops of grain and fruit. Batang had become famous throughout Tibet, and even China, for its variety of luscious fruit. The forests which so thickly covered the lower slopes of the mountains contained several species of antelope, bear, lynx, leopard, monkey; and herds of wild asses and horses, wild sheep and goats, roamed the great plains. Pheasants, partridges and other wildfowl were common, as were marmots and hares, but the Tibetans had an aversion to shooting them for food.

This bountiful supply meant that the Khambas, both farmers and nomads, were much better-off than their fellow-Tibetans elsewhere. Someone had estimated that five-sixths of the Tibetan population was engaged in agriculture, the remainder divided between pastoral livestock grazing and trading.

One characteristic feature of all communities of Tibetans – whether in eastern or western parts of the country – was the observance of a hierarchical structure at all levels. In the relationships between nobles and serfs, chieftains and tribes, husbands and wives, fathers and sons, teachers and students, monks and acolytes, this was always evident. In all parts of the country the language itself reflected whether one was superior, equal or inferior, as it embraced high honorific, honorific or ordinary status, depending on the speaker or the person addressed. The headman of the village was elected every three years, but if he did a good job he could be re-elected. The fields around the village were owned by families who held them jointly or individually, paying taxes to the headman, who passed them on to the monastery and/or overlord, and often both.

For centuries the ordinary life of the village passed uneventfully, except for the occasional intertribal quarrels and fighting, and the even rarer revolutionary uprising. The land was still worked by wooden ploughs drawn by crossbred yaks, called *dzö*, or by a line of men, women and children using long-handled, long-bladed spades. The crops were cut with

a short reaping hook, and taken to the threshing areas around the villages on the backs of donkeys; threshing was done with wooden flails, or by driving cattle round and round over the sheaves. The grain was winnowed by the wind. Amusements were few and simple: singing, dancing, horse-riding, shooting; visits to the local temple added some colour and awe to life, and there were the religious festivals and family feasts.

But the pastoral placidity of the scene was deceptive, not only because of the looming catastrophe moving towards Tibet from China but also because of daily domestic tragedies in the lives of the ordinary people. In addition to the pressures engendered by the monasteries, with their extortionate taxes and money-lending rates, there were family crises brought about by disease, or wounds gained in fighting, which, according to superstition, could be treated only by the application of the monks' urine and faeces in poultices and pills. In a country where very few people washed for weeks, months, or even years – mostly, it has to be said, because of the intense cold, which could split dry skin like a tomato – a cut from a knife or sword could rapidly develop into a fatal gangrene.

For me, this meant a constant demand for medical treatment wherever we travelled or were resident for any length of time. During the three years of my stay in east Tibet, because of my association with the Pandatshangs and my medical assistance to the family and its friends, my reputation as a 'doctor' had spread widely throughout the region and people travelled considerable distances so that I could treat them. Often their condition was well beyond my limited capacity, but when I protested that I could not help the sick person in such conditions, then either they or their relatives would insist that I do something, for their only alternative was a lingering and unpleasant death. Usually I tried, and I had been fortunate that most had recovered and none had died.

While the cycle of daily living went on in the village of Bo-mi after the initial excitement of our arrival, messengers arrived at irregular intervals bringing news from all over Tibet. In early January 1950, a fast-riding messenger brought important news from Batang. It was the long-expected communication from the Chinese Communists, but it was much more serious than the Pandatshangs had anticipated.

There was the usual long Communist preamble on 'democracy' and 'liberation', and all the new 'freedoms' that people would enjoy under the new Chinese Communist regime, and then came the important contents. The new Tenth Panchen Lama – like the new Fourteenth Dalai Lama, also from Amdo, or the Chinese-claimed Tsinghai province – had approved the new Chinese regime's calls for 'the liberation of Tibet'. This public commitment had been followed by a nationwide broadcast 'confirming' the claimed agreement with the four Amdo and Kham leaders of the 'East

Tibetan Peoples' Revolution'. With the surrender of the two Moslem warlord generals in north-west China, and the imminent surrender of General Liu Wen-huie in Sikang and Szechuan in the south-west, the way was now open for the Chinese Liberation Army to enter Tibet.

They had learned of the Pandatshangs' plans for a revolution against the reactionary feudal Government in Lhasa, and they approved of the plans and desires to further the interests of the Tibetan people. They were to go ahead with these plans and the Chinese authorities would supply them with the necessary arms, ammunition and financial help. The only difference was that it would not be a factional regional uprising, as planned, but a 'people's revolution' against the Tibetan Government. The Pandatshangs were not to consider opposing the Chinese Liberation Army, for the Chinese authorities were not viewing the Pandatshangs simply as intransigent rebels to be punished and then to withdraw, as in the past. The Chinese army intended to liberate the whole of Tibet as part of their long-term plans to liberate all Asia. Within one year Tibet would be liberated; within three years Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan would be liberated; within five years India would be liberated; and thus the East secured for Communism. If the Pandatshangs did not cooperate, they and their Khamba supporters would be swept out of existence.

The Pandatshangs were stunned at the implications of such an ultimatum. Fundamentally, it meant that instead of being a Nationalist reform group, they would now have to become traitors fighting for the Chinese against their own people. It would not help to send to Lhasa to inform the Government of what was planned and to seek their assistance, for it was already known in Lhasa that there were plans for a revolt in east Tibet and this would be interpreted as just a ruse. Further, such a mission to Lhasa would take more than four months by a sufficiently important delegation taking the normal route through Chamdo, and by the time the matter was given appropriate consideration and a reply sent it would be too late to be effective. It was obvious from the Chinese communication that the Chinese expected to attack soon.

After a great deal of thought and discussion the Pandatshangs concluded that there was only one course open to them: someone would have to get through to India, on the little-known trail to Sadiya in Assam in north-east India. By fast travelling this journey might be completed in two months. This would mean that the news could be given to leading Indian, British and American officials in India, and a decision to offer help could be communicated quickly to the Lhasa Government, which, in turn, could inform the Pandatshangs in Kham. The Kham and Amdo leaders could then launch a holding action against the Chinese until more effective help arrived.

But who was to be the messenger carrying such a message? Topgyay was required to stay in Kham as the recognized military leader of the Khambas. Rapga could not go to India, for the order of expulsion against him was still in effect, and he might be arrested on arrival before he could achieve anything. No other Khamba leader would know how to go about visiting embassies and Government departments to talk to the appropriate officials.

Topgyay and Rapga halted in their description of the situation and looked meaningfully at me. What did I think about going to India on their behalf, Topgyay suggested, to alert the necessary officials in India, and also any Lhasa officials who might be there, as to what was really happening in east Tibet, and to see if I could get help for them?

After my first reaction of outright disbelief, and then an instinctive rejection of such overt political involvement, I asked for time to consider their request. The Pandatshangs agreed, but pointed out, reasonably enough, that time was in short supply in the circumstances. If I didn't go, then they immediately had to make life-or-death decisions regarding preparations for revolt.

I spent an anguished period sorting out the implications of such a decision. Obviously it had to be me who went and not Geoff, for several reasons. I spoke better Tibetan than he did, because of the extra time and opportunities I had had, although he spoke better Chinese. I had the knowledge of medicine that would be essential during such a journey, and for the ordering of fresh supplies in India. Finally, the challenge had been presented to me, and not to Geoff, by the Pandatshangs, and so it was a personal decision.

As I prayed about it, God spoke to me out of the silent, moonlit night: 'I have brought you to this place as I promised, but this is not the end of my purpose; there are still greater things ahead. I told you I would send you to Tibet in pursuit of your knowledge of me, and no one would be able to stop you if you obeyed my voice. This is only a small part of what I have yet for you to do. The whole world must know that I am still the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of Moses, and David and Jesus Christ. Therefore, you will go to India and take the knowledge you have gained with you, for I have sent you there. I only require that you be obedient to my every word.'

All my arguments about my ignorance of Governments and ways of officials, or my reluctance to get involved in politics and revolution and war, died into silence in the light of such an explicit command. The God I wanted to know about was personally involved with politics and revolution and war in most of the Scriptures I read, so what better way to understand His ways? Ultimately, I was faced with only one decision: was I prepared to believe and obey the voice of God as completely in this matter

as I had been several years before in Scotland when I set out on this venture of faith? The answer was 'Yes'.

Two ways to India lay before me as alternatives to the unacceptably long route via Lhasa: one headed sharply south-west across the Yangtze River, down into Yunan, and across Burma; the other was to start in that direction, then angle obliquely across Tibet to the Mishmi tribal areas and into Upper Assam. The former route, while presenting many difficulties from bandits and warring tribesmen, had been travelled by a Lieutenant-Colonel Baillie some years before; the latter route had never been travelled at all by any foreigner.

I went to inform Geoff of my decision, and together we went to the white house to let the Pandatshangs know. They were talking with a Khamba bandit chief who had come to the valley to have a dispute settled, but Topgyay dropped the conversation to ask if I had come to a decision. I gave him my answer, and we talked about arrangements for travel along the route I proposed to take.

Topgyay said that very few Tibetans had ever done the complete journey along the second route through Zayul and Rima to Sadiya in Assam. He and Rapga had considered it in 1935, but had ruled it out because of the uncertainty about getting through. However, he did have a soldier who had completed it five years before, travelling on foot, and Topgyay now sent for him. Meanwhile, we discussed other possibilities, but ended up preferring the Zayul route. When the soldier, Tsering Dorje, arrived he was questioned by all of us in great detail.

He had come from India by that route because he and some friends had done some trading there but had no horses, and no money to hire them to carry the goods. It was cheaper to hire porters to carry the loads from village to village along this shorter route between Batang and Sadiya. It had been a long, arduous and dangerous experience, and he would not like to do it again. Topgyay sardonically informed him that he would be surprised to hear that he was about to do so – with *Khamba Gyau*, his nickname for me. He added that it would be easier this time, for he would have a horse. He was being appointed as my official escort to see that I got there safely.

With that settled, Rapga helped draft a request for official permission from the Lhasa Government for me to travel by this route, without mentioning my purpose, of course. This was sent by fast-riding messenger to Dege Sey, or 'Prince of Dege', who was the Lhasa commander of Tibetan forces in Markham Gartok on the other side of the Yangtze River, and a good friend of the Pandatshangs. He would transmit it to Chamdo, from where it would be radioed to Lhasa. With these arrangements completed, I would have to wait until we had a reply from Lhasa.

When we had exhausted the topic of the possible implications of my

proposed journey to India, Topgyay called for a meal to be served and the conversation became general. The bandit chief, Linka Gyabon, said how interested he was to learn of my medical treatment of sick people, and asked if I would come to his area to treat people there.

‘Certainly,’ I agreed, ‘but how do I get there? Your valley is very difficult to find’ – I grinned meaningfully – ‘and is several days’ journey away.’

‘But, of course! My valley is the most difficult to approach in the whole of Tibet,’ he boasted laughingly. ‘How do you expect me to live as a bandit unless I have a safe retreat and fast horses to get me there? No, when you return from India send me a message and I will send you an escort to bring you to my valley – otherwise you will be killed long before you ever reach there.’

‘Thank you,’ I said drily. ‘Do you rob me of my medicines after I arrive, then?’

He lay back on the dais with a roar of laughter, delighted with the thrust. ‘No, that would not profit me at all, as I do not know how to use your medicines. I will treat you well until all your medicines are finished – then I will rob you of your horse. You will then have to remain as my guest, and I will have obtained your horse,’ he finished triumphantly.

Linka Gyabon had come to the valley with twenty of his men heavily armed and mounted on swift ponies. The official who had lodged a complaint against him to the Pandatshangs had also come with his escort of heavily armed and well-mounted men. The news of their arrival had spread, and many others had come to the valley with their horses, for they knew that once the dispute was settled there would be a celebration and horse-racing.

There had been much excited talking and betting, and there was intense speculation about the possible performance of my grey against the new arrivals. I had raced it many times since our arrival in the valley, and it had become something of a legend. I had already heard of two stories which had become camp fire gossip, accounting for its phenomenal speed: one, that I gave it injections of some of my foreign medicines; and the other, that I whispered a Christian prayer into its ear as I started a race! Linka Gyabon had scarcely arrived in the valley before he suggested buying it from me, without even seeing it perform. ‘I need it,’ he had protested, ‘in my work. What is the use of being a bandit leader if someone else has a faster horse than me?’

Rapga now joined in the discussion about the horse. He had been known as a mad rider in his youth, and had gambled recklessly on horses during his exile in India. ‘Why don’t you race your horses to find out just how good or bad they are, and not just talk about it?’ he suggested to Linka

Gyabon. 'Your own horse has a good reputation, and it would make a good race.'

The bandit chief looked at him with an expression of blank amazement. 'You are not seriously suggesting that his horse is as good as my red one?' he demanded incredulously. 'I was only joking when I said it might be faster than mine, not because I thought it had any real chance.'

Topgyay grinned lazily at Linka Gyabon. 'That sounds as if you might be afraid of the result,' he said with mock innocence.

Linka Gyabon looked from the Pandatshangs to me. 'Do you really want to race?' he asked disbelievingly.

'Saddled or bareback?' I queried, according to the Khamba custom of the champion giving the contender a choice.

It was the final straw. Linka Gyabon swore an oath. '*Goon-chok-sum*. By the three gods. You've asked for it. Saddles. Tomorrow morning.'

From early dawn the next day people began gathering along the flat valley floor behind the white house, their horses staked beside their tents. There would be a variety of races, as challenges were extended and accepted, and bets laid. The horses were being groomed, but the most important preparation was in the feed of grain and tea-leaves. Before any race of consequence the tea residue from the Tibetan churned butter tea was saved and then mixed with grain to provide a feed that had a dramatic effect on a horse's performance. Horses that were normally placid and easily handled became restless and aggressive; and horses that were normally restless and aggressive became almost impossible to handle. So, to the increasing excitement of the gathering crowds there was added the mounting skittishness of the horses. As the earlier challenge races were run, the remaining horses became even more fired up.

There was scarcely a man, woman or child there who had not heard of the famous red horse of Linka Gyabon, and there was raging controversy over the possible outcome of the race between it and my grey. Many had seen my horse race, but never against one with the reputation of Linka Gyabon's. Loshay had been up since dawn grooming and preparing my horse, and as he led it forward to where we were standing there was an admiring gasp from the crowd. With a deep powerful chest, tapering to compact, beautifully proportioned hindquarters, carried on legs which lifted like steel springs as it walked, it was built like a song and moved like a melody. But the rolling eye and tossing head showed a dangerous impatience, and the pressing crowd kept at a respectful distance.

When Linka Gyabon's red horse appeared there was another murmur from the crowd. The tall, rakish animal with the gleaming chestnut coat was a good two hands higher than the grey, and it pulled its two attendants off their feet with its prancing and rearing. Two other horses had been

entered, one sorrel belonging to a soldier of Topgyay's, whom I had seen do well in several races, and the other a powerful-looking white horse belonging to the official with a complaint against Linka Gyabon.

As we walked towards the starting point a thought suddenly struck me, for I noticed that Linka Gyabon was still wearing his heavy lambswool-lined gown. 'Aren't you riding?' I asked him.

'No,' he replied, surprised. 'Why? Are you?' He looked at my riding breeches and boots with a new comprehension, and added, 'I am too heavy a weight for my horse to carry in a short race, and I have given him to one of my men to ride. Is that all right?' he finished anxiously. 'It is one of our customs.'

'Of course,' I assured him quickly, grinning. 'Only, I wanted to beat you as well as your horse. No one can ride my horse saddled except me; and no one can ride him bareback except my servant. So, if you'd rather ride bareback I'll call my servant.'

'No, ride as we agreed,' he said promptly. 'It will make no difference to the result,' he grinned.

It took me several minutes to mount the grey, as it reared high as soon as I put my foot near the stirrup; and even when I had swung into the saddle he pawed the air, dragging Loshay off his feet as he tried to hold him. The other horses were also milling around, keyed up with excitement, and there was great danger that those who were holding the bridles and trying to give a level start might be mangled under the flailing hoofs.

Finally the starter called to the holders to stand away. He would try to give a fair start when we were all facing up the course; but the flashing white cloth on his down-stroke startled the grey into another pitching battle, and when I had straightened him out the others were already a good distance away and bunched close together in a stretching gallop.

I hurled the grey after them with loose reins, giving him his head, and he lifted himself in response. He bulleted forward, gathering speed with every stride, until the wind of his racing drove the breath back in my throat and his whipping mane stung my face like a thousand needles. He devoured the distance between us and the other horses, and the riders threw startled glances over their shoulders as I thundered alongside. They were already using whips and heels, and with a wild yell I kicked the grey into a hammering lead. The watching Tibetans were shouting like dervishes, so to give them something to remember I lay along the grey's neck and drummed a mad tattoo on its flanks, streaking past them in a flying hurricane of dust and stones.

When I finally managed to pull up I was already a good bit up the mountainside, and still the grey was pawing and pulling savagely at the bit. I circled back to where Linka Gyabon was standing beside Topgyay and

Rapga, with an expression of blank amazement still on his face as he gazed wonderingly at my horse.

'I wouldn't have believed it possible,' he said ruefully, 'if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. I must have it,' he went on firmly. 'How much do you want? I will pay you double what you paid.'

'Sorry. No sale,' I said firmly.

'All right! I steal him,' he said, only half-joking, I could see.

Topgyay had been listening to the exchange with some amusement, and he now intervened to say, 'I will decide. Loshay, bring the horse here. Now,' he said, turning back to Linka Gyabon, 'if you can ride him, you can pay double the price and he is yours. If you cannot ride him you will acknowledge your defeat and say no more about it.'

For a moment I was dismayed as I saw Linka Gyabon walk forward confidently to swing into the saddle. The horse had been ridden at a gruelling pace in the race, and it must have taken a lot of the fire out of him. But I need not have worried. As soon as he managed to get into the saddle, with Loshay dragged off his feet by the already struggling and rearing horse, ears laid back and eyes rolling, he signalled to Loshay that he was getting off. He walked back to us with his boyish grin. 'All right,' he said shamelessly. 'I'll let you keep him.'

A few nights later I was returning from a walk down the valley beside the river, when I found Topgyay standing on the wooden bridge leading up to his house. I liked the evening walk, which was possible only when the moon was bright enough to see by. This evening the moonlight and stars carpeted the valley floor with silver and etched the forests and mountains in black. Topgyay was a bulky black figure on the white bridge, looking down at a white-flecked black river.

It was an arresting sight, not only because of its unique beauty but also because I had never seen Topgyay without hovering servants or bodyguards, or companions or family. The moonlight showed his smile as I approached, and I suspected he had been waiting for me. This was confirmed by his greeting.

'Why do you come out walking on your own at night?' he asked interestedly, leaning back against the bridge supports.

'I love the moonlight, the silence and the beauty,' I replied. 'It helps me to think.'

'About what?'

'About Tibet, the world, God, you, me,' I replied.

'Do you make sense of it all?' he asked, without his usual teasing overtones.

I took my time in replying, listening to the musical burbling of the river beneath the bridge. I now knew him well enough to know when he was

being argumentative, provocative, mocking or serious. For some reason his lone presence on the bridge, waiting to speak with me, was an indication that he was serious.

‘Sometimes I think I do,’ I said slowly, ‘but more often I do not. Tonight it all seemed very clear. On a night like this it is easy to believe in God; and, removed from the complexities of the world beyond this valley, it is not too difficult to work out patterns, and relationships within those patterns. How without God could we explain you and me standing in this place at this time?’

‘In Tibetan Buddhism we do not have a God,’ Topgyay said sombrely, ‘we have many gods. We also have many demons. That makes it easier for you. Inside this valley you and I might even eventually arrive at the same beliefs, because we both are seeking so many of the same things. You do not care very much for your Christian religious practices, and I do not care very much for my Buddhist religious practices. I do not want power like Rapga wants it, to change the politics of Tibet, because I am as sceptical of politicians as you are; I want power here in my country to help my people to a better life than most of them have at present under the Lhasa and Chinese regimes. So do you. But, for me, it means war, and bloody battles, and scheming, and compromises with politicians and priests whom I despise. It was I who suggested to Rapga that you go to India on our behalf, do you know that? Yet I know you despise politicians and priests, and hate violence and war, as much as I do. Still, I knew you would do what we asked of you. Why? Why are you doing what you despise, and for what purpose? That is why I am here tonight, to see if I can find out if you have answers I do not have.’

‘I would need more Tibetan than I have now to answer your questions properly,’ I said ruefully. ‘God, gods and demons, and their influence in the world. Communism and Christianity and Buddhism. The responsibility of individuals and the State. The divine purpose of the Creator in the world, and His part for me in it. You as a key figure of revolt in Tibet, me as a lone, seeking Christian trying to find that God in all that is happening. It would take months to discuss, even if we had the language, and I’m not sure we could make sense of it then. Even Jesus at the end of his life asked, “Why me?” Put simply, I believe there is a God who is knowable, that I find Him in the Bible and in daily communion through prayer, that he sent me to Tibet, that he brought you and me together, that he gave us the compatibility we enjoy, that I am part of His purpose in my association with you, that through you and this task in India I will get to know more of Him and His purpose. That means I have to cope with the hypocrisies of politicians and priests, the revulsions of violence and war, with the Bible and prayer to guide me. That’s how Jesus did it.’

He gave a deep sigh, and gazed out into the dark forests of the valley. 'You may not make it to India,' he said eventually. 'What then? Will it all have been for nothing? Do you know, we Tibetans, when we talk about you, say that in a former life you were a Tibetan and have come back in the Wheel of Life to help us? I had that in mind when I gave you your Tibetan name of *Khamba Gyau* – 'the bearded Khamba' – and not just because you had a beard and we Tibetans don't. That's just another way of saying that God sent you here.' He smiled his teasing smile. 'I suppose that means we both believe that you will not die on the way to India, and that you will fulfil your destiny for Tibet.'

He shrugged expressively, and began walking up the path to the house. 'When you return we will talk again of God, and the world, and Tibet, and you and me. You will have much more language then, and maybe more answers.'

Into Inner Tibet

A few days later a reply arrived from Dege Sey to say that I was permitted to travel via the route specified, and that my documents would be ready in Markham Gartok when I arrived there. With this permit I would be eligible to use the official Tibetan system of travel known as *ulag*, under which local people at each stage of a journey had to provide animals for the travelling officials to reach the next destination. The system also included the provision of food, if necessary, and of the headman's wife or daughter, or other female, for the duration of the stay.

Topgyay and Rapga prepared a bundle of reports and personal letters for me to take with me; some to be given to Dege Sey when I got to Markham Gartok, for him to read and then send on urgently to Chamdo for onward radio transmission to Lhasa; others to be carried to India for friends, relatives and officials there.

At last all the preparations for my journey were completed and it was time to go. I was to be given a ceremonial send-off with full escort for part of the way, and at the final meal everyone was talking excitedly of the picnic and party ahead.

Then, outside to the compound, where a milling mass of people and animals was gathered. The Khambas loved an occasion and any opportunity to saddle a horse, sling a gun over the shoulder, and ride madly was eagerly snatched. Some were leading their horses, and some horses were leading their already inebriated riders. Some children were on the horses, and some were underneath them. Some women were laughing, some giggling, and all were indulging in bawdy *badinage*. I was to ride my grey until we stopped to picnic, then I would switch to a more pedestrian animal for the tough journey ahead, and Geoff would lead him back to the village.

When I swung up on my horse, together with Topgyay, Rapga and the others, it was the signal for departure, and the cavalcade wound downhill in a colourful pattern of weaving, pirouetting horses, over the wooden bridge in a clattering thunder of hoofs, and on to the snaking, western trail out of the valley. About an hour later we stopped for the send-off party, and then I said my final farewells, each of us conscious that a rubicon was being crossed.

It had begun to snow, and I muffled myself up in my fur-lined coat and hood, but in the intense cold my exposed beard and moustache froze. I slouched down in the saddle and adjusted myself to the steady pace we would maintain across Tibet. After a few desultory remarks, Loshay,

Tsering Dorje and another muleteer called Bajay, my companions for the journey, who had conspicuously enjoyed the party, lapsed into silence, except for an occasional shout at a recalcitrant horse or mule in our small caravan. We had trimmed our loads down to an absolute minimum so that its small size would both serve as a deterrent to bandits and be useful in case we should have to carry the loads ourselves at some stage, if there was no way through for the animals, as we had heard. The Tibetans even carried a minimum of arms, so that these would not be an enticement for bandits to attack.

We struggled through a chilling gale at the top of the pass and dropped down slowly at a gentle gradient to a small village, where we decided to stay the night. Sleep was difficult, it was so cold, and so we got up early and left just as dawn was breaking. Some villagers were helping us to get the animals loaded, and I sat beside the fire and read from my pocket Bible to give me some mental and spiritual food for the long day ahead. With two months to spend in the saddle I decided that I would do something I had always wanted to do 'when I had time': read and meditate on the Books of Hebrews and Leviticus together, to come to a better understanding of Judaic-Christian symbolism.

On leaving the village we continued to descend towards the river, which we had to ford at some point yet unseen. It was an awe-inspiring sight. The mountains rose sheer from the waters of the Yangtze and folded back reluctantly towards their lofty summits, making the whole valley at this point a savage gash in the earth's surface. The trail beneath us wound downwards in a wide zigzag so steeply that after a while we had to dismount and walk, and my toes began to ache excruciatingly with the constant rubbing against the inside of my boots. The animals slithered down, most of the time on their haunches, and the loads kept falling off and were in constant danger of being lost down the sheer mountainside.

As we neared the river we could see a village appearing on the shoulder of a hill on the far side, where a small valley led away westwards towards inner Tibet. The houses were all built with their backs to the vertical face of the mountain, and from where we were, far above them, they appeared to be precariously perched above the river. However, when we arrived at the banks of the river about noon, they were seen to be some distance away on the far side and all our shouting brought no response. Finally, Tsering Dorje had to unsling his rifle and fire a shot in the air, which echoed and re-echoed in the surrounding valleys, and this brought people running to the water's edge on the other side. A shouted conversation informed us that we and the loads would have to be ferried over, and the horses would have to swim.

As they bustled about launching a suspiciously fragile yakskin coracle,

we separated the loads from the animals and stacked them beside the river, which whirled and eddied by with sullen force. When the coracle had its first load and went ahead, it was carried about a hundred yards downstream before it could be propelled out of the powerful current into the comparatively quiet eddies of the far side.

We drove the unwilling horses and mules into the river with blows and stones, until they were well on their way, and then we took to the frightening coracle. To make matters worse, my horse had refused to go into the river at all, and it was finally decided to tow him behind us. After an initial struggle, during which I was certain that we were all going to be tilted into the river and the current carry us away, it quietened and began to swim on its own, and we made the other side safely.

In the middle of the next afternoon, as we plodded steadily onward, I was jolted out of my reverie by a warning shout from Loshay. Heading down the valley towards us was a billowing cloud of dust, indicating a company of fast-riding horsemen. My companions eased their rifles, revolvers and swords within reach, sliding their swords in and out of the scabbards to make sure there was no hitch. I rode to the head of the caravan and some distance in front to draw attention, because I was well known as a friend of the Pandatshangs and this might be useful if these were bandits.

A group of about twenty Tibetans emerged from the dust-cloud and rode down on us quickly, fanning out into a double line on each side of the trail ahead of me with the practised ease of confident horsemanship. Even the sight of three women among them did not dispel the fear that they might be bandits, for women were still the legitimate – and often willing – spoils of war in this fantastic country. I greeted them courteously, and there were shouts of surprise at a foreigner speaking their language. To my polite trail-greeting of ‘Where are you going?’, the leader replied that they were soldiers making for the river boundary where there had been some fighting recently. I was conscious that Loshay and the others were beside me, unsmiling, hands still close to their weapons, for they trusted groups of soldiers as little as they did gangs of bandits.

The leader, still running his eyes over our caravan, asked casually, ‘Where are you going?’ I replied, ‘To Markham Gartok’; and he answered, ‘Oh, you must be the foreigner Dege Sey is expecting. We have just come from Chamdo and brought your documents from the governor.’

The tension eased, and after a few questions about the trail ahead on both sides, they passed on behind us in a thundering gallop.

Two days later we approached Markham Gartok. We had been climbing out of a valley and emerged on to a huge plateau. The scenery was especially beautiful in the high, flowering grasslands, and the dark green pine forests swept up from the valley floor on both sides, to be crowned on

the peaks with the towering purity of virgin snow. The deep blue of the sky was reflected in the wide sweep of the river below, to be lost again in the foaming whiteness of the spray as it met a cluster of large boulders. The sun shone warmly out of a cloudless sky.

We neared the settlement in late afternoon. It was the official location of the civil and military governors of the frontier region of Markham – ‘south Kham’ – where the boundary separated inner from outer Tibet. The military governor was a Khamba, the influential Prince of Dege, friend of the Pandatshangs. Markham had been one of the main trouble-spots in the revolts against the Chinese in 1910, 1918 and 1934–5 – the last the date of the famous Pandatshang uprising.

We dropped down into Markham Gartok from 15,000 feet into a long, flat valley still some 12,000 feet above sea level. Rounding a shoulder of the mountain, we came out on a wide expanse of plain, at the far end of which huddled the small collection of houses and the white monastery of the town. The only large building was a whitewashed fort, the garrison of the Tibetan troops in south-east Tibet. As we rode up, people were streaming out of the houses and gathering outside the heavy gates of the fort.

I had been well-schooled by the Pandatshangs and my travelling companions as to proper procedures, so I did not dismount before the gates of the fort but rode on through into a large courtyard, in which servants, who had been alerted regarding our arrival, were getting ready to receive us. As we dismounted a tall, well-dressed and commanding figure came out of one of the doors and walked towards us.

I tried to remember the high honorific usages of the Tibetan language for top officials, for Dege Sey was the highest Tibetan official I had met, and the Pandatshangs had discouraged the use of honorifics in our conversations together. But I need not have worried.

‘Have you had a pleasant journey?’ Dege Sey asked in good English. He gave a smiling nod to Loshay and the others, and a few orders regarding them to his servants and soldiers standing by. Then he said to me, ‘Let us go inside and have some tea. But first I will show you your rooms, and you can have a wash to make you feel fresher.’

When I had washed I went to the room Dege Sey had indicated, and found him seated cross-legged on a rug-covered dais. He waved me forward to a seat beside him. In front of us stood an ornamented gilt table, and when he clapped his hands several servants came in to set it. I smiled with pleasure. In front of me were being placed beautiful delicate china cups and saucers, silver cutlery, foreign cream biscuits – and Indian tea! There was even a Western-style teapot, milk and cube sugar.

For an hour or more we sat drinking tea, leisurely discussing my journey from Britain to Tibet, and Dege Sey’s own more limited travels.

He had been to Gyantse in west Tibet in his youth, and had studied English there under Frank Ludlow, the English schoolmaster appointed for this purpose. He had also lived with other British officials and had learned English customs – hence the tea, he smilingly observed. He had read many English books, and had met with the Americans Tolstoy and Dolan during their trip through Tibet some three years previously. He was thirty-eight years of age – eight years older than I – and had recently lost his much-loved wife through illness. He was an absolutely delightful host.

When we finished drinking tea Dege Sey suggested a rest before the evening meal, which he invited me to share with him. I was glad to accept, to relax and change into different clothes in such a civilized setting. I also asked Loshay to get out the present I had brought for Dege Sey. The Tibetans were such a hospitable people that they never considered charging for hospitality. However, it was customary on visiting someone to give a present, along with the usual ceremonial white scarf always exchanged in greeting. In our travels among Tibetans of various ranks we had found it best to give as presents a variety of Chinese cottons, silks and brocades, graded according to the rank of the host. For my present visit with Dege Sey I had brought a full roll of beautifully designed red brocade and one of patterned white silk.

At first he refused to accept the gift when I presented it, but I insisted and he thanked me warmly, and also the servants who had carried the gift into the room. Before they withdrew he asked them if they were being well looked after, and gave orders to his servants to feed them.

I gave him the reports and letters I had brought from the Pandatshangs and, when he politely laid them aside, I suggested that he ought to read them so that I could answer any urgent questions he might have. He agreed, and told the servants to start bringing in the food.

There were several dishes of meat, vegetables and eggs, cooked in Chinese fashion with different flavours and spices, and eaten with silver chopsticks.

‘I am sorry I am only able to offer you Chinese food,’ he apologized, ‘but my cook does not know how to make Western dishes, so I thought that Chinese would be more to your liking.’

‘I am very fond of Chinese food,’ I replied, ‘but I also like Tibetan food. For a long time I have been eating *tsamba* and dried raw meat, and also the frozen, fresh raw meat. Yak butter tea, of course, I have been drinking for years.’

‘Oh, well, in that case I shall have no difficulty,’ Dege Sey laughed. ‘We shall have a happy time together.’

Throughout the meal, and for some time afterwards, I gave him an account of what was happening in China and described the rapid advance

of the Communists there; then went on to depict recent events in Kham. Eventually he cut short the recital with the suggestion that I must be tired and should retire to bed. Tomorrow we would have plenty of time to talk, and later, for he hoped that I would stay with him for a few days. He escorted me back to my room, and being assured that everything was all right he bid me a pleasant goodnight.

Before I left Bo-mi, Topgyay had said that I should carry some anti-syphilis injections with me, as the incidence among Tibetans, especially among the soldiers, was very high. He added that I should not take other medicines, except those that I needed for the journey for ourselves, as I would be inundated with requests for treatment and it would be difficult to refuse. I had read and heard various reports of the high incidence of venereal disease in Tibet, some figures quoted being as high as 90 per cent. I was hesitant about accepting such a figure, but over the past few years had established by experience that it could not be far out.

Tibetans were neither completely polygamous nor completely polyandrous; they were generally promiscuous. Polygamy and polyandry existed, but the incidence was determined by choice, circumstance or custom: such as, for example, the polyandry of the aristocratic class to safeguard their inheritances. Where there were few men available, because of the high proportion going into the priesthood – at least one in every family, and often more – polygamy was practised in the area. But where women were scarce, polyandry was found. In both polygamous and polyandrous communities promiscuity was also practised. The monks had a high incidence of sodomy and pederasty, and so they too were not immune from venereal disease.

The Pandatshangs' theory was that as the disease was known in Tibetan as *gya-nad*, meaning 'Chinese illness', it must have been acquired from Chinese soldiers during their frequent invasions, or by Tibetan traders and muleteers visiting brothels on the Chinese border. These people, passing continuously from border to border, by their promiscuity would also pass the disease on inside the country. There was certainly a high percentage of sterility and infant mortality in Tibet. Many of the ordinary Tibetan women expected to lose two babies out of three, and this was not because of carelessness but through disease and poor hygiene.

A day or two after my arrival, therefore, I informed Dege Sey that I had anti-syphilis injections with me, and that I would be happy to treat his soldiers, or any others. At first he demurred, saying that there were so many and I was his guest on a limited stay, but eventually he agreed. He called a captain and gave orders for the sufferers to be lined up in the courtyard. The captain returned to say that there were thirty-eight ready for treatment. I guessed from the meagre response that the captain and his fellow-

officers had restricted the numbers to themselves. I told him that I had plenty of medicine, and also that I would be giving the treatment in the courtyard, letting him know that he and his friends would be publicly exposed.

I was right about the ploy. Several of the officers suggested to me that as they had sufficient money, I should give them more than one injection and also leave them some supplies of phials. I refused, and with Loshay and Bajay breaking phials and sterilizing equipment, I was soon swamped with the demand for treatment. It was common practice among wandering Chinese 'doctors' to sell pseudo-medicines at extortionate prices, and so everyone wanted to have a chance of getting the real stuff free when they could.

In the line of patients were two colonels, one of them an attractive, raffish individual, and the other not so pleasant. Both were relatives of Dege Sey, Loshay informed me, and they both sought special treatment and extra phials for the future.

It was an awkward situation. If I agreed to give them special consideration it would mean breaking my own known rule of equal treatment for all, rich and poor, throughout the territory, and would also make living with myself difficult. But if I did not comply I could make two very dangerous enemies. I resolved the dilemma by giving them heavy doses of the preparation, which had a strongly adverse effect, telling them to see how they reacted and that we could discuss giving them more later if necessary. They did not return.

After my alfresco clinic I washed up and went to find Loshay to make me some tea. I found him with other members of our caravan, and several of Dege Sey's servants, engaged in a noisy gambling session, watched by an amused and enthusiastic crowd. They jumped up when I entered, and went to get my tea while the crowd dispersed – except for three attractive and well-dressed women. Judging by their appearance, they were obviously not of ordinary servant class, and I wondered what they were doing there, still waiting after the others had gone. They stood laughing and talking animatedly together, with sidelong glances in my direction.

When Loshay returned with the tea I asked him quietly what, if anything, they wanted. He replied that they were relatives of Dege Sey, two of them servants of the wives of the two colonels I had treated for syphilis. They had come to arrange for their mistresses to have sex with me.

I was flummoxed – but not surprised. It was a common custom, and I had been in several similar situations before when I travelled with the Pandatshangs, or when I had been on my own in a village. The Pandatshangs found it highly hilarious when I politely turned down the offers, giving as my standard reply, so as not to cause offence to accepted custom,

that 'my religion does not permit me to accept the offer'. The Pandatshangs pointed out that I could have a boy instead, as that was the common religious practice of the monks!

This time Loshay, with a grin, emphasized the possible dangers of refusing the requests; the ladies were relatives of Dege Sey, the most important official in the region, and their husbands were militarily very influential. I told Loshay, drily, that I also knew that their husbands had syphilis, which took the romance, if not the amusement, out of the situation. He shrugged dismissively – implying that it was just an occupational hazard in Tibet – and asked what reply he should give to the waiting ladies. I told him to tell them about my religious objections, and he turned away, still grinning widely.

A few days later we left Markham Gartok, with a full ceremonial escort accompanied by Dege Sey, his officials and military officers – including the two colonels and their wives. With the final exchange of white scarves we parted, and Loshay brought his horse alongside mine. After chatting about some arrangements for the day ahead he said casually, 'That was a good idea to give the colonels such strong injections. It put them in bed for a day or two.'

I replied, 'Yes, we could have been in some bad trouble there.'

Loshay grinned. 'Yes, more trouble than you know. I was sleeping with their wives, and if they hadn't been sick they might have found out. I went in your place,' he finished wickedly.

When I had recovered from the shock, and had told him a few home truths, I commented bitterly, 'Why did you have to get involved with these particular women? Weren't there plenty of others?'

'Well,' Loshay said judiciously, 'it was like this. One of them was known as *dru-chu-ray-dun*, "sixty-seven", because that was the number of men she was reported to have had sex with.'

'What age was she?' I asked, recalling her apparent youth as well as beauty, and intrigued by the number he had quoted.

'Seventeen,' he replied. I retreated into silent contemplation, and Loshay kicked his horse into a trot to catch up with the others.

'She will now be called *dru-chu-ray-jay*, "sixty-eight",' he yelled over his shoulder.

Out of Tibet and into India

It was now fourteen days since I had left the Pandatshangs in Bo-mi, and I was behind my self-imposed schedule. I had been impatient to get away from Markham Gartok but had delayed at Dege Sey's request to provide him with information, and also to glean what information I could from Chamdo and Lhasa. Now I would have to press on harder than ever to make up for lost time. From now on, although I still had about two months' journey ahead of me, I would be leaving Tibet behind me.

On enquiring about the next stage from Dege Sey I had learned that there were widening gaps between villages in the maze of mountains of southern Tibet. For a start, we could not possibly reach the next village of Drayu Gompa in one day, and we would have to camp out on a very high and difficult pass to cut a three-day journey to two days as I had planned.

This involved extra animals to carry supplies of fodder for them and wood for ourselves. The problems ahead had a sobering effect on our caravan and there was not nearly so much verve as usual in our departure from the last stage before the pass.

Five hours later we reached the edge of the tree-line at 17,000 feet, and the howling, piercing wind numbed me through all my clothing. It was so cold that I could not sit still beside the blazing fire, and hurried backwards and forwards to pile on more fuel. Even when drinking the scalding tea and facing the blaze, it was still freezing cold on our backs. We kept the fire going all night, each of us throwing some wood on to keep it blazing as we woke from our fitful sleep.

The next morning I had several bowls of boiling hot butter tea before I could face the prospect of getting out of my sleeping-bag. Tying on the loads, and tightening the girths of our saddles, was an excruciatingly painful ordeal – and we had far worse ahead!

Just as dawn was breaking in surly greyness around us we left the comparative shelter of the last of the tree-line, and met the full force of the wind driving down the valley in a swirl of stinging snow. There was no sound at all, except for the rise and fall of the wind.

After about three hours' steady climb we came to a huge ice-field which completely blocked our path, filling the whole of the valley ahead. We made several attempts to get our horses on to it, to see if we could get an unloaded animal over, but they fell down immediately and had to be dragged off by their tails. There was only one thing to be done and that was to cut steps in the smooth surface of the ice with the axes and swords to give

us some sort of footing. There was not a bush in sight to provide a covering of branches for the solid ice, and we had to go back some way to find places where we could dig to uncover sufficient dirt to spread on the glass-like surface. Even then, as we led the horses over like cats on a glass-topped wall, men and horses went down with a crash and had to be helped back on to their feet by the others.

And all the time the wind howled, and the snow drove into our faces, and our eyes ached since we could not wear protective goggles or spectacles because of the ice forming from our breath. As we bent heads and shoulders into the wind and driving snow it was difficult even to see the outline of the rider ahead. We headed into this icy wilderness for hours, it seemed, although I had by now lost all sense of time and direction.

Eventually we turned into a narrow valley, which was awesome in its savage isolation. It stretched ahead for about a mile in every direction, then was completely shut in by sheer, jagged, unclimbable, snow-covered mountains. The silence itself was terrifying after the recent shrieking fury behind us, the rearing mountains shutting out the snow and the wind. Snow lay over everything, the ice-covered boulders were like massive gravestones, the huge icicles like ghostly-draped dead, and the silence was the gibbering quiet of a morgue at midnight.

Our guide suddenly spoke. 'Can you see which way the trail leads?'

I threw him an uneasy glance, for we had been told that no one in the previous village had ever been this way, and that this man was the only one willing to obey the headman and go with us, then bring back the animals we had 'borrowed'. Now the man looked as if he had no idea where he was. He and the Tibetans with me discussed trail possibilities from their experience, but it was obvious that they were all just guessing.

'Where's my compass?' I asked Loshay, as I plunged my hand into my pocket and found it missing.

'*A-tsay!*' he exclaimed. 'It must have dropped out of your pocket during the night when you had it on top of your sleeping-bag, for I found it on the ground this morning. As you were not awake I put it in one of the pack-loads for safety, and then forgot all about it.'

Loshay's carefulness was commendable but it was likely to cause us a few uneasy hours, if not our lives. If we waited until the pack-animals caught up with us to find the compass then we would have to spend the night on the exposed pass above us, which would mean almost certain death at this temperature and in these conditions. If we went on at a guess, and then took a wrong turning, we would be stranded and in an even worse predicament. Time for prayer.

'Now, Lord,' I breathed. 'You sent me, and I'm on your work. Which way do we go?'

‘To the left,’ I heard the voice in my mind say, and I waved the others forward.

For several hours we toiled up the face of that savage valley, labouring through the knee-high drifts of snow, and across razor-sharp ice-fields, or negotiating massive boulders. When the horses stumbled, the snow reached to their shoulders and, with increasingly weary arms, we had to pull them back from tumbling over the edge of sheer slopes of snow and ice.

When we finally reached the top, it was to be faced once again with the raging blizzard; and, as we dismounted to descend, giving the animals a rest, we formed a chain by holding on to the reins of our own horse and the tail of the horse in front. Time after time one of us would fall down in a heap, as man or horse took a wrong step in that blinding blast and smothering snow, and be saved only by the others going into immediate reverse.

After some time we reached a small gully, where we huddled together out of the force of the gale to talk over the situation. The guide still could not say whether we were on the right trail or not, and I could not blame him, for we could see nothing at all that might serve as a landmark. I suggested we go on a bit further to see if we could get out of the wind and snow and find some sort of identifying landmark to help our guide.

Some time later – a long time, it seemed – the snow thinned, the wind eased, and we were able to ride the horses again. A turn in the valley and a sharp drop in the trail brought us out of the snows at last, and we found heaps of manure beside the trail, indicating that we were on the right track.

Just as dusk was setting in we saw some houses far ahead, and I ordered one of the Tibetans, Dawa Dondup, to go ahead and inform the headman of our arrival. We had only crossed the wooden bridge spanning a river leading to the village when Loshay’s horse collapsed and refused to move. We had just made the village in time, for the other animals also looked exhausted.

We were now twelve people and another eleven animals in our caravan, because of the extra loads and animals we had accumulated since Markham Gartok. This slowed our rate of progress and I chafed at every delay, but I was forced to realize that the Tibetans had to proceed cautiously because so little was known of the terrain.

Three weeks after leaving Bo-mi, and a week or so after leaving Markham Gartok, found us winding our way up and around the steep face of a mountain, where our stirrups hung over the edge of a drop of thousands of feet to the river far below. The trail became so bad that the normally indifferent Tibetans dismounted and led their horses, and we made slow speed as we moved gingerly forward.

Suddenly, Loshay let out a shrill whistle and shouted mockingly to Aku, one of the temporary muleteers who had been showing signs of nervousness, to look ahead at what was facing us. The trail took a sharp bend and then became only a thin line running across the face of the mountain, which was a vertical cliff above and below the trail. At some time the whole mountain must have dropped away, leaving only loose earth and boulders, and now there was not even a shrub to hold the remaining mass in place.

As our caravan came to a halt I asked the local people with us if there was any alternative route, for this one looked impossible, but they shook their heads. It was this way, or go back. On the very few occasions when travellers came this way they were always on foot and never with animals, as far as they knew.

It had to be attempted, so I gave orders for the crossing to be made with the animals one at a time, spaced out at regular intervals so as not to have too much weight on the treacherous trail. Even at that, small stones were dislodged which, gathering momentum and other stones in their descent, gave dire warning of what would happen to us if we slipped.

The silence was uncanny as we edged our way forward in a long, spaced line. I was bringing up the rear, to make sure that everybody and all the animals got over safely, when I heard a voice ahead yell that the mountain was moving – and blind panic was let loose.

Just in front of Loshay a young muleteer, no more than a boy, sobbed aloud as he tugged at a frightened horse and stumbled forward with his gaze fixed in terror above him. Loshay gave his horse a savage cut with the whip, which almost drove it over the edge, and it leapt forward in a scramble on to solid ground. He threw himself off his horse and raced back to help me. Both of us, with my panicking horse, turned the corner of the trail to safety just as the mountain face collapsed in a thundering landslide. It took some time for us to recover our composure.

Far ahead we could see a gleam of water that was the upper reaches of the River Salween, running north to south in the bed of a deep valley. I indicated that I wanted to get to the far side before dark, and the words were hardly out of my mouth before Aku came back from scouting ahead to say we had another problem.

During my travels in Tibet I had spent many interesting hours thinking of writing a book on the subject of 'bridges in Tibet'. Maybe it was because I was brought up within sight of the Kincardine Road Bridge and the Forth Bridge, in a village with a skew bridge at one end and a barrel bridge at the other, that I was so impressed with the number and variety of bridges in Tibet. It was not that there were so many rivers or streams, but that when a trail reached a river, and a bridge had to be built, the ingenuity with which

it was done was literally breathtaking. With no metal available, most of them were cantilevered with jutting wooden logs, linked together with a swaying contraption of ropes or twisted fibres precariously supporting a walkway of wooden slats. This was nerve-wracking enough for humans to negotiate, but often the rivers were so turbulent that no animal could swim and they had to be driven across the flimsy, swaying structure as well. The usually stoical animals were as petrified as the humans when this became necessary.

What we were facing now was not a river bridge, but a mountain platform. The trail at one time must have led round the shoulder of a huge rock-face jutting out of the mountain, which had since been carried away by rain or landslides, leaving a straight drop into the river thousands of feet below. Some incredibly agile and hopeful Tibetans had constructed a linking platform of wooden planks, and supported it along the jutting rock-face by means of wooden posts precariously jammed against the mountainside and held there by creepers. To make matters worse, we could not see where it ended for the bend in the rock-face. Loshay went first, and we all edged after him leading the reluctant animals, and found the distance to be 'only' some thirty yards – which felt like an eternity.

The descent was now so precipitous and the trail so bad that the loaded animals could not go down. We had to strip the loads off them and lead them, while the men carried the loads in relays by stages. For four hours we descended the face of the mountain in this fashion, until we arrived on the banks of the Salween, which at this point flowed wide, deep and sullen between the sheer slopes of the mountains.

We crossed on a wooden raft of six large logs tied together with leather thongs, and hauled ourselves to the other side by pulling hand-over-hand on a fibre rope lying on the surface of the river.

The next few days were a repeat of the days behind us, with one or more crises every day as we drove forward. At almost every village we were told that it was not possible to get through to India by this route, and hair-raising stories were repeated of those who had tried. While we were duly sceptical much of the time, for it was obvious that the headmen were naturally reluctant to provide *ulag* of men and animals to help us, if we decided to return the way we had come they would still have to do this. So, we battled on.

When we had almost reached the border, by my estimation, we were again told that it was not possible to get there because of a pass that was uncrossable at this time of year. There was a village called Mijiriga there in the summer, but it was always evacuated for the winter because it was impossible to live in the conditions which existed then.

We got up well before dawn so that we could send the slower travelling

yaks ahead of us. It was a nuisance having to take yaks instead of mules or horses, but we had no choice, for the latter were not available; and, as Loshay pointed out, we might be glad of the yaks if we were heading into snow.

As soon as it became light enough to see a shadow ahead we left. Snow had fallen steadily throughout the night and lay knee-deep on the ground. The yaks had left a broad, beaten track for us to follow and this helped the animals we were riding. We passed out of a silent forest and on to an empty plateau hidden in a curtain of snow.

Everywhere we looked it was white, and my eyes ached and sought the relief of the darker grey of the sky. We caught up with our caravan and then I could see how much we owed to the skill and strength of the huge, shaggy yaks. The leading yak would move forward with unerring instinct into the shoulder-high snowdrifts hiding the trail and struggle until it could not move. The men would then push their way past its heaving flanks and help it to its feet, trampling the ground in the process. The next yak was then driven into the lead and went through the same activities. It was slow, freezing, tedious, backbreaking work at that altitude. Even with eleven yaks breaking the trail ahead of us, our horses would stumble and pitch us into the drifts on either side.

The wind increased, driving the freshly falling snow into our faces, making it impossible to use goggles. We had smeared our faces around the eyes with charcoal before we left, and we now pulled our long hair forward over our eyes, in order to forestall the possibility of snow-blindness. But eyes and head ached, and bodies protested with exhaustion.

At times even the yaks could not find a trail beneath the white tablecloth of snow, and one of the men would have to stretch out full length while the others held him and he drove a long stick down into the snow to find the hard ground underneath. The danger in these conditions was that we could be on a 'snow-bridge', which might collapse under our weight, or there could be a crevasse down which we would disappear without trace. It was numbing, terrifying work and several times I thought about turning back. But the alternatives were equally, or more, unacceptable, and so we struggled on.

Gradually we worked our zigzag way across the saucer-shaped depression and began the climb to the summit of the pass. Two hundred yards below the summit we were brought to a full stop. The ceaseless winds had carried the snow into huge drifts on the final slope, and after sounding in every direction there appeared to be no way through. Finally, one of the strongest muleteers offered to go out on the drifts if we would tie a rope to him and keep it taut. It was murderously fatiguing work at that altitude, as time after time he would drop through the snow and be pulled out to

labour or flail his way forward. When he gave up, exhausted, the others agreed to give it a try and we inched forward.

Every one of us laboured like men possessed, and by coaxing, beating, pulling and yelling, managed eventually to get one yak to the summit, where we left it to lie panting while we returned for the others. When we had finished we dropped down beside them where they stood, heads adroop, and used their shaggy bodies for a shelter from the howling wind.

When we struggled off the summit and began the descent it was no easier. For we came almost immediately on to an ice-field where we could not keep our feet. We had to unload the animals, and then *pull* them across like sleds. I was trembling with exhaustion, and I had done only a fraction of the work done by the Tibetans.

Even when the trail began to drop sharply, dangers reared up at every turn. At one point Loshay shot over the edge as his horse slipped, and in its struggles it knocked against my horse and I, too, went over. Fortunately, Loshay had stopped against an outcrop of some kind and I rolled against him, and we were able to be pulled upwards by the muleteers.

The gruelling day slowly passed and the exhaustion of walking was replaced by the icy numbness of riding, as the deadly cold ate its way steadily from the extremities inwards, until it froze even the fears of frost-bite.

Nobody spoke in that great desolation, and out of the wind the snow whispered down in a requiem of death. I lost all interest in everything and everybody. I did not care whether I lived or died. The heel which kicked my horse did not seem to belong to me. Only hate belonged. I hated the stumbling horse beneath me. I hated the omnipresent snow. I hated the darkening sky above me. I hated the trail which stretched endlessly before me.

It was dark when at last the trail suddenly dipped and we entered a forest, where only the snow gave enough light to pick our way forward. Our horses were stumbling every few steps, looking likely to drop dead beneath us, when we came out into a clearing and there were the empty houses of Mijiriga. In one of them we found an old crone with a meagre fire, and the muleteers banked up her fire into a roaring blaze.

The flames seemed to be of a peculiar variety of colours and I drew Loshay's attention to the fact. He looked at me curiously and asked if I had any pain in my eyes. I confessed they were sore, but that was to be expected, wasn't it? Snow-blindness, he said, was never felt until one looked at the fire and then the pain was excruciating. He was right. Soon afterwards we all began to complain of the intense pain in our eyes, tears streaming between our fingers as we pressed them against our eyes. I tried applying compresses of butter and cold tea, but nothing helped. Even when we

dropped off to sleep with exhaustion, the darkness was shot through with brilliant streaks of agony.

My pain had eased but not gone in the morning, but the muleteers were in much worse shape. We had to go on to the next village about four hours away before we could get replacement animals, and then they had to return across the pass over which we had just come. No wonder they did not like the *ulag* system.

The new muleteers told us that we had a comparatively easy stage the next day, with only a difficult 'iron bridge' to cross on the way to the last town in Tibet, Zayul. I thought that if it was an 'iron bridge' then at least it would not be as nerve-wracking as those others we had crossed. I should have known better.

The reason it was called 'iron bridge' was because of the iron staples driven into the rock-face on which the wooden planks rested. The valley had taken a sharp turn to the left between the steep slopes of the heavily forested mountains, and the river was wide, dark, deep and very menacing as it swirled against the smooth rock sides some 300 feet below us. It was into this rock that the iron staples had been driven, and a rickety wooden walkway erected, composed of loose slats which, to make matters worse, sloped upwards from where we stood in stricken contemplation. To get on to this platform we had to cross on three rocking logs with one end lying loosely on the first of the wooden slats of the precarious platform. There was no handhold of any kind, I noted.

We made it safely, although not without some very heart-stopping episodes. After that it was an easy trip all the way into Zayul, situated on the confluence of the Tsangpo (or Brahmaputra) and Rongo Rivers, which we had just survived. It was just over a month since we had left Bo-mi.

It was also the time of the Tibetan New Year festival and preparations for celebration were begun at dawn. The local Tibetan official was the highest ranking since I had left Dege Sey at Markham Gartok, with the title of Dzong Bon, or 'commander'. When I presented myself at his quarters he invited me to be his guest at the celebrations.

The New Year is one time when the Tibetans really wash. There are individual Tibetans, and even communities in Tibet, who have never known what it is to have water on the skin except by accident or when crossing a river; but where water is available, the Tibetans will wash for the New Year celebrations. They do not object to water, or to being clean, but they know that to wash in the extremes of temperature in Tibet is to ask for split skins and chapped hands. It is much more sensible to rub one's body in rancid butter as protection.

The Tibetans of Zayul who, when we had arrived the day before, had stood around in mud-encrusted gowns with no shirts or blouses, were now

clothed in brocades, silks, broadcloths, embroidered boots, silver, gold and turquoise ornaments; many of them were drunk by mid-morning before the official festivities had begun.

It was a very hung-over group of muleteers and servants that I had to dragoon into getting up and on our way once more. The terrain and the people were now conspicuously different. The grim savagery of Tibet was dramatically replaced by the green tropical luxuriance of the Himalayan foothills.

As we passed through pleasant woods we came out in a wide clearing and were startled to find small, wiry people wearing almost no clothes, their dark hair piled up in topknots, and carrying machete-like swords. From my reading I gathered that these were the former head-hunting Mishmis of the tribal areas of upper Assam. After only a curious passing glance at us they carried on with their work, so I assumed they must have seen other foreigners.

This was confirmed when, a day or two later, we arrived at the Indian garrison village of Walong. It was obviously an army encampment, and I asked my way to the commander's office. He was very pleasant and ordered tea to be brought immediately. While we drank he listened with surprise to my story of having spent three years in Tibet, and to a brief account of my journey from Bo-mi to Walong. I did not mention anything of my mission to him.

He told me that there was another Briton in the neighbourhood, the famous Himalayan botanist, Captain Kingdon-Ward, and his wife. He was living in a spare barrack-room nearby, and the CO escorted me to meet them. Meanwhile, he would telegraph to the political officer in Sadiya regarding a travel permit for me to enter India, and would I wait in Walong until he had a reply?

He showed me where I could stay during my wait in Walong and I gave my servants a few instructions, then he took me to meet the Britons.

'This is Mr George Patterson,' the CO formally introduced us, 'Captain Kingdon-Ward.'

'Where did you come from?' Kingdon-Ward asked in astonishment.

'China,' I replied laconically, 'through Tibet.'

'By which route?'

'Markham Gartok, Drayu Gompa, Zayul.'

'Wait till my wife hears this,' he chuckled, and shouted to her to come through.

As she came to the door she stopped short on seeing me. 'Well! John the Baptist, I presume?' she said.

Later Jean Kingdon-Ward would write of my arrival in her book, *My Hill So Strong* (published by Jonathan Cape, 1952):

In sparsely populated hill tracts news travels like lightning; you hear of comings and goings weeks before they occur. So when Phag Tsering told us, two days after we reached Walong, that an American sahib had just arrived from Tibet (right in the middle of winter, was it likely?) and further, that he had a long beard and longer hair, I thought he must be talking through his hat, and said as much. But, apart from the detail that the American was a Scot, the whole fantastic story was perfectly true; and while Frank was still sceptically implying that Phag Tsering had better consult an oculist, in walked – well, I thought it was John the Baptist. However, he introduced himself merely as George Patterson. Dressed for the road, he was wearing riding breeches and boots, a white silk Chinese shirt buttoning across the shoulder, and a Tibetan *chuba* (robe).

But it was not the clothes that attracted attention, but the man wearing them. He was strikingly handsome. Tall and well-built, he looked magnificently fit. He had a beard, as Phag Tsering had said, and deepset blue eyes. It was also true that he had long hair, chestnut in colour, fine and wavy, which fell nearly to his shoulders. Effeminate? No, not in the smallest degree. It was not a pose, the long hair and elegant dress, and because it was not, they emphasized rather than softened the powerful, clear-cut features which, though youthful, were yet so firmly drawn . . .

It took me some time to live down this rhapsodized account when it was read by my friends! However, we arranged to meet for a meal, and to exchange information about trail conditions, as the Kingdon-Wards hoped to get permission to travel beyond Zayul seeking horticultural specimens. Then I went to my room and wrote letters for my trail-companions to take back to Geoff and the Pandatshangs. I gave them the remaining gifts, and my unnecessary clothing now that I was heading for warmer weather. I also wished them well for the return journey with all its known hazards.

With my loads now reduced and my porters recruited from the local people, I was left with only Loshay, as my personal servant. After four days my travel permit arrived, and I was able to depart. According to the Kingdon-Wards another week should see me arrive in Sadiya, if I could set a fast pace.

We now had no animals, of course, all loads being carried by locally hired Tibetan-speaking porters. Each day we dropped down slowly through pleasantly wooded mountains, the weather getting warmer as we neared the plains of India.

A week later I was approaching Denning, the last small town before reaching the city of Sadiya, some thirty-five miles away. I stayed the night

at a village called Theronliang where, lying back in a chair on the verandah of a Government Inspection Bungalow, I read my first English-language newspaper in several years. I gave orders to Loshay to be called at two o'clock in the morning, for I wanted to cover the thirty-five miles to Denning in one day.

To do this we had to take a short cut straight up one 6,000-foot mountain, and we reached the top just as dawn was breaking in a gloriously coloured sunrise. It was exhilarating to swing downwards at a fast pace through the trees and watch the haze lift slowly from the plains below us.

We arrived in Denning about noon, dripping with perspiration in the steaming heat. I went straight to the Government Inspection Bungalow to enquire whether my telegram from Theronliang had been received regarding arrangements for hiring transport to take me on to Sadiya. It had, although transport would not be available until four o'clock in the afternoon. The caretaker had also been told to provide me with food and any help I might need.

I had a long, cold bath and changed into a khaki suit for the first time in several years, brushing out my long hair and beard. The transport did not arrive at four o'clock as expected, and would not be available until the next day, but I could have a cold drink on the verandah and a good meal later.

Next day, a Mr Samdup arrived in a jeep to take me to meet the political officer. He told me that he had a permit, but no information regarding transfer of money. However, he would be happy to advance me what I required and I could send it back to him when I arrived in Calcutta. He also arranged to send a telegram to a friend in Calcutta, a Brethren businessman, whose name and address I had been given by Geoff, and with whom I might be able to stay.

We left Sadiya by plane the next day. It was Loshay's first experience of flying, and his white-knuckled grip on the arms of the seat indicated how terrifying he found it. To make matters worse, the heat inside the plane was unbearable, there was no air-conditioning, and I thought I was going to faint.

Then we hit some bad turbulence and both Loshay and I became violently air-sick. I felt worse than at any time during our journey across Tibet. From somewhere I heard Loshay ask how he could get a window open so that he could jump out; but he could not push past my prostrate body to get into the corridor and near the door.

The sun was setting in blood-red splendour when we began the descent into Calcutta, and we entered a taxi to take us into the city in the dark. We were glad to accept the invitation from Geoff's friends, Mr and Mrs Armen George, to stay with them, and to retire immediately to bed.

Attempts to Save Tibet

Calcutta, a hybrid monstrosity of architectonics, reared out of the heat-hazed ground like one of the creatures from India's own mythical Sea of Milk. The sun beating back from the white Anglicized colonial buildings and thousands of white-clothed people, together with the shimmering heat waves which blurred all outlines, increased the impression of mild unreality and the overspilling fecundity of ancient legend.

In the golden age, so the legend ran, Brahma, the creator god, presided over a conference of gods and demons to decide means of securing their immortality. It was finally decided that if they completed the long and difficult journey to the Sea of Milk, the sixth of the seven seas which it was believed surrounded the world in ever-widening circles, and succeeded in churning it, they would obtain a liquor called *amrita*, which conferred immortality on all who drank of it. When, after many adventures, they succeeded in accomplishing the churning of the sea by using a revolving mountain 77,000 miles high and 77,000 miles deep, certain objects began emerging from the milky ocean. The first to appear was the wonderful cow, Surabhi; then came the goddess of wine, the goddess of prosperity, the inventor of the Ayurvedic system of medicine, a horse, a moon, a wonderful gem, and countless millions of beautiful women.

Except for the moon, it did not require too much effort to see evidence of all the other mythical benefits in modern Calcutta. The first to make an impact on the Western mind was the ubiquitous cow, sauntering unmolested through shopping arcades sheltering fabulously stacked shops, grazing in front of luxurious hotels with scintillating jewellery displays, streaming unconcernedly across six-lane tarmac roads on to the grassy Maidan, which was widely covered with hundreds of the creatures. The Sea of Milk that was India was still being churned and still producing delights for some of the population, while others waited for their promised *amrita*.

In the midst of all this proliferating humanity and abundant evidence of human ingenuity and administration, I did not know a soul. Even the friends with whom I was staying I knew only through Geoff, and they were unable to put me in touch with the high authorities I needed so urgently. What had seemed natural, if somewhat dramatic, in the mountains of Tibet now appeared more than slightly ridiculous, as I walked towards the British High Commission through the anonymous thousands of pedestrians in this strange city.

The Victoria monument and Anglican cathedral distracted my atten-

tion but did little to lift my depression; if anything, they increased it. An administration that could erect buildings like these was hardly likely to have enough soul or imagination to accept my story. And the newly independent Government of India would be even less likely to pay attention. The first major test of Indian foreign policy, and the first major clash between independent India and China's Nationalist Government had occurred over Tibet.

In 1947 an Asian conference had been held in New Delhi and, in addition to the Chinese delegation, a Tibetan delegation was also invited by the new Indian Government. At the opening ceremony there was displayed in the conference hall a huge map of Asia, on which Tibet was shown as being outside the boundary of China. The Nationalist delegate protested and it was altered.

The Tibetan Government then sent a telegram demanding recognition by India of her former territories, listing those:

. . . such as Zayul and Walong, and in the direction of Pemako, Lonag, Lapa, Mon, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and others on this side of the River Ganges and Lowo, Ladakh, etc., up to the boundary of Yarkhim.

The Indian Government had replied, with commendable restraint:

The Government of India would be glad to have an assurance that it is the intention of the Tibetan Government to continue relations on the existing basis until new agreements are reached which either party would wish to take up. This is the procedure adopted by all other countries with which India has inherited Treaty relations from His Majesty's Government . . .

The 'Tibetan Trade Delegation' to India, as it was designated, was also commissioned by the Lhasa Government to proceed to the United States, Britain and some other countries. The ostensible reason for the 'trade' emphasis was the increasing difficulty that Tibet was experiencing with its exports, especially yak wool. Previously, Britain had agreed an annual tax-free export of some 4,000 tons of yak wool to the United States – where it was used in making car rugs and Santa Claus beards! – but the new Indian Government had levied taxes on all goods passing through Calcutta. The trade delegation was also seeking to expand trade in gold. The delegation was led by Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, and one member of it was the eldest Pandatshang, Yangpel.

At the time the British-Indian political officer in Sikkim dealing with Tibetan affairs, Arthur Hopkinson, communicated to his joint official superiors in New Delhi and London that, while Shakabpa's purpose was to

obtain gold for Tibet, the idea behind the trade delegation was ‘Rimshi’ Yangpel Pandatshang’s, and it should be discouraged. The trade delegation had gone on to China from India, where the fading Nationalist authorities had tried to persuade it to take Chinese instead of Tibetan passports for its overseas travels – and Rappa Pandatshang, then in Nanking, persuaded them to reject the proposal. The trade mission continued its round-the-world-tour, and Rappa left for Kangting on the border of Tibet and my momentous association with him and Topgyay.

But while the trade mission was in the United States the noted television journalist, Lowell Thomas (Senior), became friendly with Shakabpa and, claiming to represent great influence in America, persuaded him to obtain permission from the authorities in Lhasa for him to pay a visit to the country, with a view to getting help for Tibet from America.

On his return to Tibet in 1949 Shakabpa did this, and Lowell Thomas (Senior and Junior) visited Tibet amid tremendous publicity. However, they had little official US Government support for their visit, and even after their return to the United States, when they made a highly publicized appeal for military aid and advice for the Tibetans, their comments fell on deaf ears in Washington. In January 1950, President Truman declared that ‘The US Government will not pursue a course which will lead to involvement in the civil conflict in China.’ The British response had been characteristically ambivalent: on the one hand regretting their inability to be of assistance, while on the other advising India to offer Tibet some small arms – but not enough to be militarily significant.

These were my thoughts as I approached the imposing gates of the British High Commission. Inside, like the reading-room of a public library, voices were muted and doors closed softly. Neatly dressed men and women went quietly and dedicatedly about their business of consolidating Commonwealth solidarity. I was reminded of T. S. Eliot:

*A Cry from the North, from the West and from the South
Whence thousands travel daily to the timekept City;
Where my Word is unspoken,
In the land of lobelias and tennis flannels
The rabbit shall burrow and the thorn revisit,
The nettle shall flourish on the gravel court,
And the wind shall say: ‘Here were decent godless people;
Their only monument the asphalt road
And a thousand lost golf balls.’*

When my turn came at the reception desk I told the woman I would like to talk to someone important about Tibet. She asked me for more details

and I tried to explain that I had some important information about Tibet that I wanted to discuss with an appropriate official.

'Just a minute, please,' she said, with weary tolerance, and struck a bell. An elaborately uniformed Indian appeared and she asked him to take me to see Mr So-and-so, and we crossed the echoing foyer to a small office with two men sitting at small desks. I accepted their invitation to sit down.

'I have just arrived from Tibet,' I said, 'and have important information which I want to pass on to somebody important enough to do something about it.'

'What sort of information?' asked one of the men. I gazed at them. They were obviously the security men, responsible for the safety of the building. I doubted whether they had even heard of Tibet.

'About China taking over Tibet,' I ploughed on, 'then Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Then India - .' I stopped as I saw the expressions of the two men. We stared at each other for a few moments, and then one of them picked up the telephone and spoke to someone.

'I have a gentleman here who says he has just come from Tibet with important information,' he said. 'Would you like to see him? All right, I'll send him up right away.' He replaced the telephone and pressed a bell beside it. Another uniformed attendant appeared and, after a few words of instruction, the security officer said to me, 'If you go with the *chuprassi* he will take you to see someone who can handle this matter.'

We went upstairs and along echoing corridors to a double-leaved door leading into an impressive office. A young man seated behind a huge desk stood up to shake hands, and pointed to the chair in front of him.

'Have a seat. Smoke? Tea?'

'Tea, please,' I said.

'I hear you have just arrived from Tibet,' he said conversationally. 'What were you doing there? Just a minute, until we get the tea sorted out. Sugar? Milk? Now, then.'

'It's a long story,' I began tentatively, and launched into an abbreviated account of how I got from Scotland to Tibet. The official, who had introduced himself as David Anderson, listened with polite interest, occasionally pushing me along quickly with an interrupted question. When I got to the Pandatshangs and the planned revolt against Lhasa, and the involvement with the Chinese Communists, he sat forward in his chair and began making a number of notes.

'The Pandatshangs reckon they can hold off the Chinese for about six months - or, at least, six months from the time I left them, almost three months ago now. I have to get some kind of commitment of help from Britain, India or America, or all three of them, as soon as possible so that the Pandatshangs can decide on their strategy before the Chinese attack

them. I will have to take that assurance back, and I need three months for travelling.'

I stopped. David Anderson finished writing his notes, and sat back in his chair.

'Fascinating,' he said sincerely. 'What a story. But I need to get some idea of where all this is taking place on the map. Show me.' He stood up and walked over to a wall map of Asia and put his finger on Tibet. 'Where is this Kangting, and then the route to Batang, and on to India?'

I showed him the various strategic regions and towns, and then he asked me to show him where the nearest Chinese were located. He raised his eyebrows when I pointed out Jekundo, north of Batang; Kangting, to the east; and then Likiang, in Yunan, to the south.

'Any special reason why they stopped at these particular places?' he asked.

'Yes,' I replied. 'They represent the end of Chinese-occupied and -governed territory. Beyond these places the land is primarily Tibetan-inhabited and controlled. Also, from where they are now they have to climb over 15,000-foot passes to penetrate the interior of Tibet – needing special equipment and people.'

Anderson turned away from the map, frowning slightly in concentration. 'Of course you know that we no longer have any influence in Tibet, since independence here in India? It is now India's pigeon, and while we might be able to tender some advice we are not in a position to do more. That is' – he smiled to take the sting out of his words – 'even if your story is believed. I find it difficult, and I have the advantage of seeing and speaking with you. Have you spoken with anybody else yet?'

I told him that I had not; that I had arrived only the night before and had come straight to the High Commission.

He thought for some time, turning his pen over and over in his hand. Finally, he made up his mind.

'Here's what I suggest,' he said briskly. 'I will arrange for you to meet some Indian officials, political and security. That will keep everything above-board. Then, strictly *entre nous*, I will get my wife, Audrey, to arrange a private dinner – I take it you are free of engagements? – and invite a few others along, including the Americans. Don't enquire too closely what they do when you talk with them! They will certainly be interested in what you have to say; but whether they can do anything more than we can is open to question. We'll just have to see what happens. That is the best I can do for you.'

I assured him that it was more than I had expected when I had entered the High Commission, and thanked him genuinely for his interest. At dinner, a few nights later, I met several British, American and Indian

individuals, who were obviously on more than just official terms with Anderson, and they bombarded me with questions about Tibet and my involvement with the country.

The conversation, however, kept digressing into Tibetan Buddhist practices, and my Christian reaction to, and explanation for, them. Thirty years afterwards I learned that that night was the start of a spiritual journey for David and Audrey Anderson that ended with them both becoming committed Christians some years later.

When I had provided all the information I could to the various officials, I decided that it was time for me to make for Kalimpong on the Indian side of the Tibetan border, to see what Lhasa officials might be there. Also, I had letters for the eldest Pandatshang brother, Yangpel, and for the resident Pandatshang manager in Kalimpong; and I had arranged for all my own letters to be sent there. In addition I had to buy medical and other supplies and have them sent in Pandatshang caravans across Tibet to Bo-mi by the normal route, for when I returned by the route I had taken to India I did not want to be encumbered with more baggage than was necessary.

Loshay, my servant, was relieved to hear that we were leaving soon. Not all the novelty of Calcutta could drag him away from sitting under the fans. Almost three months after departing from Bo-mi we left by train on the 400-mile journey to Siliguri, the railhead in north Bengal serving Kalimpong and Darjeeling. The road to both of these famous hill-stations ran from Siliguri across a flat, nondescript plain for several miles before entering the lush, tea-garden-covered foothills of the Himalayas. Far above us the eternally snow-covered peaks of the Kanchenjunga mountain range provided a spectacular backdrop to the exciting interplay of ever-changing greens and yellows and browns of field and forest.

The road rose sharply through the forests, laced by the brilliant yellow sunshine across which exotically coloured butterflies dipped and twisted, and sometimes along the face of the mountain above the green and white spray of the River Teesta far below. The last ten miles into Kalimpong were a series of sharp zigzag bends and then a run into the town through green and yellow paddy and maize fields, with borders of flaming scarlet rhododendron and bougainvillea and delicate blue jacaranda and pink cherry blossom.

At first there were small, mud-walled, straw-thatched *bustees* – native houses – often hidden in the tall-growing maize stalks; then lath-and-plaster houses with corrugated iron roofs gave way to the brick houses of the town centre. This was the end of the trade route which started in Kangting on the borders of China, six months' caravan journey away.

The town was scattered along a ridge lying at a height of 4,500 feet, with the main bazaar, or market, in the seat of the saddle. The mountain

dropped away sharply on either side of the ridge, giving a magnificent view into Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. The shopping centre sprawled on each side of the bazaar, petering away in *bustees* on the far outskirts. Here the two-storeyed caravanserais of the Tibetan traders took over, and beyond them the mountain road rose sharply to the Dr Graham's Homes for disadvantaged Anglo-Indian children, and, after skirting the Homes, went on into Tibet.

I instructed the driver of our taxi to take us straight to Yangpel Pandatshang's house. Both he and Rapga had houses in Kalimpong, but Rapga said that his was rented in his absence. Yangpel's house was a large bungalow-type, set in a lovely garden, and as the taxi stopped in front of it a Tibetan came out and introduced himself as the Pandatshang manager, Pasang Tenpa. I introduced myself and Loshay, and when I handed over the letters from the Pandatshangs I asked if he would make arrangements for our stay in Kalimpong.

He was distressed to admit that neither Yangpel's nor Rapga's houses could be used, as the latter was rented to a Tibetan official, and the former had its furniture in storage. If I was going to be staying for some time he could arrange to have it made ready, but if I was going to be here only a short time, he would make other suggestions. I agreed that it was not worth it, as I hoped to be away within a few weeks at the most, for I must be on my way before the monsoon rains broke in June and carried away the bridges on my route back through Tibet.

He suggested that I could either go to the Himalayan Hotel in the town, or to Dr Graham's Homes, where there was a large foreign missionary community; and he could fix me up to stay at either. I opted for the Homes, and after a short discussion on the telephone, Pasang Tenpa said that the headmaster, Mr Lloyd, would be delighted to have me as his guest during my stay in Kalimpong.

Before I left, Pasang Tenpa agreed to fix an appointment for me with the highest-ranking Tibetan official in Kalimpong. This was not difficult, he said, as he was living in Rapga's house, and the official was Tsepon Shakabpa, leader of the recent Tibetan trade delegation.

I met Tsepon Shakabpa a few days later. As my spoken Tibetan was the Kham dialect, Pasang Tenpa provided me with an interpreter, a friend of Rapga's who could be trusted with confidential details. Shakabpa was a slim, middle-aged Tibetan of average height, with all the charming courtesy so often found among high Tibetan officials. He knew a little English, but most of the time we used the interpreter.

It appeared that once again he was the leader of a Tibetan delegation, this time a seven-man mission appointed by the Lhasa Government to negotiate with the Peking Government. However, the sensitive matter of

appropriate travel documents had again arisen and was proving a major obstacle. The Tibetans, naturally, wanted to use their own authority, as they had in 1947; the Indians were reluctant to commit themselves to official recognition of these 'debatable' documents; and the Communist Chinese were insisting that they should have Chinese travel papers. While this problem was being sorted out the delegation remained in Kalimpong.

Shakabpa said that Yangpel was expected to arrive shortly, and he expressed great admiration for all the Pandatshang family. But I knew from my conversations with Rapga in Kham that he did not trust the wily finance minister; according to Rapga, he was an opportunist who had risen to power and prominence through association with the ruthless Regent Takta, who had murdered Regent Reting. As I passed the letters and information from the Pandatshangs to Shakabpa, I sensed that underneath the polite interest there was a thread of disbelief, an amused tolerance of the foreigner who had permitted himself to be used as a pawn by the astute Kham leaders to further their own interests in Tibet. But he did promise to pass on the information to the Government authorities in Lhasa.

I could do no more. I would wait for a few weeks to see what response came from New Delhi and Lhasa and then be on my way back to Kham. Meanwhile, I would enjoy the facilities provided by Kalimpong. The population of the border town was a fascinating mixture. It had a resident population of 12,000, but over 5,000 Tibetans were reckoned to visit in a normal trading season. On market day there were Nepalis, Bengalis, Sikkimese, Bhutanese, Lepchas, Chinese, Mongolians, Tibetans and various Indian nationals, as well as a variety of Europeans. During the trading season, which was just beginning, the main street of the town was jammed with trucks, bullock carts, horses, mules and coolies, carrying loads of all descriptions to and from shops and warehouses. In the shops the tall, swashbuckling Tibetan muleteers, or the more elegant traders, haggled good-naturedly over the huge displays of goods brought in from all over India. And each morning long caravans of red-plumed mules, neck-bells jingling, brought their loads of goods from China, to the delight of both locals and foreigners.

I might have gone unnoticed beneath all the bustling activity of the town, had it not been for the developing crisis in Tibet. The presence of the Tibetan delegation and the squabble over their travel documents, together with the increasingly belligerent statements being made by the new Chinese Government from Peking, brought a number of newspaper correspondents from New Delhi, and a few from the international media. When they found no immediate news, they scouted around and heard of my arrival from east Tibet, and they sought me out for a story.

I had been requested by all the officials I had met to say nothing of the

details or nature of my mission from Kham, so I avoided the more pointed questions and gave only some of my more colourful experiences of life in Tibet and of my journey overland. This was given considerable prominence in India and in the West, and I received letters from all sorts of people – including publishers, who asked if I had ever thought of writing a book. This provided me with more amusement than interest, because I expected to be returning to a region where there were no pens or papers, let alone post offices.

But I was concerned by letters written by Christians who expressed fears that I had ‘deserted’ Geoff in Tibet and broken up a promising spiritual partnership for material gain. Even Geoff’s letter, which I had brought with me and had sent home to our church fellowships – and in which he stated clearly, ‘The Lord left us in no doubt as to the division of labour at this point’ – did nothing to stop the rumours and gossip. But there was nothing I could do about it.

After a month or so in Kalimpong without any response from the various officials I decided that I had better begin preparations to return to Kham. Tension was rising in the town as more and more Tibetans began arriving from Lhasa, bringing disturbing news – mostly rumours – of Chinese intentions in Tibet. They also brought with them long caravans of personal possessions, including their wealth. With their arrival more newspaper reporters, scholars and tourists came to Kalimpong. Increasing the tension was the news that it looked as if the new Chinese Communist Government was going to invade Korea – as well as Tibet.

I returned to Calcutta for a final talk with the people I had met there. Shakabpa and his delegation were also in Calcutta and I met him several times to discuss their situation. It was not optimistic. Both Shakabpa and the Indian and Western officials in Calcutta I found to be evasive. I gathered that the British authorities in London were cool in their response to my report. What they had heard from their officials handling Tibetan affairs in the past was that Yangpel Pandatshang was a ruthless businessman, Rapga a Marxist troublemaker, Topgyay an irresponsible adventurer, Shakabpa untrustworthy and without real support, and senior Cabinet Minister Surkhang a nonentity in the new regime in Lhasa.

Well, that was that. There was nothing to be done in the face of such a reaction. Back to Kham. I applied to the Indian Government for the necessary permits to return to Tibet by the way I had come. On 13 May I received word that I could apply to Sadiya for my return frontier permit, and on 16 May I sent off a cable to my parents in Scotland to say that I was preparing to depart on 24 May.

Then, on 18 May I was asked by American officials if I would go to New Delhi for important discussions regarding Tibet. All travel and living

expenses would be paid. There had been some new developments and there was renewed interest in Washington regarding possible help for Tibet. The US Ambassador to India, Lou Henderson, would like to see 'Tibetan military capacity to resist [Chinese Communists] strengthened'. Also, there were reports that a Czechoslovakian newspaper had quoted that their correspondent in Calcutta had observed US officials supervising the unloading of arms from a ship in Calcutta. At the same time, Peking Radio alleged that there was a secret understanding between Prime Minister Nehru of India and the US Ambassador in New Delhi to assist the Tibetans militarily. To cap it all, in the local Kalimpong newspaper offices of the Tibet *Mirror* there appeared a copy of an American pamphlet entitled *Armed Forces Talk No. 348: Tibet: Roof of the World*, published by the US army, the original of which the editor took from the files to show to me.

When I arrived in Calcutta again, on my way to New Delhi, I called on Shakabpa and he told me that the delegation was hoping to fly to Hong Kong, on the understanding that it was 'neutral' territory for discussions with the Chinese, but that Britain was being obstructive. I sympathized with him.

Just before leaving Calcutta I was introduced at a luncheon, arranged by an Indian intelligence officer, to the daughter and son-in-law of the Indian Ambassador to China, Sirdar K. M. Pannikar. As Britain had only a *chargé d'affaires* in Peking who was allowed to meet a Third or Fourth Secretary in the new hostile Communist Government, and America had no diplomatic representative at all, it was left to India to find out through Ambassador Sirdar Pannikar just how much of the information I had brought was true. I was told by Pannikar's daughter and son-in-law of the negative reaction that Pannikar would later develop in his book, *In Two Chinas*:

To add to my trouble, by the middle of the month, rumours of a Chinese invasion of Tibet began to circulate. Visits and representations to the Foreign Office brought no results. The *Wai Chiapu* officials were polite but silent. Things were certainly moving on that side. The only information I was able to wring out of them was that certain precautionary measures were being taken in West Sikang, that is, on the borders of Tibet Proper. In India, mainly as a result of messages from American and Hong Kong correspondents, public opinion was already excited. On the 25th October, however, the Chinese announced on the Peking radio that the process of 'liberating Tibet' had begun. The fat was in the fire. The Government of India was troubled about the Chinese action on the Tibetan border and I received instructions to lodge a strong protest. The Chinese reply was equally strong. It

practically accused India of having been influenced by the imperialists, and claimed that China had not taken any military action, but was determined to liberate Tibet by military means . . .

I had expected a virulent campaign against India in the Press. But for some reason the Chinese, apart from publishing the correspondence, soft-pedalled the whole affair. The controversy was seldom mentioned in the Press. But on our side matters were not so easy. The Indian Press, egged on by the sensational reports of the American correspondents and the bloodcurdling stories issued from Hong Kong by Taipeh agents, kept on talking about Chinese aggression. Even Sardar Patel, the deputy Prime Minister, felt called upon to make an unfriendly speech. There was also some support in the External Affairs Ministry for the view that India should act vigorously to protect Tibet . . . Knowing the temper of the Indian public and the attitude of some of the officials I was nervous that the Government might take some hasty step . . .

Later he went on:

The Tibetan question had also settled itself, for the Chinese after the first military display were content to keep their armies on the frontier and await the arrival of the Tibetan delegation for a settlement by negotiations . . .

Pannikar's almost audible sigh of relief at the successful *fait accompli* of the Chinese, coupled with the efforts of his colleague, Krishna Menon, to have the Tibetan appeal to the United Nations shelved, convinced me that no help would be forthcoming from India. That was the message so diplomatically delivered to me at Pannikar's daughter's luncheon.

When I met the American Ambassador in New Delhi a few days later I was told of a new development. It transpired that the American Embassy had received word from the Lhasa Government that the American Vice-Consul and his party, while fleeing secretly from Urumchi in Sinkiang, had been fired on by Tibetan border guards who had not known who they were. One had been killed, and some were wounded. The ambassador wanted to know if I would form and lead an expedition to the northern borders of Tibet to rescue the wounded survivors.

I agreed immediately, on condition that I be allowed to leave the expedition in Lhasa on the return journey, instead of coming on to India, and then proceed on to Kham from Lhasa. Two vice-consuls were appointed to accompany me, and I drew up a list of supplies that we would require and which we bought in New Delhi.

We left for Calcutta on 1 June, to be met there with the news that a

radio message had been received from Lhasa requesting that no expedition be sent. The Lhasa Government already held the US responsible for the present Chinese invasion of Tibet, due to the unfortunate visit of Lowell Thomas (Senior and Junior) and they feared another violent reaction from the Chinese if we went there.

Disappointed, we cancelled the expedition and I left Calcutta for Kalimpong. It was now 6 June, and dangerously near the six-month time limit I had been given on leaving east Tibet in mid-January. But still the monsoons had not broken, so there was a chance I could get back to Kham in time. I sent a cable to the political officer in Sadiya informing him of my pending arrival, and asking him to hire several porters on my behalf.

I was still in Kalimpong a few days later when the rains started, and never stopped. Three days later it was still falling in such sheets that it was almost impossible to breathe when I attempted to go out. The rainfall gauge showed that it had rained forty-three inches in forty-eight hours. In Kalimpong district there were twenty-three dead, and over 400 casualties; and Darjeeling had 163 dead and over 1,000 casualties. Houses, roads, cattle, power stations, bridges, railway lines, reservoirs, had all been swept away in the landslides throughout the mountains, and we were cut off from the plains by sheer slopes of quivering mud, which every few minutes roared down thousands of feet into the raging river. The Kalimpong–Siliguri road was down in thirty-one places, and at one point almost ten miles had completely disappeared. There was only one week's supply of food left in Kalimpong, and aeroplanes circled overhead to see if it was possible to drop supplies, but the poor visibility and continuous rain frustrated their attempts.

A few days later I received a cable from the political officer in Sadiya to say that all Tibetans had left the town and returned to Tibet and that none would be available until after the monsoons.

But I could not just leave it at that. I was needed in Tibet – by God and the Tibetans – and having driven myself across Tibet from east to west in that mad dash six months before, it seemed ridiculous to be frustrated now by wet weather and pessimistic officials. I cabled the political officer in Sadiya to say that I would arrive in mid-August to attempt a return to Tibet.

Betrayal of Tibet

I had almost finished my renewed preparations to leave India when, at 7.44 on the evening of 15 August 1950, Kalimpong was rocked by an earthquake. I was in the Dr Graham's Homes school assembly hall attending a function at the time, and the shock set the lights swinging, the beams creaking and the audience screaming. In the town itself buildings were reported to have swayed in the intensity of the shock, and there was a time of panic as people rushed into the streets to get away from the dangers of collapsing houses.

However, what we experienced was nothing compared with what was happening in north Assam and Tibet. The next day's newspapers carried descriptions of the unprecedented catastrophe. The *Calcutta Statesman* reported:

The epicentre of the earthquake which shook East and North-East India on Tuesday night has been calculated to be a point in the Eastern Himalayas about 50 miles from the North-East border of Assam . . .

Holiday crowds in Calcutta celebrating independence day ran for shelter as the city was rocked. Cinema house audiences shrieked and prayed while bewildered shopkeepers shut the doors and windows of their shops.

Records available to the Meteorological Office in Poona show that the earthquake was of greater intensity than the Bihar earthquake of 1934 and much greater than the Quetta earthquake of 1935. Experts there suggested that it may be second only to the great Assam earthquake of 1897 which was felt over an area of 1 million square miles.

In the next few days, as reports of the damage caused by the earthquake increased, the imagination boggled at the chaotic devastation. Millions of tons of water, blocked in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra River by landslides after the earthquake, burst through their barriers and swept over hundreds of miles of north Assam. The town of Sadiya began to sink; over 2,000 villages were swept away; other towns were damaged, with 6,000 people homeless in Jorhat alone; and over 100,000 cattle were endangered.

The centre of the raging cataclysmic destruction lay between Sadiya and Batang – my proposed route back to east Tibet, and the trail down

which I had come some six months before. Reports filtered through that thousands of houses and hundred of monasteries in Kham had been destroyed.

I had tea-planter friends, Benjy and Zoe Llewellyn, who had a small two-seater aeroplane, and I asked Benjy if he would take me up to see the extent of the devastation from the air, and give me some idea of what I faced on my proposed return journey.

As I buckled myself into the seat behind him he pointed to the floor at my feet, shouting to me to be careful, as there was no floorboard and I would have to balance myself on the metal crosspiece or I might land in the drink below!

We criss-crossed the skies at various levels and the earth beneath us was an awesome sight. Water poured from the accordion-pleated valleys of the gigantic Himalayas like the opened sluice-gates of some monumental dam, covering thousands of square miles of upper Assam and the tribal areas with a network of rivers and lakes like ditches and puddles in a field. Tea plantations and forests had been buried under mud, and hundreds of miles of jungle, silted from ground to upper branches, made them look like ordinary tea garden tea-bushes.

Formerly uncrossable rivers appeared as trickles through gigantic yellow silt-beds. The gods had been angry, and in a fit of pique had turned the taps of heaven on the greatest watershed on earth to mock puny man with a display of their temperamental power.

Benjy made a perfect landing on his postage-stamp, river-soaked runway, and I removed my feet from their precarious support with a deep sigh of relief.

'Well, isn't that a staggering sight?' said Benjy, as he opened the cockpit door.

'It certainly is,' I agreed. 'It's bad enough seeing it through the cockpit window, but it's a thousand times worse seeing it through the non-existent cockpit floor!'

'Oh, it's all right once you get used to it,' Benjy said dismissively. 'I just haven't bothered to fix it, for I am hoping to buy a new four-seater and it isn't worth spending time on this one. I keep the essentials in good working order and just leave the rest.'

I thought of the expanse of water and jungle which I had seen through the open floor and swallowed. 'Outside of the engine, just where do you draw the line between what you consider essential and non-essential if a floor on the plane isn't?' I asked him.

'Well, take the fabric, for instance,' he replied cheerfully, pointing to several repairs. 'When it gets torn I usually repair it right away before it gets worse and lands me in trouble. I use Zoe's nightgowns for that.'

Later, from Jean Kingdon-Ward, wife of the botanist I had met in Walong, I had more detailed reports. She and her husband were still in that area when the earthquake struck, and she said that people were thrown to the ground by the violence of the shocks, and in the succeeding paroxysms they could neither stand nor sit, clutching panic-stricken at the shuddering earth. There was a continuous rumbling from the bowels of the earth, and thunderous reverberations in the heavens pealing through the valleys in terrifyingly deafening salvoes. Mountains poured down an endless cascade of rocks and soil into the river valleys, and raging rivers dried up. The stars of the early evening were blotted out by the impenetrable cloud of dust, and then added to the horrors of the night when shot through with a bloody red from unseen and inexplicable fires or volcanic masses.

This was the route which I had to take to get back to Kham, if I was to be there before the Chinese arrived there. Somehow I had to make the attempt, for so much depended on it.

By the morning of 17 August I decided I would leave the following day. I would fly to Calcutta, and from there to Dibrugarh in Assam, then use whatever means was at hand to bypass sinking Sadiya and make my way up any negotiable valley to Walong, and then on to Bo-mi. On 19 August, I noted, I would be thirty years of age.

I went down to the office of the Homes to send off my last letters and cables, and after a short chat with Daisy Fowles, the secretary who had been so helpful to me during my stay, went back to the headmaster's house to finish my packing.

On the way I felt a sudden twinge of pain in my groin, which brought me up short with a catch of breath. It passed off and I went on, thinking it strange but not unduly worried. As I entered my room it came again, and this time it was accompanied by a momentary blackout. Fortunately, I was at the bedside and I caught at the headboard as I swayed.

This second attack had me worried, for I had never experienced anything like it. I decided, in view of the very rugged trip ahead of me, that I ought to see a doctor, and I went to the very experienced retired surgeon who was now the Homes' doctor, John Lechler. He was in bed with a mild attack of flu, but saw me and diagnosed a possible strain due to the football I had been playing with the school team during my stay in Kalimpong.

I went back to the house and, rising from the lunch table, had another attack and passed out completely. Mr Lloyd put me to bed with a couple of aspirins, and I went off to sleep. The next few hours – and days – became a haze of jumbled recollections. It appeared that when Mr Lloyd returned from school he came to my room to see how I was keeping and found me in a delirium, twisting and turning on the bed. He immediately sent for the medical superintendent of the Scots' Mission Hospital, Dr Craig, who

ordered me into hospital right away, where he diagnosed deep thrombophlebitis. I was strapped to the bed to control my agonized contortions, and to keep the clot of blood from breaking away and putting an end to my life.

It was several days before I was sufficiently recovered to understand what had happened. Throughout this period I had been given injections of penicillin every three hours, night and day, and the pain had eased considerably. My leg was still weighted to the bed, so that I could not move, and the doctors said that it would have to remain that way for some time. They were unable to explain why I, a fit young man, should have been so suddenly pole-axed by the condition. After a month or so they would review the situation, but meanwhile I could put out of my mind any thought of returning to Tibet – or even of any demanding exercise – because of the potentially fatal consequences.

After some weeks in hospital I accepted an invitation from my friends, Gordon and Millie Bell, to go and convalesce with them. Gordon was the third member of our trio who had gone to Tibet, but in Kangting he had met and married an American missionary. When Geoff and I left Kangting for inner Tibet, Gordon and Millie had left Kangting for Hong Kong in the exodus from China of that time, and had come to the Indian side of the Tibetan border at Kalimpong. Some other missionaries had done the same, Clarence and Helen Hjelmervik going to Darjeeling. It had been a very pleasant surprise to meet them all again.

The Bells had another missionary colleague living with them, who was a nurse, and she offered to do all the nursing I would require during my convalescence. My Tibetan servant, Loshay, would attend to whatever other tasks were necessary.

The prognosis of the three doctors in town was very pessimistic. It varied from the possibility of four months' convalescence, and subsequent very limited activity, to the likelihood of being a permanent invalid or instant death. The least that could happen was that the walls of the veins would inflame and cut off the flow of blood, causing inflammation and intense agony.

The publicity attached to my arrival in India from Tibet, my intended return to Tibet in spectacular circumstances, and the dramatic nature and timing of this latest development, caused great public debate in the region. I was offered all sorts of physical and spiritual advice from a variety of visitors, most of them urging me 'to be sensible'. I was reminded of the words of the German martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

It is infinitely easier to suffer with others than to suffer alone. It is infinitely easier to suffer as public heroes than to suffer apart and in

ignominy. It is infinitely easier to suffer physical death than to endure spiritual suffering.

For the suffering I felt most acutely was personal humiliation and spiritual devastation. Instead of treading the high places of the world with exciting physical domination and assured spiritual conviction, as a chosen servant of God, I was reduced to a helpless and numbed survival. At one stroke – no, at three strokes: a monsoon, an earthquake and an illness – I had been left without any reason for living. It was not just the possibility of having to face life as an invalid following an unfortunate accident that bothered me; it was being removed from Tibet when my whole vision of God, the reason for my existence, was centred there. I felt like Job, who, though devastated by the loss of family, possessions and health – and facing ugly death – was still more concerned by the fact that he could not find God to find out why.

While I had been in hospital the official Chinese Communist News Agency had quoted General (subsequently Marshal) Liu Po-ch'eng, Chairman of the South-West China Military Affairs Commission, as saying:

The People's Army would soon enter Tibet with the object of wiping out British and American influence there. When the country had been liberated, Tibetans would be given regional autonomy and religious freedom. Lamas would be protected. The Communists would respect existing customs. Tibetan Government officials would not be removed from their existing posts. But the Tibetan Army would be reorganized as part of the Chinese People's Army.

Meanwhile, in Tibet itself – or, to be exact, in east Tibet – the Chinese were preparing an alternative proposal to their broadcast announcement of several months before; namely, that the Kham and Amdo leaders were to spearhead the 'East Tibetan People's Revolt'. From January 1950 (presumably the time when they received no immediate response from the Pandatshangs to their ultimatum) – after a series of meetings held in Peking with Tibetan 'democratic representatives' and the commander-in-chief, Chu Teh – a high lama from Kham, Geda Lama, had been chosen to lead a delegation to Lhasa on behalf of the Chinese Government. He had met, and become friendly with, General Chu Teh when the Chinese Communist Army was retreating through Kham during the 'Long March' in the 1930s. At the time Chu Teh had given Geda Lama a letter expressing the Communists' appreciation of the help provided by Geda Lama and his monastery. Geda Lama had kept the letter, and then in 1949 had sent four trusted friends secretly through Amdo to Peking to meet with Chu Teh and



The author before leaving for Tibet in 1946.



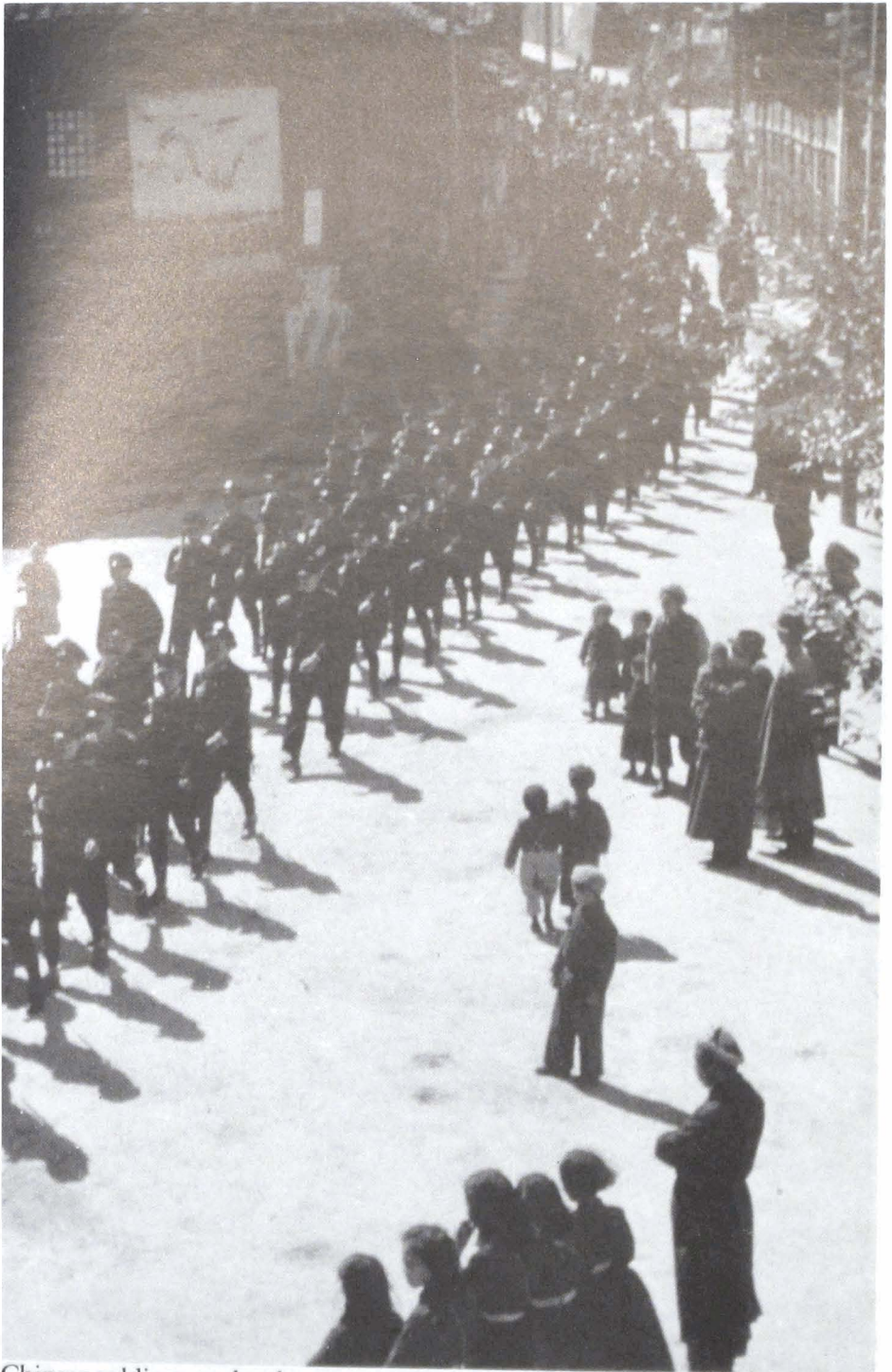
Meg Ingram, whom the author later married, before leaving for India in 1948.



Chinese coolies carrying loads of Tibetan brick tea – each bale weighing thirty pounds – on the trail to Kangting.



Luting 'Iron Bridge', between Ya-an and Kangting, scene of the most famous battle during the Communist Long March.



Chinese soldiers, under the command of Colonel Fu, march into Kangting to arrest Topgyay Pandatshang.



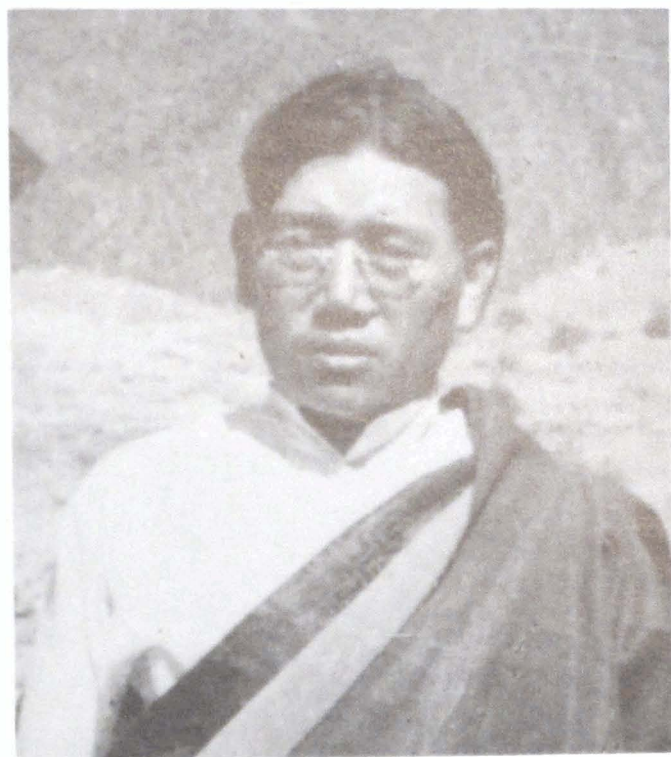
Jedo Pass, above Kangting, with George Kraft in the foreground, returning with a severe case of pneumonia.



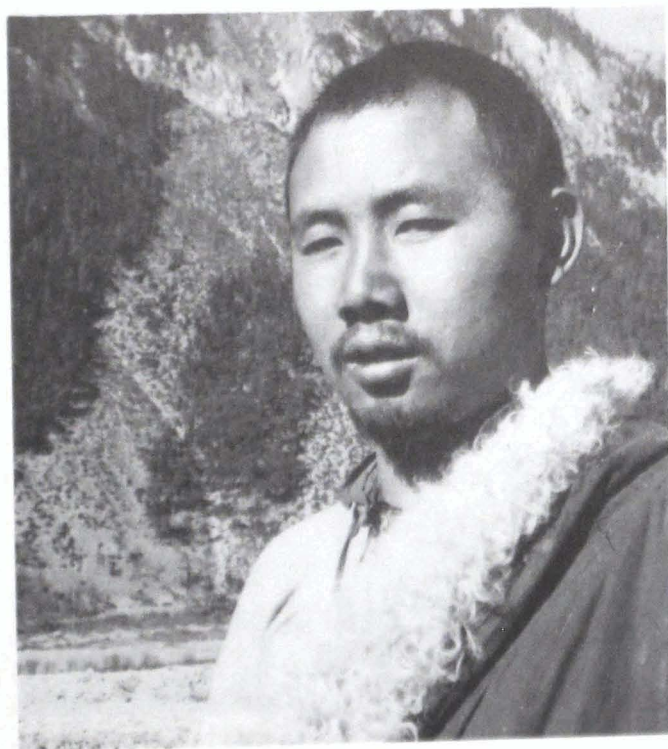
The white house in Bo-mi, Pandatshang stronghold deep inside Tibet.



Topgyay Pandatshang placing a prayer flag at the top of a pass in Kham.



Rapga
Pandatshang,
scholar and
brother of
Topgyay.



Linka Gyabon,
Khamba bandit
chief and owner of
the famous red
horse in the race
against the author's
grey at Bo-mi.



The author with his servant Loshay after their arrival in India in 1950 (*top*).

Some of the guests at a party hosted by the author in the Tagore house in Kalimpong. *Front row, left to right*: the author, Prime Minister of Bhutan Jigme Dorje, Prince Thibaw of Burma, Jigme Taring, with their wives, the famous Tsarong sisters, and other foreign guests.



Members of the 1987 film team in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa. *Top, left to right:* Iain Smith, David Henry Hwang, John Williams and the author. *Bottom:* with the Dalai Lama at his refugee retreat in Dharmasala.

remind him of his promise of help. Chu Teh kept his word and now chose Geda Lama to head the important delegation to Lhasa.

Geda Lama was made 'Vice-President of Kham's new People's Provisional Government', and he travelled from Peking to Kham to take up his post. He got about as far as Chamdo in August 1950, on his way to Lhasa, when he died mysteriously of poisoning. Richard Ford, the British radio operator working for the Lhasa Government in Chamdo, knew the murderer but did not disclose his name.

On 31 August the Peking authorities peremptorily notified the Indian Government that the Tibetan delegation still in India should reach Peking not later than the middle of September, or they would be held responsible for any further delay and would have to take the consequences. Five days previously the Indian Ambassador in Peking had officially acknowledged Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

This renewed public determination on the part of Peking to 'liberate' Tibet and 'all other territories of China' caused great concern in India. On the one hand, the new rulers in India wanted to shake off all traces of 'imperial legacy' – which meant forgoing the 'special rights' in Tibet inherited from Britain – yet at the same time too generous a concession could endanger the security of India's borders.

From Peking there flowed a spate of statements designed to swamp the hesitant Delhi consultations. 'The reactionary Nehru Government naturally follows in the wake of its British masters in the exhibition of anxiety over Tibet,' said one. Another declared, 'Efforts are being made to give great importance to the north and north-east frontiers of India.'

The Sino-Indian crisis that I had foretold in my communicated message was now emerging; the Pandatshangs and the Khambas were awaiting my arrival; the whole meaning of my life demanded action – and I was bound, immobile, to my bed, with an inexplicable illness for several months, perhaps even for a lifetime.

Then the Tibetan Government expelled all remaining Chinese from Lhasa and declared Tibet independent. Peking replied with a furious attack on India in the *People's Daily* of 13 September:

The expelling of the Han people and Han lamas, and the closing down of Han schools by Tibetan authorities on July 8 lays bare an international plot. On July 27 the official news agency of the Nehru Government announced that Tibet had never recognized Chinese suzerainty. On the same day British authoritative aides told the United Press that if China attempted to force her rule on Tibet, Tibet could seek British intervention . . .

The Nehru Government cannot deny that it has sent men to Lhasa.

The *New York Times* reported from New Delhi on August 8 that the spokesman for the Indian Foreign Ministry announced that night that Bhutan had become a protectorate of India. Since the Nehru Government has announced its suzerainty, will it not declare suzerainty over Tibet? . . . The Nehru Government has no legal right to announce its protectorate over Bhutan. The United Nations should examine the matter . . .

It was mid-September before I could bring myself to face my personal situation and look for definitive answers. Until then I had been content to use my condition of semi-stupor, induced by pain and sickness and shock, as an excuse to avoid some deep soul-searching. But in the light of what was happening in Tibet and the region, I realized that it could no longer be postponed. My peace of mind did not lie in simply acknowledging the purpose of God, but in intelligently apprehending it. Merely to acknowledge His will was a barren fatalism, or an empty determinism, and could never provide any satisfaction.

I went back in my mind to the point when I could state with confidence that I had been working for God's purpose and that point stood out stark and clear. He had sent me to India with the message I had delivered. Then it hit me: He had not directed me to go back to Kham.

I began slowly to pick my way through the events of the past few months, step by step, arguing the logical necessity for each decision as I had made it: the need to get back before the Chinese attacked; the need for the medicines; my promises to the Khambas and to Geoff. Eventually I stopped, silenced by my own argument as it rose in rebuke before me. Since when had God ever permitted His actions to be dictated by expediency, or need, or opportunity. Rather, He was a God who 'took vengeance on their inventions', who ruthlessly punished 'presumptions'.

This was bad enough, but then another staggering possibility presented itself to me. If it had been God's will for me to remain in India to complete His purpose, and I had been doing everything to oppose His will in that regard by pushing ahead with my plans to return to Kham, then the monsoons and the earthquake as well as my present condition must be taken as evidence of His divine intervention to stop me. Could such catastrophic devastation and death be interpreted to fit such an explanation? Or were they just incredible coincidences? An earthquake of that magnitude, with its epicentre between Sadiya and Batang: could a message be any clearer? On sober analysis it was too fantastic to be considered seriously; equally it had to be conceded that even an earthquake of that magnitude had not stopped my plans to return – and that was followed by the immediate attacks of my illness, which did stop me.

I turned shudderingly away from my problem. The conclusion of such contemplation was not that any one person could be so important to God as to occasion such intervention, but that His purpose for a person, or country, was sufficient to necessitate it. What manner of God was this that I had chosen to serve, that I was seeking to know and understand? And what was the scale of His purpose for me in relation to Tibet, which would place these events in acceptable perspective? I was facing death, and so was the nation of Tibet. Was there a connection?

I had arrived at the crux of my problem: if my disobedience was the cause of my illness, then it followed that, if I was willing to obey by remaining in India and not returning to Kham, God would remove the illness. All I had to do was admit my disobedience, seek forgiveness, ask for removal of the thrombo-phlebitis, and carry on with God's new commands as usual.

There was a horrified reaction from my friends – 'God expects you to look after your body'; 'You must use sanctified common sense'; 'You are not supposed to do anything foolish' – when I announced my decision to get up and resume my 'normal' life. I had made it on a Sunday, concluding that, as I would need to get up by stages after lying virtually motionless on my back for several weeks, it would be Thursday before I was back to normal.

The night I made the decision I had a visit from the Pandatshangs' manager in Kalimpong, Pasang Tenpa, who brought me a letter from Geoff sent via some muleteers. It was dated 16 July, and read in parts:

... Have spent, in two visits to Batang, some seven weeks in all there ...

First Communist troops arrived – about forty; a few still staying in Bo, much to the Pandatshangs' annoyance. [They] seem intent on going on into Lhasa. Rapga says I am under suspicion by the Communists. I expect to leave with Rapga for [inner] Tibet shortly. Health excellent. Topgyay's wife coughing blood and painfully weak ...

The following morning I had an agonizing recurrence of the pain in my right leg, followed by an attack in my left leg – which had been normal until then – and when the doctor arrived he said that both legs were now affected and that I would have to be immobilized for another two months. I told him of my decision to get up, which he dismissed as sheer folly. When I insisted – not disagreeing with his diagnosis, I said, but his prognosis – he became angry and refused to accept any more responsibility for my treatment.

I got up as planned, and a few days later I left for Calcutta to see a specialist, as a friend had requested, walking two miles over a landslide on

the way. The specialist asked about the symptoms, the decisions of the other doctors, and then gave me a thorough examination. At the end he said that, according to the symptoms I had listed, I must have had severe thrombo-phlebitis but there was absolutely no sign of it now. There was no inflammation of the veins, no sign of a clot, and only a slight swelling of the right leg and a slight drag on the same. He advised as much exercise as possible. He agreed that I could play football – and climb mountains.

I sent off cables to Britain, and also to Kalimpong, with the news, asking in the Kalimpong cable that I be included in the team scheduled to play football on Saturday. When we took the field on the town football pitch, there was total silence from the crowds for the first time ever, for everyone knew of my illness and watched me as I took my position as centre-forward to see what would happen when I kicked off. Nothing happened, the game finished, and my leg never troubled me again.

Now that I was committed to staying on in Kalimpong I had to look for a house of my own, instead of living on a temporary basis with the Homes' headmaster. Through one of Kalimpong's resident 'characters', a Church of Scotland missionary, the Honourable Mary Scott, I was introduced to Mrs Pratima Tagore, daughter-in-law of India's famous philosopher-poet, Rabindranath Tagore. Gurudev, as he was popularly known, had been very fond of Kalimpong and had built a house there. The family spent only a few weeks there every year, and Mrs Tagore asked if I would live in the house as 'caretaker'.

It was a lovely building in a magnificent situation, located on a projecting platform of land that faced out on an uninterrupted view of the snow-covered Kanchenjunga mountain range, and with the ground dropping away just beyond the garden walls into the valley far below. It was a pleasant walk of only about a mile to the centre of the bazaar. The house was filled with Gurudev's books, mementoes and artefacts, and as it was a place of pilgrimage for all admirers of India's greatest modern sage I met many new Indian friends, who introduced me at the highest level to India's religion and culture.

On 30 September 1950, the first anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Republic, the Prime Minister, Chou En-lai, reiterated his Government's determination 'to liberate the people of Tibet and stand on guard at the Chinese frontiers'. Earlier that month the Chinese Ambassador had arrived in New Delhi, and the Tibetan delegation – still in Calcutta – went to have talks with him.

The talks ended without agreement on 1 October because the Ambassador would not commit himself on the question of Tibet's independence. The Tibetan delegation said they would consult Lhasa and return for further talks.

But the Chinese Liberation Army was already on the march to invade inner Tibet. The order from Peking went out on 7 October to the Chinese forces, which had been building up in Kham and Amdo, and they crossed over the upper reaches of the River Yangtze at several points. From Kangting they struck through Litang, Batang, Gantze and Dege, Nyarong – and Bo-mi.

The Lhasa Government had made some desperate last-minute attempts to prepare for resistance by sending reinforcements of the Tibetan army to Chamdo; and by replacing the unpopular and ineffective Governor of Kham in Chamdo with another Lhasa minister, Ngabu Ngawang Jigme. The Tibetan army was a joke, and the Lhasa Governor a disaster.

The official Tibetan army was organized on the basis of individual units of 500 men, and there were about twelve of these units. Each unit had a commander and two assistant commanders, for which job no qualification or training was required other than to be a member of the aristocracy. There was no promotion from the ranks to be an officer. Not only had the army poor equipment, poor arms and poor leadership, but they were despised by the people and hated by the monks. They had absolutely no chance against Chinese Communist soldiers who had just conquered China.

It took only five days to capture Chamdo, capital of Kham. The number of casualties was 180 Tibetans killed or wounded, 898 Tibetans captured, and 4,317 Tibetans surrendered. Among those surrendering was the new Lhasa Governor, Ngabu Ngawang Jigme, who arrived only a few days before the Chinese attack.

Another letter from Geoff described what had happened. With the news of the imminent Chinese attack, and my non-arrival, it had been decided that Rapga would leave for Chamdo for talks with the new Lhasa Governor Ngabu, and that Geoff would also go there. They had left at different times, and travelled by different routes, meeting up on the other side of the river before going on to Markham Gartok together, where they stayed with Dege Sey, as I had.

They arrived in Chamdo just as Ngabu arrived and before the Chinese attacked. Rapga gave to the governor the most recent news from the Chinese, and heard from Ngabu the Lhasa decision that he was to stall as long as possible while the Lhasa delegation talked, through their representatives, to the Chinese Ambassador in New Delhi. Rapga presented to Ngabu the Pandatshang proposals for a reconstructed Tibetan Government which would include the Khambas, and said that for this the Khambas would be prepared to fight the Chinese. Ngabu said he would send the details to Lhasa.

However, the Chinese attacked within a day or two and no more was

heard of the proposals. Rapga and Geoff left for Markham Gartok before the attack, but when they arrived they found that the Chinese army had also arrived. They were up all night with Dege Sey discussing whether to make a stand, but it was recognized that the Tibetan soldiers with Dege Sey were no match for the Chinese army – and, anyway, many of them were already deserting. Geoff described the last hours in Markham Gartok:

As the Communists advanced, the local people were going over to banditry, the magistrate fled for his life, administrative control broke down, people started to steal, the army was disintegrating, resistance was impossible. The General, Dege Sey, stood before me with his six-foot odd and magnificent clothes . . . He said, trying to control the break in his voice, ‘I have decided to go out and surrender. I must go for my men’s sake’ . . .

I paused for a moment to learn what God’s will was, and said, ‘Would you like me to come with you? I will interpret for you in Chinese.’ He looked at me. I don’t think he thought I would go all the way through the crisis with him. He said, ‘Yes, come’ . . .

The advancing Red Army was just round the brow of a hill about 500 yards away. Our man went forward and announced the fact of the General’s presence, and we were asked to go forward . . . We gathered in the evening in a Tibetan house . . . where the Chinese accepted the General’s surrender. I tried to speak for him to some extent. They accepted that his policy was quite different . . . Two days later I was interviewed, transferred to a private house in the village, and placed under arrest . . .*

When news of the Chinese invasion of Tibet reached India, the Indian Government lodged a protest through its ambassador in Peking on 21 October. This was repeated a week later in a note explaining the reason for the continuing delay of the Tibetan delegation.

On 25 October Peking Radio announced that ‘The process of liberating Tibet has begun’; and on 30 October the Peking Government sent a reply to the Indian Government, which said:

Tibet is an integral part of Chinese territory, and the Tibetan problem is entirely the problem of China . . . Regardless of whether the local authorities wish to proceed with peace negotiations, and whatever the results of such negotiations, no interference whatsoever from a foreign country shall be tolerated.

*For further details of Geoff Bull’s experiences in captivity see his book *When Iron Gates Yield* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1955).

In its reply of 1 November the Indian Government rejected the allegation of interference, and stressed the fact of Tibetan autonomy within the scope of Chinese suzerainty.

While the diplomatic duel over the question of Tibet was going on, the Lhasa Government sent a cablegram to the United Nations on 7 November through Shakabpa, now back in Kalimpong, citing the Chinese invasion of Tibet as 'a clear case of aggression' and asking for UN intervention.

Only a small central American country, El Salvador, was willing to support Tibet's plea for help, but it was able to get the matter placed on the UN agenda. In the discussions that followed the British delegate said Tibet's status was 'ambiguous'; the United States delegate said it was really a matter for India to decide; and the Indian delegate expressed a sanctimonious hope for a peaceful solution. The matter was then dropped without a vote being taken.

In Kalimpong the Tibetan delegation sent another appeal to the United Nations on 28 November urging further discussion; and, again, on 8 December, expressed 'surprise and regret, agony and despair' over the lack of concern, requesting permission to send a delegation. They were unsuccessful, and the matter was pigeon-holed.

In Lhasa there was total confusion as the bad news poured in from both east and west of the country. When the leaders could not come to any satisfactory decision among themselves, they resorted to the historical precedent of *lha-bab* – 'calling down the gods' – by consulting the Nechung Oracle. After the usual rituals it was agreed that the Dalai Lama should immediately be officially recognized as the Fourteenth in line of succession, although at only sixteen years of age he was still two years short of the usual age of enthronement. This was done on 17 November.

At this time, one of the Dalai Lama's older brothers, Thubten Norbu, a high lama whose religious title was Taktser Rimpoche of Kumbum monastery in Kham, arrived in Lhasa from east Tibet. In the early stages of the Chinese Communist invasion he had been captured and taken back into China for 'indoctrination', which had stipulated that if he did not cooperate he would 'disappear'; but if agreed to work with them in their plans he would be spared and promoted. He was to accompany a Chinese diplomatic delegation preparing to go to Lhasa to negotiate peace terms with the Lhasa Government. Once in Lhasa he would be the chief spokesman to persuade his brother and the Government to submit peacefully to China. If successful in this, he would later be made President of Tibet.

But while still some days' journey from Lhasa, he sent a trusted family servant to warn the Dalai Lama of what was being planned, and then gave full details himself on his arrival.

This news precipitated the decision by the Dalai Lama and his retinue to leave Lhasa immediately and flee to the Indian border with Sikkim, at Yatung, from where they could contact the Indian authorities quickly regarding possible asylum in India. They took with them the 'Dalai Lama's treasure chest' of several hundred loads, in a caravan comprising some 1,500 pack-animals.

Before his departure from Lhasa the newly enthroned Dalai Lama authorized a delegation to be sent to Chamdo to say that he 'sincerely wanted to restore friendship' between the Tibetan and Chinese people. But at the same time he sent another delegation to China via India – this time not under Shakabpa's leadership but led by Khemey Sonam Wangdi, his older sister's husband. The instructions to leaders of both delegations were to hold exploratory talks only; they were not authorized to sign any agreements. A third delegation was also authorized to travel to Peking from Chamdo, under the leadership of the governor, Ngabu Ngawang Jigme. The Chamdo delegation arrived in Peking on 22 April 1951, and the delegation from Yatung and Kalimpong arrived a few days later.

Before he left Lhasa, the Dalai Lama also appointed two administrators to remain behind as 'Prime Ministers' in charge of official business. One was a monk, Lobsang Tashi; the other a veteran and experienced lay official, Lukhangwa. They had full authority to act on the Dalai Lama's behalf and need refer to him only in an emergency.

The Dalai Lama was not happy about the Oracle's decision that they should leave Lhasa. 'I did not want to go at all,' he confirmed later. 'I wanted to stay where I was and do what I could to help my people. But the Cabinet also urged me to go, and in the end I had to give in. As a young and able-bodied man, my instinct was to share whatever risks my people were undergoing.'

An unusual observer of the Dalai Lama's departure from Lhasa was an Austrian ex-prisoner-of-war, Heinrich Harrer, who had escaped from camp in India seven years before and had been living in Lhasa for some time. He, too, was forced to leave by the impending Chinese invasion and he described the departure:

The Dalai Lama's flight had been kept strictly secret. The authorities did not want to disturb the people and feared lest the monks of the great monasteries would do their utmost to deter him from his resolution. Accordingly the high officials who had been chosen to accompany him were only informed late in the evening that the caravan would leave at two o'clock the next morning . . .

The column of fugitives moved silently through the night, proceeding first to Norbulinka, where the young ruler stopped to say a prayer.

The caravan had not been a day on the road before the news of the flight spread right and left. The monks of the Monastery of Jang swarmed in thousands to meet the Dalai Lama. They flung themselves before his horses' hooves and begged them not to leave them, crying that if he went away they would be left without a leader, at the mercy of the Chinese . . . After demonstrations of affection and loyalty the monks cleared the way for the caravan to proceed . . .

Sixteen days after leaving the capital the caravan reached its provisional destination . . . All the approaches to the valley were guarded by military posts, and only persons carrying a special pass could come in and go out . . . A service of couriers was established between Lhasa and the provisional Government . . . Later on [Reginald] Fox arrived with his instruments and established a radio station . . .*

*From *Seven Years in Tibet* by Heinrich Harrer (E. P. Dutton/Granada, 1979).

The Chinese Attack Tibet

The official Indian reaction was one of accepting the *fait accompli* in Tibet, while at the same time protesting at the violation of Tibetan autonomy; but the unofficial reaction was strongly in favour of 'strong action' in Tibet.

There was little doubt that, but for the sudden flare-up of the Korean war, the influence of such leading Indian officials as Sardar Patel, Acharya Kripalani and Jayaprakash Narayan might have forced Prime Minister Nehru to take a stronger line in regard to help for Tibet. These officials were irritated not only by the Chinese action in Tibet and its implied threat to India, but also by the high-handed decisions being taken by Pandit Nehru and Ambassador Pannikar in Peking. The Chinese intervention in the war in Korea, the subtle flattery of Pannikar by the Chinese, in using him as a vehicle of communication with Western nations, and the hint of inside influence persuaded the left-wing, pro-Chinese Pannikar and Krishna Menon to go along with China on the subject of Tibet.

High officials from Lhasa were now pouring into Kalimpong almost every day. My house in the New Development area became surrounded by Tibetan lessees in neighbouring houses. The Dalai Lama's mother and sister were only a few hundred yards away, as was Shakabpa in his new home. Leading Cabinet Minister Surkhang and his family became good friends, as did the Tethong family. Other members of the Lhasa Government quickly bought or rented houses, until the area looked like a suburb of Lhasa.

With this exodus of a hitherto remote Tibetan people into Kalimpong, especially in the context of the dramatic possibilities afforded by the new situation in Tibet itself, international and national newspapers of every description took an increased interest, and reporters of all kinds flooded into Kalimpong looking for 'copy'.

They were faced with unprecedented obstacles, for the Tibetan officials were not publicity-conscious and refused to meet the media representatives; and when they did meet at some official or social function they were unable to communicate because of language difficulties. It was this problem which, to some extent, supported Pannikar's complaints of newspaper fantasies, for when the reporters could not find genuine sources of information they resorted to fabricating them, or deriving them from dubious bazaar informants. In this way the world was informed, completely fallaciously, of the 'antiquated weapons' of the Tibetans, and given myths about the 'peaceful, happy' Tibetans being unable to oppose the

ruthless might of an all-conquering China. At one time there were twenty-two internationally known correspondents all trying to find some new story to send home to demanding editors.

One famous reporter of a leading news agency sat in his hotel and, with map, pen, paper and ruler, worked out the supposed Chinese advance across Tibet at an average of sixteen miles a day, until he had them occupying Lhasa – and they had never moved a step beyond Chamdo at the time. When I pointed this out to him he promptly blamed me because, he said, I was in a position to know and refused to cooperate!

However, the pressures generated by this media interest produced a situation in which my services as an interpreter were in constant demand. While the Tibetans were reluctant publicists or unaware of the media potential, they were a sociable and hospitable people with a great love of social occasions. Newspaper correspondents with large expense accounts soon used this to advantage to throw a succession of parties, which the Tibetans happily attended – and I was at them all as interpreter.

Because of this involvement I was approached by several newspapers about acting as a ‘stringer’ – a freelance contributor – when their own correspondents left Kalimpong. I had never done any serious writing beyond occasional articles for religious magazines, but I agreed to give it a try. I had also agreed to write one book about my recent experiences crossing Tibet and another giving an account of my ‘spiritual’ reasons for going to Tibet.

Not only media representatives were interested in Kalimpong. Scholars of many kinds from all parts of the world took advantage of a situation which had brought so many influential and normally unapproachable Tibetans to Kalimpong and they, together with the tourists, made the town the most popular resort in India. The press of visitors and round of social engagements became so great that appointments at lunches, teas and dinners were soon filled, and breakfasts had to be included in order that people might meet everyone they needed or wanted to meet.

Among all the foreigners in Kalimpong there were now three who spoke Tibetan: Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark (cousin of Prince Philip), who was leading the Third Danish Expedition to central Asia; Dr George Roerich, a well-known Russian scholar on Tibet; and myself. The variety of activities meant that I had to rapidly extend my knowledge of Tibetan to cover whole new fields of expression; I also had to learn the Lhasa as well as the Kham dialect. As I looked back on my despair at being deprived of all active participation in Tibetan affairs – as I thought, at the time of my recent illness – I marvelled again at the workings of divine destiny.

In Kalimpong the political confusion was compounded by the fact that

the Tibetans themselves continued to indulge in feudal intrigues between the various families and groups. Shakabpa was a protégé of Takta Rimpoche, the usurper of the regency who had ordered the death of Reting, and as such was intensely hated by the supporters of Reting. Also, he was anti-Ngabu, the leader of the delegation from east Tibet now in Peking, and all his activities were directed towards diminishing Ngabu's influence. Further, I had heard from Yangpel Pandatshang that Shakabpa had never communicated my messages from Kham, which I had given to him on my arrival, because of the undue influence he thought that this might give the Pandatshangs.

Then there were the cross-currents of confusion caused by those whose interests were either pro-Dalai Lama or pro-Panchen Lama, the latter a minority, but vocal and powerful because of the Chinese connection. The monks added their own quota, by digging out ancient prophecies – from the imminence of prosperity from the legendary Shambala, to the doomed prophecy foretelling that there would never be a Fourteenth Dalai Lama, that the cycle of incarnations would cease with the Thirteenth. They argued that the present Dalai Lama had been installed after, and because, the Chinese had arrived in Tibet, that he had been only sixteen at the time, that he had never ruled as Dalai Lama, and that he had fled from Lhasa to Yatung after his hasty enthronement.

From Kalimpong to Yatung it was a journey of only about seventy miles, most of which could be travelled by car or jeep, although the last twenty or so miles had to be done on horseback. With the Dalai Lama in Yatung there was a constant stream of messengers passing backwards and forwards as diplomatic pressures increased.

With all this political activity the most active, if least visible, people were the intelligence agents of India, Britain, America, China, Russia and other countries with interests in the region. But all these clandestine operators were subject to the same limitations of language, and however secret or important their communications they had to have an interpreter. Since Dr George Roerich was widely believed to be the Russian representative (and was shortly afterwards asked to leave the country), and Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark could hardly be asked to perform such a task, it was mostly left to me to be the go-between. After I had made it clear that my interest was neither Western, capitalist, Socialist nor Communist, but was pro-God and pro-Tibet, I was happy to become involved.

On 23 May 1951, to the surprise and consternation of the Dalai Lama and his Government, Peking announced that the Tibetan delegation had signed an agreement between Tibet and China, called the 'Seventeen-Point Agreement'. This stated that 'The Tibetan people shall unite and drive out imperialist and aggressive forces from Tibet and shall return to the big

family of the motherland – the People’s Republic of China.’ The agreement went on to promise the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Tibetan regional Government structure, as well as in the internal position and authority of the Dalai Lama, but called on the Lhasa Government actively to assist the People’s Liberation Army to enter Tibet and consolidate the national defences, while permitting ‘autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People’s Government’. Tibetan troops were to be reorganized into the People’s Liberation Army, and all foreign affairs were to be handled by Peking. To ensure that the agreement was implemented, the Central People’s Government would establish in Tibet a military and administrative committee, and a military area headquarters with as many Tibetans as could be absorbed.

The Tibetans in Kalimpong and Yatung were completely overwhelmed by this unexpected development, for the delegations had been expressly ordered by the Dalai Lama not to sign any agreement, and no preparation had been made for such an outcome.

While controversy raged over what should be the next step to take in repudiating this imposed agreement, especially in view of the fact that the United Nations had evinced no interest and India had seemingly committed herself to a policy of non-intervention, and even connivance, the Dalai Lama’s brother, Taktser Rimpoche, slipped quietly into Kalimpong from Tibet.

In the second week of June I was asked to tea at the house of the Dalai Lama’s mother and sister, and when I arrived I was introduced to him. We talked in generalities, and when I finally rose to go, Taktser Rimpoche said that he would like to call on me some time. I politely urged him to do so.

Two hours later, just as it was getting dark, there was a knock at the door and when I opened it Taktser Rimpoche stood there, surrounded by several armed guards. I invited him in, bewildered by the unexpected visit, the heavily armed guards, the air of watchfulness and secrecy. My bewilderment increased as Taktser questioned me closely about the trustworthiness of my servant, and then asked for all the curtains to be tightly drawn.

However, what he had to say clarified the situation considerably. He described how he had been taken prisoner by the Chinese, briefed on their plans for Tibet, the proposal to depose the Dalai Lama and make Taktser head of the country instead. At the Dalai Lama’s request he had left Yatung as his special envoy, with a mission to get to the United States as quickly and secretly as possible, carrying personal letters from the Dalai Lama seeking help for Tibet.

In the state of political confusion which existed on the Indo-Tibetan border at the time, with many suspected pro-Chinese officials among the Tibetans, a high percentage of Chinese nationals in the local community,

and an Indian Communist representative in local Government, he went in hourly fear of his life, not knowing whom he could trust. Even his mother and sister had no knowledge of his true mission, and it was from them and from Yangpel Pandatshang that he had heard of me and my involvement with Tibet. Would I help him escape and get to the United States without anyone knowing? If I agreed, I could ask anything of him or his brother and it would be granted when it could.

He produced the letters from the Dalai Lama: one his letter of authority; the other requesting some form of help for Tibet. I was silent for a time, and he moved around restlessly, talking with Loshay about Kham. My immediate reaction was to agree wholeheartedly and begin discussing ways and means of accomplishing the task successfully. I had the contacts in Kalimpong, Calcutta and New Delhi to do the job.

Slowly I outlined to Taktser what it was that was troubling me: not the question of payment for any services rendered, but my place in the purpose of God. Of course, I liked the idea of acting like a Christian Scarlet Pimpernel, but my friend Geoff was in a Chinese prison to counterbalance that adventurous aspect. But if I knew clearly that it was what God wanted me to do, then I could leave all the consequences to Him. Would Taktser be prepared to leave the letters with me to read and translate? Then, if I agreed to help, I would slip away quietly in the morning to Calcutta without saying anything to anybody. When I had completed the arrangements there I would send a cable to Yangpel Pandatshang to say that the goods he had ordered in Calcutta were ready for collection, and Taktser should arrange to obtain the cable from Yangpel and come immediately to Calcutta to the address I gave him.

Taktser was delighted with the proposal, agreed that it was necessary that we have the help of God to be successful, and said that one day we would celebrate together in an independent Tibet. On that note we parted.

The news I took to Calcutta created a sensation in the limited official circles to which I released it, and the diplomatic telephones between New Delhi, London and Washington hummed with questions and answers. Difficulties multiplied as arrangements for Taktser's escape progressed. His departure had to be kept absolutely secret, and he had no passport. Sufficient money for his stay in the United States had to be pre-arranged, as he was not carrying enough with him, and a satisfactory means found for providing it that would not create political embarrassment. Exit permits to leave the country and bypass custom formalities had to be obtained without drawing undue attention.

Gradually all the problems were resolved. In the United States the 'Committee for Free Asia' would be officially responsible for Taktser's expenses and his visit. He would be the guest of Robert Eckvall, a former

missionary to Tibet who spoke both Tibetan and Chinese, and who was now an interpreter for the US Government. The US and Indian Governments issued affidavits in lieu of a passport, accepting the Dalai Lama's escape as sufficient *bona fides*. The way for departure was now clear and I sent for Taktser to come to Calcutta.

He slipped quietly away from Kalimpong into Calcutta, where he joined me in the hotel I had booked. But he must have been spotted, for I discovered we were being followed by at least two people. We changed taxis in lonely streets, slipped into shops and markets, and out through back doors and side entrances, but this was successful only for short periods.

Taktser's fears increased as the discussions dragged on, for he had to wait while we arranged for the Dalai Lama to come to India after Taktser left, and we had to use Taktser as the liaison with Yatung. He had arranged a secret code with the Dalai Lama and a close trusted adviser, Trichang Rimpoche, and when I had translated the various proposals he sent cables in the code through Yangpel Pandatshang and Trichang Rimpoche.

The terms of agreement were that the Dalai Lama would publicly and immediately on his arrival in India repudiate the terms of the Seventeen-Point Agreement forced on the Tibetan delegation in Peking. Following this rejection, the United States would take up the matters of Tibet's independence and Chinese aggression in the United Nations.

When all the agreements were concluded, Taktser planned to leave India on the night of 2 July and the Dalai Lama, subject to my being able to make satisfactory arrangements with him in time, was due to arrive in India from Yatung a week later.

At this point news was received from Hong Kong that the Tibetan delegation which had negotiated the Seventeen-Point Agreement in Peking was on its way back to India, accompanied by a Chinese diplomatic delegation with instructions to prepare for the Chinese take-over of Tibet. They were due to arrive in Calcutta on Sunday 1 July.

That Sunday night, without prior warning, one of the Tibetans on the delegation, the Dalai Lama's brother-in-law, known as Yapshi Sey, came to the hotel where we were staying. Taktser insisted that we say nothing to him regarding his own or the Dalai Lama's arrangements; and only that Taktser was in Calcutta for medical treatment. (He had been to see a doctor, who had diagnosed that he was suffering from the effects of stress.)

On the Monday we remained away from the hotel all day until late afternoon to avoid any more confrontations. When we returned there was a message waiting for us that the diplomatic delegation wished to meet Taktser urgently at the Chinese Consulate. As we expected to leave the hotel at nine o'clock that night we did nothing about it.

We were sitting in our room, waiting for a taxi, when Taktser's brother-in-law walked in again. The suitcases were packed and stacked in the centre of the room, and Taktser and his travelling companion were dressed in Western-style suits, obviously ready for immediate departure. After an uneasy conversation Taktser finally admitted to Yapshi Sey that he was leaving for America, binding him to secrecy. While we were still talking news arrived that we could not leave that night as Taktser's servant's passport was not in order and would require some alteration. It would be 5 July – three days later – before they could leave.

During the intervening days one or more of the Tibetan delegation regularly visited Taktser at the hotel, either bringing messages from the Chinese with thinly veiled threats, or expressing anxiety regarding their own circumstances in the light of his departure. They suspected that, if Taktser was leaving for the United States, then the Dalai Lama would not approve their signing of the Seventeen-Point Agreement.

On Thursday 5 July the Chinese Ambassador arrived in Calcutta from New Delhi, and a curt request was despatched to Taktser to attend the Chinese Consulate at 6 p.m. for a meeting with him. If Taktser was not well enough to attend, then the Ambassador and others would call on him at the hotel.

Taktser's first reaction was to refuse point-blank to see him anywhere, but I was able to persuade him that the Indian Government had shown that it was friendly and would not permit any nonsense such as detaining Taktser at the Chinese Consulate. He finally agreed to go to the consulate, accompanied by Yapshi Sey, for exactly thirty minutes; if he did not appear outside the consulate, where I was waiting, after that time, then I was to contact the Indian authorities immediately.

There was no problem. The Chinese Ambassador demanded to know what Taktser was doing in Calcutta. If Taktser was ill, as he claimed, then the Ambassador would arrange for him to have the best of treatment in China. Taktser made no concessions; simply thanking him for the offer. A Tibetan official was appointed by the Chinese to remain in the hotel with Taktser at all times.

When the time came for us to leave for the airport I called a taxi to the side entrance, where I had had the luggage carried without being seen by the Tibetan official. We got away successfully, but had just reached a lonely stretch of the road to the airport where there was little traffic when the taxi sputtered to a standstill – out of petrol.

The road from the city to the airport passed through poorly lit, squatter-occupied areas, and we were stranded on a dark stretch surrounded by shanties of scrap-wood and corrugated iron. There was no sign of a shop or garage of any kind, only a few lean-to's selling food and

cigarettes. On the road itself cars and lorries roared past, paying no attention to our driver feebly signalling them to stop.

Taktser Rimpoche was growing increasingly frantic as time passed, and I was in a not much better state myself. I could fume inwardly, and bawl at the driver, but none of it helped at all. Eventually, the driver took a tin out of the car boot and disappeared into the squalid darkness of the shanty-town.

It was not just the breakdown that bothered us, but the suspicion that perhaps the driver had been got at by the Chinese Communists in some way without our knowing; and that he had deliberately stalled the car and was wasting time to stop us catching the plane, while the Chinese and their Tibetan helpers caught up with us. So we sweated in the darkness of the car and the heat of the night, seeing the hands of our watches pass 9 p.m., then 9.15, then 9.30, and calculating the distance to the airport and the plane's departure at 11.15 p.m.

At 9.40 the driver arrived back carrying his can – filled with petrol. He poured it into the tank and the carburettor, and we set off. At the airport the waiting officials, who were in a worse state of panic than we had been, rushed Taktser and his servant on to the plane.

The following afternoon I left for Kalimpong, and at the airport I heard that the Chinese and Tibetan delegations had caught the morning plane. I took with me letters from Taktser to the Dalai Lama, informing him of what I had done and asking him to help in the remaining arrangements.

The task of getting the Dalai Lama into India from Yatung, on the other side of Sikkim, was a formidable one. According to Taktser, the Dalai Lama could trust no one except Trichang Rimpoche, and his position was such that he was never alone. Any official who went into his presence had to be accompanied by another official, making it impossible to discuss secret plans.

I talked it over with Yangpel Pandatshang who, as Governor of Yatung at the time, was in a position to provide a strong escort of 200 Khambas to bring the Dalai Lama out by force if necessary. But he said that he was reluctant to consider this as it raised all sorts of complications, and must be a last resort – and at the Dalai Lama's own request.

While we were still considering the various plans with increasingly anxious American CIA officials, who were under pressure from New Delhi and Washington, the former Austrian prisoner-of-war, Heinrich Harrer, arrived in Kalimpong from Yatung. The CIA officials had been in touch with him to obtain his report of the situation in Yatung, and had found out that he had made maps of the area. He was anxious to be involved in any plans to move the Dalai Lama, and made it clear that he was not prepared to release any maps unless he was part of the operation. At the time he said

little of an association with the Dalai Lama that he was to claim later in his book *Seven Years in Tibet*. Certainly, the Dalai Lama's mother and sister, Yapshi Sey and the Dalai Lama, were all reluctant to have Harrer involved in the plans for escape. They pointed out that his present plans to form an anti-Communist group of officials from among his Tibetan friends included one who was a known Chinese collaborator.

But I saw no reasonable alternative. With the maps and Harrer's knowledge, and with Yangpel's Khambas and my knowledge of the language, plus Taktser's recommendation of me to the Dalai Lama, I reckoned that I could get him successfully into and through Bhutan to a quiet spot on the Bhutan-Indian border without too much difficulty. But I told the CIA, and Harrer, that I was to be in charge throughout.

The plan was simple. The Dalai Lama was to go for a walk in the evening, as was his custom, but taking with him only a few of his most trusted officials. Yangpel would arrange for him to be escorted by a small but effective group of his trusted Khambas, led by one man who knew of the plan and who would take the group to a nearby spot where the other Khambas were waiting with horses. They would then make for the Bhutan border, hopefully with enough time to put sufficient distance between them and any pursuit. I had already discussed the plan with the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Jigme Dorje, whom I knew well, and he had agreed. The plan was to be carried to Yatung by the Dalai Lama's brother-in-law, Yapshi Sey who, as a close relative, could see the Dalai Lama at any time without an official being present.

Three days later Yapshi Sey returned with the devastating news that the plan had been cancelled. The Dalai Lama would have to return to Lhasa. The three abbots of Tibet's leading monasteries in Lhasa – Sera, Drepung and Ganden – had come to Yatung with the request that the Dalai Lama return. When he had refused, they had insisted that the custom of consulting the State Oracle be observed. When the Dalai Lama did so, the Oracle said he must return. The Dalai Lama unprecedentedly demurred and requested another 'possession'. Again, the 'order from the gods' was that he should return to Lhasa. When it looked as if the young Dalai Lama might reject this also, he was firmly reminded by the leading abbots that if he did not accept the commands of the gods, how could he expect his people to accept him as their representative?

So, the Dalai Lama said in his letter, he must return. He thanked me, and all those who had helped, and said that he would not forget us. He had asked Yapshi Sey to burn the letter, as it was too dangerous to keep. I watched the flames slowly eat it away.

Next day the newspapers carried the front-page story of the dramatic arrival in the United States of the Dalai Lama's brother, and speculated

whether this meant that the Dalai Lama himself would follow. A few days later I received a letter from Taktser Rimpoche, written in English by his interpreter, Robert Eckvall:

Ten days ago I arrived in New York city and am now in hospital having a careful check-up, which may take some days longer. On the journey I thought often of your helpfulness in acting as my interpreter; fortunately one of the persons who met me at the airfield, like yourself, speaks Tibetan and has been helping me in my plans and problems having to do with getting settled and getting started on my studies . . .

Please accept my thanks for your great interest in my people and myself, and for your many efforts on our behalf.

The news of Taktser's arrival in the United States had an explosive effect in Kalimpong, increasing the tensions which had built up inter-family and between factions, exacerbated by the international intriguing. It had also not gone without notice that I had been out of Kalimpong at the same time, and rumours of my involvement swept the bazaar, making me once again the focus of media interest.

The people who were the hardest hit by Taktser's escape were the members of the Chinese 'advisory' delegation to Tibet, led by Chang Ching Wu, now stranded in Kalimpong. He, and the Ambassador, had already informed Peking that they had successfully persuaded Taktser to go to China. Knowing nothing of the Dalai Lama's Oracle-communicated decision, of course, they naturally expected that, as he now had a direct link with the United States through Taktser, he was in a position to reject the Seventeen-Point Agreement – and their presence in Tibet.

They had intended spending only a few days in Kalimpong, but now they dared not move, lest they be made an international laughing-stock in front of the international journalists. Chang Ching Wu was reported to be livid, and his fury was directed mostly at me. I heard from two sources that he had given orders to get rid of me – without making clear whether he meant that geographically, from the borders of Tibet, or physically, from this life altogether!

From a friend who was a member of the local Communist Party I was warned that some of the more radical elements preferred the latter option to the former. Then one of the Indian security officials with whom I had held many official talks over the past year informed me that from their sources of information they had heard that I was to be liquidated, and did I want a permit to carry a gun? I sent word back through the pipeline by my own sources, whom I knew to be in touch with the individuals concerned, that I would not leave Kalimpong, that I was aware of their intentions, that no follower of Karl Marx could intimidate a follower of Jesus Christ, and

that I would be carrying on with whatever I could do to help Tibet. Was it Cromwell who said, 'I am immortal till my work is done?'

One of the most disturbing factors in the Chinese advisory delegation's prolonged stay in Kalimpong was the opportunity it provided for contacts with Indian Communists, who came to Kalimpong as 'tourists' along with all the other questionable individuals. Their clandestine meetings and discussions for proposed infiltration into India were made easier by the stupidities of a local official. This official, who was Bengali and little acquainted with local Nepali customs, manoeuvred by dubious tactics to get the Nepali Gurkha League representative out of the way to let in the Government-approved Congress candidate. Instead, this let in the Communists, and Kalimpong, the most strategic town on the Chinese Communist route to Calcutta, became a Communist constituency at this most critical period of Indo-Tibetan crisis.

This was further complicated by the growing influx into the town of refugee Khambas. Most of the caravans had Khamba muleteers, who were being badly hit by the Chinese occupation of Kham, which was restricting the normal trade between China and India. Although the Tibetan officials in Kalimpong were becoming increasingly disillusioned with India, Britain and America because of their lack of support for Tibet, they were still not willing to throw in their lot with the Chinese; especially the militant Khambas, who preferred to fight. Many of them had formed themselves into roving groups of bandits in west Tibet, plundering the caravans of those they suspected of favouring the Chinese, and now threatening the Chinese advisory delegation if it attempted to go to Lhasa.

But when news arrived of the Dalai Lama's decision to return to Lhasa, the Chinese delegation made rapid plans to go there at the same time. On 16 July the Dalai Lama and members of his Yatung-based Government met the Chinese delegation to discuss future possibilities, and he left Yatung for Lhasa on 21 July.

In Kalimpong my servant, Loshay, told me that I was being followed by people when I came home at night. He had heard of threats to me and, without saying anything, had made it his practice to follow me from the bazaar and had seen different individuals pursuing me. I had warned him after our arrival in India that his disposition to fight would have to be curbed, for India was not like Tibet, where a brawl was an evening's entertainment. Since arriving, I had heard directly or indirectly that he had been in several battles in the rough section of the town, and he had a high reputation. Among the Khambas, fighting was as recognized a custom as boxing was in the West.

When Loshay heard that I was marked down for liquidation it did not worry him; in fact, he was delighted, for he said that now no one could

blame him if he killed an opponent in retaliation! He was bewildered when I informed him that he would still be put in jail. However, he had decided that he would follow me without saying anything, and see what happened.

He found out that I was being trailed by two different people, and he was unsure whether either was a policeman. But he had overheard one discussing me and planning to kill me, and then Loshay had seen him in the bazaar at a Communist public meeting. He picked a fight with him, and beat him up so badly that the Communist had to be admitted to hospital. Then Loshay calmly informed the onlookers that the Communist had tried to kill his, Loshay's master, and that if anyone else had any ideas the same would happen to them. Whether it was this threat, or continuing divine providence, I was never molested.

On 9 September 1951, the Chinese People's Liberation Army entered Lhasa. On 13 March they entered Yatung, and deployed along the northern frontiers of Assam, Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal up to Ladakh. On 28 April, escorted by Chinese troops, the Panchen Lama arrived in Lhasa, and what the Chinese declared to be the 'liberation of Tibet' was complete.

Before the Chinese army launched the invasion of Tibet it was given two warnings, one by Mao Tse-tung and one by Deng Xiao-ping. These two Chinese Communist leaders between them formulated and directed Chinese policy on Tibet. In his *On the Policies of Our Work in Tibet*, Mao declared:

We depend solely on two basic policies to win over the masses and put ourselves in an invulnerable position. The first is strict budgeting coupled with production for the army's own needs, and thus the exertion of influence on the masses; this is the key link. We must do our best and take the proper steps to win over the Dalai Lama and the majority of his top echelon, and to isolate the handful of bad elements in order to achieve a gradual, bloodless transformation of the Tibetan political and economic system over a number of years; on the other hand, we must be prepared for the eventuality of the bad elements leading the Tibetan troops in rebellion and attacking us, so that in this contingency our army could still carry on and hold out in Tibet . . .

Deng Xiao-ping told the civilian cadres who were on their way to Tibet from Chengtu that they should limit themselves to helping the Tibetans, and avoid mentioning class struggle and Socialism, as they would not be understood.

When it entered Tibet the Chinese army was in a poor condition after years of non-stop fighting and in no physical state to withstand strong Tibetan opposition. The Chinese soldiers were reported to have straggled

into the various towns and villages in the desolate plateaux looking tattered, insufficiently clothed, underfed and exhausted. The several months of waiting in Chamdo in east Tibet had helped them to recuperate, and they were put to the task of building or widening the road that was to be the main trade route through Tibet. However, had it been left to the Chinese alone the road would never have been built. They had the engineers, they had some of their labour in the ranks of the occupation army, but they were not physically equipped to work at such heights, where the slightest exertion brought on extreme vertigo to all except the hardened Tibetans. So they recruited Tibetans for the work of clearing the trails of stones, and building up the places where transport might not get through.

As the Liberation Army advanced from Chamdo through the towns to Lhasa it left behind garrisons every five miles to maintain the road and guard its supply lines into Tibet, for food was its major problem. Most of Tibet being at an unproductive height of 15,000 feet, the amount of food produced by the farming communities in Tibet was only just sufficient to meet the needs of Tibetans, with occasionally some left over for storage. Barley, the staple food of the Tibetans, was grown up to a height of 7,000 feet, and in south Tibet rice was grown to about 4,000 feet, but any extra supplies had to be brought in from Bhutan, China or India. With the influx of the 50,000-strong People's Liberation Army, it was necessary for the Chinese to ensure that their supplies were adequate so that their presence in Tibet did not upset the precariously maintained food balance. In any case, the *tsamba*, or barley flour, and dried meat diet of the Tibetans did not appeal to the Chinese. At one time in 1952 it looked as if they might have to drastically cut down their occupation army, or even withdraw, because their food supplies were so low that there was reported to be wide discontent among the Chinese troops. Ironically, they were able to survive this crisis by making a gift of rice to famine-stricken India, and attaching as part-condition that several thousand tons be sent to Tibet.

Farm implements, agricultural loans and technical experts on farming were sent to Tibet by the Peking Government in an enthusiastic attempt to overcome what they claimed was the reactionary feudal policy of the Tibetans in the past. But, with the exception of a few local successes, in the country as a whole the great agricultural experiment was not productive, and the grim natural conditions of the highest country in the world defied the Chinese efforts. In the towns and villages along their routes of conquest the Chinese also built primary schools, medical and veterinary dispensaries and, in Chamdo and Lhasa, hospitals. They made school attendance compulsory for the Tibetan children during the day and for adults at night. At first, both the Tibetan and Chinese languages were taught in these

schools, together with hygiene, simple crafts, history, citizenship and politics; then, later, only the Chinese language was taught.

The Liberation Army was scrupulous in its behaviour, the soldiers keeping strictly to themselves and not oppressing the Tibetan population in any way. Heavy penalties were imposed on any Chinese soldier who was known to have made use of even a Tibetan prostitute. One Chinese soldier, accused by a Tibetan woman of rape, was shot by his superior officer. With all the beneficent and necessary reforms being introduced, however, one ominous factor was also emerging: the innovations were highly selective, not being introduced on a national scale but limited to the inhabited places on the main route from China through Tibet to India. In effect, they were merely supplementary to the military thrust to the Indian border; there was no attempt to develop them in the country beyond the main arteries. Further, the Chinese 'restraint' was also limited to the show-places of Lhasa and the towns to the west, where this exemplary Chinese behaviour could be seen and reported. In east Tibet, their approach was both suppressive and oppressive.

After the Dalai Lama's brother, Taktser Rimpoche, had escaped to the United States in 1951 the Chinese had attacked his monastery at Kumbum and confiscated all its wealth – grain, lands and treasures – as punishment. They then made this the excuse for widespread requisitioning of monastery lands in a programme of land reform, making great propaganda of the new reforms.

In the summer of 1952, they launched a campaign to disarm the Khamba tribesmen, who until then had been allowed to carry on their lives as normal. The high-handed approach of the Chinese to the independent Khambas provoked them into retaliation in a number of places. Whether it was this unexpected intransigence after all their 'beneficial reforms', or the increasing demands of the parallel war in Korea, or perhaps a combination of both is not known, but a decision was taken by the Chinese authorities to impose sterner measures in east Tibet.

In Lhasa itself, the Chinese proceeded cautiously, but even in the capital there were anti-Chinese demonstrations. Leading monks had been persuaded to cooperate with the Chinese through assurances that there would be no interference with Tibetan customs or religion, but they were now disturbed by reports of resistance coming out of east Tibet, where many of them had relatives. The nobles and high officials who had been persuaded by one means or another to participate in the proposed new reforms now began to have second thoughts, as the Chinese increased their demands for cooperation in suppressing all signs of opposition. For the first time a powerful anti-Chinese group calling itself the *Mi-mang Tsongdu* ('People's Party') began operating in Lhasa, holding demonstrations,

placarding walls with protests, denouncing China's interference in the Dalai Lama's traditional powers and in the customs and religion of Tibet. Some reports placed the number of troops in Tibet at over 200,000, conspicuous in all the major cities and towns. This prominent presence, with the increased demand on food supplies, irritated the Tibetans, who were now experiencing severe food shortages – accelerated by unprecedented earthquakes, floods and subsequent famine, which the superstitious Tibetans attributed to the displeasure of the gods because of the Chinese occupation. Finally, the Chinese policy of imposing the Chinese language, dress and customs on Tibetan children in the schools, and the ever-intrusive Chinese Communist cadres at all levels, infuriated the Tibetans.

In east Tibet the 'East Tibetan People's Government' was formed with six vice-presidents, among them the four revolutionary leaders, Topgyay and Rapga Pandatshang of Kham, and Lobsang Tsewong and Geshi Sherab Gyaltsso of Amdo. For a year, on Rapga's advice, they had refused to accept any payment from the Chinese for this service, but eventually they were forced to do so. The Chinese took several delegations from east Tibet to China on a grand tour, to show to them the power and prestige of the new regime and demonstrate the folly of opposing them. They were given lectures and propaganda sessions wherever they went, and urged to return and inform the Tibetan people of the Communist blessings awaiting those who cooperated with them.

But inside Tibet itself the Chinese administration was not viewed so pleasantly. Since taking over control, the new Communist regime had imposed a series of taxes, ostensibly for the 'Aid to Korea Fund', on crops, wool and herds, until the people were paying the Chinese more than they had paid the monasteries. Through the veterinary dispensaries which they introduced, the Chinese estimated the wealth of the Tibetans, and when they did not voluntarily register their animals for taxing, the Communists requisitioned them.

But while the remote territory in east Tibet may, in the Chinese view, have lent itself admirably to facilitating a rigorous enforcement of land 'reforms', the policy itself, in an area that was historically so hostile to the Chinese, was an explosive issue.

The increasing intransigence of the Tibetans angered the Chinese, and the representative in Lhasa, Chang Ching Wu, was so furious on one occasion with the two Tibetan 'Prime Ministers' appointed by the Dalai Lama during his exile in Yatung – the lama Lobsang Tashi, and the lay Lukhangwa – that he refused to meet them again and demanded meetings with the Dalai Lama alone. When this was agreed to, he brought along guards and stationed them outside the conference room. When this became known to the Tibetan people there was great anger at this

intimidatory insult. At one of the meetings it was decided to set up a 'Chinese Communist Party for the Tibetan Area', with the Chinese representative Chang Ching Wu as secretary, and with three deputies – and no Tibetans.

The two 'Prime Ministers', Lobsang Tashi and Lukhangwa, were sympathetic towards the underground *Mi-mang Tsong-du*, or 'People's Party' – and were even said to have inspired its formation. Certainly, it numbered some 70 per cent of the upper strata of Tibetans among its membership, an indication that it had high-level influence and not just the 'street support' of 'bad elements', as claimed by the angry Chinese. The level of support extended to the grass roots and looked like spreading from Kalimpong in India to Kangting in China, according to the increasingly cooperative 'quisling' Tibetan, Ngabu Ngawang Jigme, who had led the infamous 'Seventeen-Point Agreement' delegation to Peking and was their leading mouthpiece in Lhasa after his return. This led to the demand that Lobsang Tashi be imprisoned for 'traitorous' activities, and the respected and redoubtable Lukhangwa was persuaded by his friends to flee from Lhasa to Kalimpong for safety. Before he left, he stood up in the *Kashag* – the Tibetan Cabinet – and publicly denounced the Chinese for their aggression in Tibet, emphasizing that they had no political claim to the country.

With Lukhangwa's arrival in Kalimpong I now had another high-level source of information about what was happening inside Lhasa, to add to the information I was receiving from Kham. When Taktser Rimpoche left for the United States I had arranged with him to correspond with the Dalai Lama through his tutor, Trichang Rimpoche, but only in an emergency. Normally, I kept in touch through members of his family still living in Kalimpong, and with the many Tibetan officials who continued living there.

It was a difficult time for the Dalai Lama's mother, she had confided to me, because the confused situation inside Tibet compounded the pressures on her with regard to the Dalai Lama. To add to her problems, one of her sons, Gyalu Thondup, who until then had been living in China and who had married a Chinese woman and fled with her to Taiwan with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, had arrived in Kalimpong and was becoming increasingly involved in the politics and plots there. He was suspected of being an agent of the Chinese Nationalists and was an added complication in the already complex conspiracies.

The national politics of Tibet were becoming increasingly internationalized, as intelligence agents from Britain, India, America, Russia and other countries came to Kalimpong. They now had Gyalu Thondup, with his family connection with the Dalai Lama to help him, as an alternative

interpreter to myself, as he spoke good English and Chinese. But as he had arrived without any known source of support (his mother informed me worriedly), and was willing to take money from any source to increase his personal wealth and political influence (I was informed by Yangpel Pandatshang and others), his increasingly evident affluence added to the suspicions about where his true loyalties lay. Very few believed he put Tibet or even the Dalai Lama's interests first.

What it meant for me, among other things, was that his mother often had to arrange for Gyalu Thondup to be out of the house when I, as interpreter with a foreign agent, visited her to discuss important issues, which neither she nor the agent wished to be leaked to Taiwan or other parties. Things were made even more complicated when Gyalu Thondup entered into a commercial relationship with Tsepon Shakabpa, involving both Hong Kong and Taiwan. Were they in touch with the Nationalists, or the Communists, or both?

Chinese Occupation

The second European I had met after my arrival in Kalimpong was Molly McCabe. The day after my arrival the headmaster of the Dr Graham's Homes in Kalimpong, Mr Lloyd – with whom the Pandatshangs' manager had arranged for me to stay – invited me to join the staff in a tennis party. I had not played for years, and had no suitable clothing, but he put together some things for me.

At the tennis court I sat down next to one of the participants, and after the general introductions she said to me, 'You are from Scotland?'

'Yes,' I replied, noting that her own accent was Scottish. I also noted that she was looking at me more curiously than my accent warranted. I knew I was unusually brown from years of exposure to the sun in Tibet, and my hair was down to my shoulders, but even as my ego was preening from the interest, I had a growing conviction that we had met somewhere.

'Which part of Scotland are you from?' she asked.

'Falkirk,' I replied. 'Where are you from?'

'Falkirk,' she answered.

'What is your own name?' I asked her.

'Molly Macklin,' she said. 'Wait a minute. You're not –'

'George Patterson,' I finished, 'from Laurieston.'

Molly and I had been to the same Falkirk High School, had gone to the same Sunday School, and knew some of the same people. She had married George McCabe, who was the estate manager of the Dr Graham's Homes, and had been in Kalimpong for several years.

Molly and George were my closest friends in Kalimpong, and after I left the Homes for my own place, the Tagore residence outside the town, I continued to visit them almost every week, sometimes staying overnight or for a weekend. When I started writing my first book Molly offered to type the manuscript for me, and this took me to their home on even more occasions.

Molly had known one or two of my girlfriends in Scotland, and she had listened with growing amusement to the reports and rumours of my involvement with numerous ladies in Kalimpong. As these increased in variety and scale, she took it on herself to 'make an honest missionary' of me. She did this by seeing to it that I was introduced to a number of eligible young women missionaries.

It was useless protesting, as I did, that I was not interested in any permanent relationship; that I was happy to be 'just good friends'. When

my assertion about remaining unmarried was not believed, I then resorted to flippancy. I pointed out to her that most women missionaries, for obscure but understandable reasons, were not very attractive or intelligent; that the few who were either, or both, soon became disheartened or disillusioned with their spinsterhood in a foreign country, and the consequent dependence on senior and often incompatible missionaries in remote mission stations. When they went to the hill-stations, such as Kalimpong or Darjeeling, for vacations or language studies, they were desperate for companionship, or husbands, and while I was ready to provide the former I was not willing to be the latter. It was unfortunate that my good intentions were misconstrued when their hopes did not materialize. Molly was not, however, discouraged.

My increasing political involvement with the Tibetans also brought me in touch with many non-Christian women of all kinds. The embassies kept in contact with me through secretaries, who were invariably attractive, as 'cover' for their intelligence bosses. There were women journalists, and photographers, who were looking for 'inside' material on Tibetan politics and customs, and who required my services as interpreter. There were mysterious 'freelance' agents of vague derivation who were 'sent' to me for information, and who were happy to spend a lot of time in my company to obtain that information. There were the numerous attractive 'Tagore girls', as I called them in my mind, the nieces and friends of the Tagore family who came to the house in Kalimpong where I was the family-approved caretaker, and who accepted that I was also approved to escort them at all times during their visits. There were the many beautiful Tibetan, Bhutanese and local Chinese women that I came to know socially, and who, because of my association with their families, felt free to be with me at parties, or tennis, or on moonlit walks.

It was like a young man's dream come true – but my vocation excluded me from its potential delights just as firmly as any celibate Catholic priest. I was a servant of God, waiting to be sent by God back into a Tibet where any, if not all, of these young ladies – even the sophisticated Tibetan ones – would be reluctant to go.

I recalled with whimsical irony the efforts of Topgyay and Kora Lama to get me 'fixed up' in the limited environment of Kham. In Kalimpong there was a literal embarrassment of possibilities. I discussed my self-enforced celibacy with lovely sinuous Indian ladies in the exotic Tagore gardens, while the sun set in a blaze of golden splendour over the snow-crowned Kanchenjunga mountain range; with gorgeous Bhutanese ladies in the exotic royal palace outside Kalimpong; with gypsy-like Tibetan ladies on tennis courts and immaculate lawns; with mocking European ladies in hotels and restaurants and woodland glades. Like Topgyay and

Kora Lama, none of them believed me; all of them, in their different ways, were convinced that I was 'having it off' somewhere and somehow with everybody. Even Princess Peter of Greece and Denmark, at her lunches and dinners for the distinguished visitors to Kalimpong, held while her husband was researching Tibetan anthropology, would announce when she introduced me, '*Pat-la* [the English name given to me by local Tibetans] is famous here for wanting us to believe he is still a virgin at over thirty years of age!'

So, Molly McCabe thought it was too bad that I had such a reputation, and that the best thing was to get me settled into respectability. She also knew, from experience, that her reservoir of local possibilities was useless. However, she informed me, she had three friends she had met on the ship coming to India who were wanting to spend some five weeks' holiday with her in Kalimpong, and one of them was just the woman for me. She was Canadian, a pharmacist, a good horsewoman and attractive. The other two friends were a doctor and a nurse. The doctor was said to be a brilliant surgeon and a very committed Christian who had given up a promising career to come out to India to work with the poor in a Punjab hospital – 'the saintly Meg Ingram'.

I had by now completed my first book, *Tibetan Journey*, an account of my trip across Tibet, and had moved in with Molly and George to stay with them while she typed a clean copy of the finished manuscript. I resigned myself to the requirements of Molly's well-meant match-making, but confided to the amused George that I would have some fun while doing so.

The day of the expected arrival of Molly's three guests I was away from after breakfast until suppertime, working with Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark on a film for the University of Copenhagen about a Tibetan oracle-priest. I arranged to arrive home just as everybody was sitting down to dinner. I also arranged to wear a bow tie, which was a form of dress not approved for, or by, missionaries.

When Molly introduced me with mock grandiloquence, 'Ladies, this is Patterson of Tibet', I said, without a smile, 'Ladies, I am delighted to have you meet me.' I knew from the stilted acknowledgement from the three guests that round one had gone to me. Molly and George just roared with laughter. They knew me.

I sat down between the doctor and the nurse, and the Canadian was on the opposite side of the table. George was an excellent host and kept the conversation going, and Molly was having fun with her own observations, without embarrassment to anybody. The three guests managed not to address any remarks at all to me.

I was very busy and only saw the guests at the occasional mealtime, and gradually the atmosphere thawed sufficiently to permit some guarded

conversation at times. I stuck grimly to platitudes for George and Molly's sake, carefully avoiding comments or recounting incidents which might be construed as controversial.

I was leaving as usual early one morning after breakfast when I met the surgeon, Meg Ingram, sitting alone on the outside verandah. I chatted politely for a few minutes, and then she asked me what I did when I went off every morning at this time. I hesitated with my reply. We had had only superficial conversations up till now, and I did not want to get into any serious discussion of a Christian nature with a missionary – especially a young woman missionary, even if she was attractive and intelligent.

'I am working with someone on a film about demon-possession in Tibet,' I said off-handedly.

'Demon-possession?' she said with interest. 'In Tibet? Have you had experience of this?'

'Yes,' I replied, looking at my watch. 'Maybe we could have a chat about it some time. I must rush off now.'

A day or two later I was working at a table in the garden on polishing my manuscript when I happened to look up the mountainside to a spot where it curved away above the farmhouse. I was gazing into the distance when it dawned on me that someone was having trouble with a horse on the trail leading from the Homes' stables. As my gaze sharpened and I tried to fit the scene into some coherence, I decided that it must be the Canadian guest who was trying to get one of George's horses to ride up the trail leading into Sikkim and Tibet, and that the horse was stubbornly reluctant to leave the comfort of the stables. I grinned to myself. This was Molly's expert rider, and my intended marriage partner! I decided to watch closely and get material for some fun with both of them.

Rider and horse came up to where the path from the stables met the trail into Sikkim, but instead of going on upwards, as the rider wanted, the horse backed away and turned back on to the path to the stables. Once, twice, three times, four times. Eventually the rider gave up and returned the horse to the stables. I waited for her to return to the house.

It was not the Canadian, but the surgeon, Meg Ingram. I was disappointed. I could not make humorous capital out of her and Molly, especially when I discovered that she had never ridden anything more than a plodding hack, and willingly admitted that she did not know what to do with the horse on the trail from the stables. I found myself suggesting that if she wanted to ride, then I would show her how to get the horse to do what she wanted.

Next day I got George to saddle up two horses. When we got to the end of the path from the stables and the fork with the trail to Sikkim, Meg's horse pulled against her and tried to turn back. I gave it a sharp cut with my

whip and it jumped forward. I told her to bring the horse back. When it tried to refuse again, I cut it with the whip again.

On the third occasion it kept going up the trail, and I followed behind at a steady pace. But now, as I tried to get alongside, it edged forward at a faster trot to get away from me. Meg was being bounced around a bit, but was obviously enjoying herself, so I let the pace quicken. Soon we were cantering and I decided to ease alongside Meg to be on hand to slow her down.

But when I tried to draw level her horse stretched out into a gallop to keep ahead of me, forcing me to drop back. I noted with some unease that the trail was narrowing, and that the mountain slope to my right dropped away for thousands of feet to the river far below. Also, the trail beneath us was becoming rougher with stones. I gave my horse a cut with the whip, and lifted it into a fast gallop to draw level with the outside of Meg's horse.

It was the easiest move in all the races I had run in Tibet, when the Tibetans passed each other in a race to the summit of some mountain. There was still enough space to let me draw level in order to lean forward and grab the reins. But her horse laid back its ears and hammered on ahead of me. I leaned forward and at the same time whipped my horse, reaching for the reins on Meg's horse. I had just about caught them when her horse suddenly swerved to the left and she was thrown from the saddle on to the trail.

I took off after the horse and eventually was able to catch it and lead it back to where Meg had fallen. She was unhurt, but blazingly angry – not so much because she had been thrown off the horse by my efforts, but because I had so casually taken off and left her lying there without a backward glance. I told her that it had been an instinctive reaction. In Tibet the first thing one did in such a situation was get the horse; because without the horse in such country a rider was dead. She was mollified, and we returned to the farmhouse at a walking pace.

The experience helped ease our hitherto strained relationship, and when a few days later I asked Meg if she would like to go on a riding picnic with some of my Tibetan friends, she was delighted to accept. I did not ask her Canadian friend, much to Molly's chagrin.

On the day of the picnic there were about twenty or thirty Tibetan men and women, all with their horses well primed with cold tea to stimulate them into eager action. I told Meg to keep close to me, hold her horse to a steady trot despite what the Tibetans said or did, and let them get on with their mad escapades. I knew what to expect.

It began sedately enough from the town where we forgathered, then as the trail led upwards out of town the wilder spirits began the usual jockeying for the front place. The horses knew what was expected of them,

and there was a mêlée of pushing, racing animals on the narrow, six-foot-wide trail as each tried to pass the other in a flat gallop.

Normally I would have been up in front with them, shouting and driving and jostling, but I kept beside Meg as her horse strained to get into the action. She was obviously enjoying the excitement, oblivious of the potential dangers as the Tibetan riders dared each other to greater excesses of skill. Even when some of the younger Tibetans drove alongside her, not knowing she was unaware of the practice and the skills, pushing her horse to the outside of the trail with her right stirrup hanging over the sheer drop, she kept her head and enjoyed herself.

The trail flattened, and twisted, sloped upwards and downwards and ever upwards, narrowed and broadened, and the Tibetans quickened the pace until the whole company was strung out in a flat gallop for the planned picnic place. We arrived there safely, breathless, and with our blood pounding with the excitement.

Fires were lit, tea and food prepared, beer and wine liberally dispensed, songs were sung and dances performed. It was the happy-go-lucky partying of the Tibetans that I knew so well. At the end of the day the pace of enjoyment slowed; and, sprawled around the fire, stories were told of individual experiences in Tibet – of wars, and feuds, and demons, bizarre and mysterious happenings, and laughable incidents. They drew Meg into the companionship, coaxing her to drink the yak-butter tea, and regaling her with (mythical) accounts of my experiences with women in Tibet.

As the sun went down the party broke up. The younger members challenged each other to a race back to Kalimpong, while the others found their own pace. Meg and I held our horses to a steady walk, content to head down the trail facing the disappearing sun and an indescribable sunset crowning the Kanchenjunga mountain range, with the only sound the horses' hoofs. When the sun finally disappeared, and the clouds turned saffron and purple from yellow and red, we got off the horses and walked together, leading the horses, still silent.

Something was happening between us, something important had happened, and I tried to sort out what it meant. Was it the glamour and excitement of sharing Tibetan friendship and excitement which was meat and drink to me? Was it the intellectual stimulation of having an attractive and intelligent companion, a doctor at twenty-one and a surgeon at twenty-five, see me at my most vulnerable with my Tibetan friends and share it with me? Was what I was experiencing the effect of a great day out and a glorious sunset? Or was it love? If it was love, was she experiencing the same emotion? And if so, what was to be done about it?

She was a brilliant surgeon, working in a hospital 1,500 miles away. She had trained under one of the world's leading surgeons and was

accustomed to well-equipped operating theatres to do the work she had been given by God. I was an itinerant evangelist, a wanderer in remote and difficult places, a penniless servant of God without a parish, a rootless adventurer. What had the Punjab to do with Tibet?

The onus was on me. She, too, had been brought up in a Christian Brethren family. The flirtatious glances, the allusive phrases, the suggestive proposals, the provocative hints, which had been such a part of my recent experiences in Kalimpong, were not open to her. Nor had she tried to use the customary practices of women missionaries with me, to give me some indication of her feelings and intentions – if she had them.

All I had on that slow walk back to Kalimpong was a pregnant and compatible silence. Neither of us tried to break it with idle chatter.

When we got back to the farmhouse George and Molly and the others were out, and our supper had been left in the oven. We ate together in the same companionable silence, broken by desultory conversation. We looked at each other and smiled occasionally. We had coffee in the sitting-room.

‘Meg,’ I said eventually, ‘there is something I must say to you. I love you, but I cannot marry you.’

She looked at me, waiting for me to carry on.

‘I feel that it is necessary for me to tell you of my love,’ I continued, ‘in order to free you to speak. But at the same time, I have to admit that I do not know where you fit into the life I believe that God has purposed for me; hence the conclusion about marriage. This has come as a total surprise to me.’

‘I love you, too,’ Meg said quietly. ‘I knew the other day when I stood at the window upstairs and watched you leave for the town. I suddenly thought: “I love that man.” I have thought of little else since; for I do not see where we fit into each other’s lives.’

When she left five days later for the Punjab we still had not settled our dilemma, and we thought we would never see each other again. We corresponded constantly, exploring every thought and response. No one – not even Molly and George – had the slightest idea what had happened.

Then Meg returned to Kalimpong alone – and everyone knew. We had decided to meet again to settle the problem once and for all. If what we felt for each other was of God then He must have the answers to all our problems. Before Meg left Kalimpong we decided that we would marry in Aberdeen, in Scotland, in September, when her contract with the Ludhiana Medical College in the Punjab expired. She would join me in Kalimpong, and we would face together whatever it was that God had for us both to do. He had given us our skills, and our vocations, and He would give us our directions in His own good time.

We were married in Aberdeen University’s King’s College Chapel, and

returned to Kalimpong at the beginning of 1954. Meg carried on some medical work locally* (there was only a small hospital with meagre facilities); and I carried on with my studies of Himalayan politics, writing for the *Manchester Guardian* and, later, for the *Daily Telegraph*, publishing books, and lay preaching locally and nationally. My first book, *Tibetan Journey*, giving a diary account of my trip across Tibet had been published in 1953 and was an instant success, receiving critical acclaim.

Kalimpong and its activities had now become world-famous, because of the number and diversity of colourful articles about it carried in the international media. It was reckoned that 80 per cent of people visiting India found their way to Kalimpong, and when Prime Minister Nehru was asked in the Indian parliament about Kalimpong's increased notoriety, he replied with considerable acerbity that it was 'a nest of spies'.

It did not take me long to pick up the threads of border conspiracy by the various interested national intelligence organizations. In frustration the Tibetan refugee officials were breaking into even more factions under the pressures of enforced exile. This provided the intelligence representatives with fertile ground for exploiting the situation.

I was brought up-to-date regarding the situation in east Tibet by a letter from Kham delivered to me by special messenger, who had been reduced to panic by my absence in Britain:

In time, by sheer, machine-like pressure, their [the Chinese] propaganda resulted in many conversions to the dagger-and-smile policy of the Communists, and many succumbed to the promises of Utopia. However, it was not long until the Communists, despite their dazzling promises, began to cut down radically the payments being made to higher officers. Those who stubbornly adhered to the policy of retaining the Buddhist religion, and the importance of Lhasa as a centre, were taken to China and subjected to 'brain-washing'. A few gave way under those methods and these were given responsible posts despite their inferior calibre. The intelligentsia, scholars and high-priests of the country were ridiculed and degraded. Individual liberty and freewill were conspicuous by their absence. Dictated directions and instructions became the order of the day. Life had no meaning, no purpose. Willy-nilly, a person must part with his cattle, land, cereal, et cetera, whenever the Communists thought it necessary for their purpose. Taxes and tolls went up ten times more than in previous years . . . Woe to the evil day that saw this holy land spoiled by such forces of misery. On top of all this, a constant flow of arms still continues. Communica-

*For my wife's account of her experiences see her book *Doctor Meg*.

tion and transport are being introduced on a large scale. It is no doubt a good idea, but the people have to groan under heavy taxation levied to pay for such communications. There are signs of protest and exhaustion everywhere. The mind and body are crushed beneath this callous burden . . .

In late 1953 a Tibetan from Amdo had slipped quietly into Kalimpong. He was brought to me, as he had an important message from the leaders in Amdo for Taktser Rimpoche. His name was Gompo Sham, and he was a 'People's General' in the Chinese-supervised Tibetan army and the son-in-law of Lobsang Tsewong, one of the four revolutionary leaders in the new 'East Tibetan People's Government', and an associate of the Pandatshangs. He had travelled across Tibet disguised as a mendicant monk to avoid the attentions of the Chinese, who were searching for him.

He reported that a crisis had been reached in Amdo, where the Chinese were exasperated by the non-cooperative attitude of the Tibetans to the reform schemes. Where the towns, villages and monasteries were reasonably accessible the Chinese had been able to enforce their policies on the reluctant Tibetans, but in the remote valleys and mountains the Tibetans refused to submit to the Chinese and, in armed defiance, carried on their lives as usual.

When the Chinese eventually sent in troops to coerce them into submission the Amdo Tibetans, taking advantage of the mountainous terrain, waited until the Chinese were drawn deep into the mountains and then attacked and slaughtered them. The most antagonistic of the Tibetans were the fierce Goloks, who had precipitated the crisis. The Chinese authorities, infuriated by the Golok attack, had ordered Lobsang Tsewong and Gompo Sham to proceed to the Golok territory straight away and, with the help of Chinese troops, disarm the unruly tribesmen and bring them under the control of the East Tibetan People's Government.

Like the Pandatshangs in Kham, Lobsang Tsewong had hoped to retain power in his hands for some time by cooperating with the Chinese to some extent, but the crisis with the Goloks placed him in an impossible predicament. He knew that to demand the submission of the Goloks was useless, and would only result in his loss of prestige and leadership. On the other hand, to refuse to go to them would mean imprisonment or death at the hands of the Chinese. He and Gompo Sham had therefore decided that now, rather than later, the time had come to call on the tribes of east Tibet to revolt.

According to Gompo Sham, they were fairly well armed to fight for a short period of guerrilla warfare, but required much more military equipment to be successful. They had been receiving some air-dropped supplies

from Nationalist planes flying over Tibet – from Taiwan, they presumed. When I expressed surprise at this he said that they – the Tibetans – had radios which had been brought to them by the retreating Nationalist troops of the defecting Chinese Moslem generals. He calculated that they had about 80,000 armed men, not counting those from Kham; among them some 6,000 of the Nationalists, who had provided the radio operators.

Gompo Sham was disappointed to find on his arrival in Kalimpong that Taktser Rimpoche had already left for America, and he tried to obtain permission to visit him there. It was one thing for Taktser to get there at the height of a crisis, however; quite another for a relatively unknown Tibetan to obtain the appropriate travel documents when relations between India and the United States were in a poor state. The right-wing US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, had little in common with the left-wing Indian UN representative, Krishna Menon; and the US Congress was reluctant to send surplus grain to a famine-stricken India via a non-cooperative Prime Minister Nehru.

Gompo Sham was advised to go to Taiwan to see if they would help, but while he was making arrangements the delays and frustrations caused him to suffer a breakdown and he was admitted to a mental asylum for treatment.

Meanwhile, on the Indian border, the Chinese military build-up in Tibet began to look ominous for the Indians. Military drill and army exercises were reported to be taking place from dawn to dusk, and the constant stream of propaganda to the troops foretold the imminent invasion of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. The Chinese border troops were so truculent that, when the Rani Chuni of Bhutan and her son, who had close relatives at high level in Tibet, were visiting Tibet they were detained for several hours.

The persistent propaganda and military activity on her borders at last began to worry India, and Prime Minister Nehru, accompanied by a large entourage of political and military advisers, made a personal tour of inspection of Kalimpong and Gangtok, in Sikkim. He was bluntly informed that there was nothing that India could do, either politically or militarily, to stop a Chinese invasion of the area. China's claim to the border states was based on the same assumptions as her claim to Tibet.

In India the newspapers blazed warnings of possible Chinese attack. 'We Are Next On Mao's List' read one. The *New York Times* also published an article, from information obtained on the spot, headlined 'Chinese Plan to Dominate Border States'.

With almost 300,000 troops in Tibet, and conditions deteriorating, the Chinese now had to do something, and quickly. They made the mistake of

trying to do everything at once. They launched an intensive campaign of 'land reform' in east Tibet, which had as its real goal the elimination of the influence of the monks. At the same time they took the monks and forced them to work alongside the lay Tibetans as slave labour for building the roads that would support their expansionist plans.

The social benefits introduced earlier into Tibet became an active focus of sustained Chinese Communist propaganda. Primary schools now taught only Chinese language, history and customs to the exclusion of all things Tibetan. Five hundred young Tibetan males and females were selected and sent to study in the Central Nationality Academy in China, and were subjected to intensive Chinese Communist propaganda; Tibetan dress, customs and aspirations were publicly ridiculed. Radio stations, which had been set up in Lhasa and Chamdo, broadcast a steady stream of Chinese comment on current affairs, domestic and foreign. Film projector teams showed only Chinese Communist documentaries.

The intensive 'slave labour' used on the roads produced an airfield at Chamdo, which brought it within two hours' flying time of Chengtu in Szechuan in west China; and widened roads brought the town within seven days' travel from Chengtu, instead of the previous six weeks to two months.

In the autumn of 1954 I was visited and asked by a top Indian Government official to advise on what might be done to redeem India's prestige in Tibet. It appeared that Prime Minister Nehru was becoming increasingly concerned about India's alienation from Tibet. Also, in the spring of 1954 India had signed a trade agreement with China by which it had not only explicitly accepted China's sovereignty over Tibet but had also implicitly recognized diminishing Indian influence in the country. Prime Ministers Nehru and Chou En-lai had also agreed to push ahead with an agreement to be known as 'The Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence', which included non-aggression, mutual respect of each other's territory, mutual non-interference, mutual equality and peaceful co-existence. So, the official concluded, the matter of India's position in Tibet would have to be handled 'sensitively'.

I was not at all sanguine, for Tibetan feelings against India ran very high. The various cliques inside and outside Tibet made it difficult to co-ordinate any course of action as each jockeyed for self-interested power and position. All of their proposals centred on a return to the status quo in Tibet, whatever current conspiracies were being discussed, and it was obvious that already Tibet was being carried well beyond the point of no return. Whatever happened the old Tibet was gone.

The only hope that Tibet had of getting rid of the Chinese, as a first step in any future, lay with the Kham and Amdo Tibetans of east Tibet – and

few of the Lhasa officials or nobility ever gave this more than a passing thought. Not only were the Kham and Amdo Tibetans the most populous in the whole country, forming two-thirds of the inhabitants, but their fearless fighting qualities, their knowledge of mountain warfare and their implacable hatred of the Chinese added up to a formidable antagonism that could prove insuperable to the Chinese. The difficulty, of course, lay in harnessing them to the cause of Tibetan unity, because of their violent antipathy to the effete conspirators of Lhasa. In my opinion and experience, there was only one person who could bridge this gap of intolerance and prejudice, and that was Rapga Pandatshang. I outlined the situation to the bemused Indian Government official.

I concluded my brief historical analysis by telling him that, if the Indian Government would rescind the expulsion order against Rapga, I was certain that Rapga would leave Kham, come to India, and work for Tibetan unity against the Chinese. The official was not hopeful, but shortly afterwards he confirmed that I should go ahead with an assurance to Rapga that he could return to India. I duly sent a message to him contained on an information leaflet in a bottle of medicine, which I knew he would open as soon as it arrived in Kham.

In September 1954 the Dalai Lama was invited by the Chinese leaders to visit Peking; the Panchen Lama was also invited at the same time. The Chinese Communist Chairman, Mao Tse-tung, personally flattered the Dalai Lama during the visit and impressed him with his ultimate vision of Tibet as a free society under an easy Chinese supervision.

While the Dalai Lama was in China from September 1954 to March 1955, the Indian Prime Minister arrived there for a State visit, and the Dalai Lama witnessed the adulatory reception given to him. So it was inevitable that he should associate the Indian Prime Minister with a pro-Chinese policy after all that Tibet had suffered in recent years at India's hands.

What came as a revelation to Mr Nehru was the impression of anti-Tibetan bias that existed in the Tibetan mind with regard to India. It was an impression more than a stated attitude, for Nehru had only a short private talk with the Dalai Lama lasting about twenty minutes. During this time he asked if there was anything that India could do to help Tibet, and the Dalai Lama cautiously replied that there was really nothing that India could do, that Tibet was happy with the Chinese occupation. Perhaps it was the deliberate, if polite and restrained, display of lack of confidence in Nehru that disturbed him; but, before he left China, the Indian Prime Minister issued a warm invitation to the Dalai Lama to visit India as he had visited China, and assured him of India's help in persuading China to agree.

In March 1955 both the Dalai and Panchen Lamas were invited to

attend a meeting of the Chinese State Council, where they were forced to submit to a number of decisions on Tibetan affairs. One of these concerned the establishment of a 'Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet', whose chief task was to prepare for regional autonomy in accordance with the provisions of the Chinese Constitution, the Seventeen-Point Agreement (1951) and the concrete circumstances of Tibet.

What the Chinese authorities did not know was that during the journey from Lhasa to Peking, one of the most trusted of the top officials of the Dalai Lama's party, Surkhang Wangcheng Galei, the seniormost Cabinet member of the Lhasa Government, had held secret talks with the Pandatshang brothers, Topgyay and Rapga, in Kham. Another official, Shudrun Lobsang Yeshe (a former close friend of mine during his few years in Kalimpong), also held secret talks with the Amdo rebel leaders at the same time. During those talks it was arranged that the four top Kham and Amdo leaders would take a careful, updated assessment of the revolutionary feeling in their region, and would prepare a detailed plan for united revolt against China for the Lhasa officials to take back with them when they returned to Lhasa with the Dalai Lama. The Kham and Amdo leaders were assured of complete political and military support from the Lhasa Government once the plans were approved.

Meanwhile, in Tibet the people were becoming uneasy at the unduly prolonged visit of the Dalai Lama in China, which seemed to confirm their suspicions that the Chinese were going to detain him indefinitely as a hostage. Demonstrations were organized in Lhasa by the *Mi-mang Tsongdu*, demanding his early return, and even in Kalimpong there was a mass protest and public prayers. If the Chinese had any intention of keeping the Dalai Lama in China, they quickly changed their mind in view of this ominous reaction, and he was allowed to return to Tibet.

In March 1955 Rapga Pandatshang arrived in Kalimpong, his dramatic appearance fuelling all sorts of speculation. How had he been able to get his expulsion order cancelled? Why had he left Kham for Kalimpong at this time? How had he managed to get across Tibet without being stopped? Was he an envoy of the Chinese come to spy on the Tibetan officials in India? Was he part of the Chinese take-over plans for the border areas? No one accepted that he had resigned his influential position in the East Tibetan Autonomous Government just to come to India to see his son, and to settle some business affairs, as he said.

The scholarly, inscrutable Rapga paid little attention to the many rumours circulating about him. To me, accepted as a member of the Pandatshang family because of my long association with them, he was completely frank. He was also disturbingly frank with the Indian officials who came to debrief him. If they had hoped for a quiet, scholarly organizer

of anti-Communist propaganda they were shatteringly disappointed. Rapga refused point-blank to collect information, or to list numbers of Chinese soldiers in different places, or to write articles and pamphlets for clandestine distribution. These were tasks that could be done by lesser fry who might be interested in plots.

He, Rapga, was interested only in revolution, the overthrow of the Chinese Communists in Tibet, reform of the Lhasa Government and the recognition of the proposed new Tibetan People's Government by the other nations of the world. He had made the journey to India with this in view, and he would accept nothing less. If the Indian and other interested Governments were not prepared to help or cooperate in any way, then, of course, the Tibetans would be disappointed but it would in no way affect their determination to revolt, and they would just have to adjust their policies accordingly. No amount of talking could stop the inevitable uprising being planned, and it was because of this conviction that he had made the trip to Lhasa to co-ordinate the Kham-Amdo Tibetans with the anti-Chinese *Mi-mang Tsong-du* there in a nationwide revolt.

Rapga's information rocked the Indian Government, which had hoped only to salvage some prestige from the earlier diplomatic *débâcles* by working quietly to counteract the steady flow of Chinese Communist propaganda against India. Tibet in revolt, denouncing China as an aggressor, would seriously embarrass India, which was now the Afro-Asian champion of the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' signed over the presumed national corpse of Tibet. The ruthless suppression of an Asian nation, Tibet, by an Asian nation, China, while another Asian nation, India, connived with it against the first, while advocating a platitudinous non-aggression and non-intervention policy, was something that would destroy the reputations of both nations in the eyes of the watching world.

Rapga tried desperately to co-ordinate the factional Tibetans in Kalimpong into some semblance of unity in support of a national uprising. But he found it a hopeless, despairing business trying to get the various groups together to discuss anything, let alone organize themselves for national revolt. Each was suspicious of the other's motives, and when they did get together it was only to discuss how they would come out of it in the event of being successful. Even Yangpel, Rapga's older brother, was reluctant to get drawn into such an overtly unpopular proposition as outright revolt in Tibet. Neither Yangpel, nor the Dalai Lama's brother, Gyalu Thondup, nor Tsepon Shakabpa, were prepared to commit themselves without an outright instruction from the Dalai Lama – and he was still in Lhasa without anyone to inform him of what was happening.

It was what I had been telling all who would listen to me since my

arrival. There was no Lhasa Tibetan of any consequence in India who was prepared to sacrifice ten minutes of his time, let alone wealth or position or life, for his country. It would have to be left to the laughing, reckless, damn-the-odds Khambas to take on the Chinese vultures waiting to gorge themselves on the dead body of Tibet.

Shortly after the Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa from China, in the spring of 1955, evidence of his new attitude to Communist China began to appear, both directly and indirectly. There was a general hardening of official opposition to Chinese 'proposals'. The move by the Chinese to have Chinese paper currency substituted for the Tibetan silver currency was flatly rejected, and the offer of economic integration with China was refused. The Chinese then countered with an order that only traders with letters of credit issued by the Bank of China, and negotiable in branches in India, would be allowed to trade. They then found themselves with a monumental leakage of Chinese silver dollars being smuggled into India. As their frustration mounted, with the lack of co-operation in their spurious 'Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet', the Chinese became more truculent – and the Tibetans more obstreperous.

On the twenty-third day of the Tibetan fifth month (July–August 1955) the Dalai Lama made a public speech in Norbulinka, his summer palace. After reviewing the history of Tibet, he pointed out that when there was a balanced emphasis on both religion and politics the country had prospered, but when politics took precedence over religion to the exclusion of the latter there was national deterioration. He cautioned against the more radical elements among the Tibetans, who were demanding radical measures against the Chinese. He had been surprised and shocked at the ruthless manipulation of the new 'Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet', of which he was the titular chairman, and at the deliberate fixing of Chinese policies through their misguided Tibetan puppet officials. However, the alternative of outright armed struggle being urged by a growing number of his officials disturbed him as he considered the possible consequences, so he was urging patience and co-operation.

But at the annual, hugely attended Monlam Festival in Lhasa, the popular leaders chosen by the people through the *Mi-mang Tsong-du*, 'People's Council', and the unofficial but sympathetic leaders, combined in a public protest of demonstration and leaflet-distribution, demanding that the Chinese leave Tibet and let Tibetans govern themselves. Three popular leaders were arrested and put in prison, where their deaths went unannounced. But before being put to death they were visited in prison by a Khamba rebel leader, called Andrutshang Gompo Tashi, who was so incensed by their plight that he returned to Kham and threw himself fully into expanding and organizing the armed uprising in east Tibet.

At the same Monlam Festival celebrations in the famous Litang monastery in Kham – which I had visited with the Pandatshangs, and where I had found my famous grey horse – there was a major outbreak of rebellion. Following the passage of the Dalai Lama's entourage through Kham on his visit to Peking in 1954–5, and the secret talks initiated by the top Lhasa officials with the east Tibetan leaders, widespread fighting had broken out in several areas. In early 1956 Chamdo, Batang, Gantze and Litang had their Chinese garrisons wiped out by marauding Khamba rebels.

A few months previously, the Amdo leader, Lobsang Tsewong, had been arrested by the Chinese for speaking out against the Chinese land reform iniquities, and had been taken down-country to China. This precipitated a series of local uprisings and demonstrations against the Chinese in Amdo, and the Peking Government ordered more Chinese troops into the area to subdue the area once and for all. But when a unit of Chinese troops arrived in the Golok tribal area, the Goloks captured them, disarmed them, cut off their noses and sent them back mutilated to their garrison as a contemptuous warning. The Chinese then sent several thousand troops into the mountains, and the Goloks, with the help of other Amdo tribesmen, including one Dorji Pasang – chieftain of over 100,000 families in Dzachuka, and a leader of rebels since 1952 – killed between 7,000 and 8,000 Chinese before forcing the others to retreat from the region.

Rebellion broke out in the Dege area, in Litang and Batang. The leader of the revolt in Batang sent me a letter in which he recorded the atrocities of the Chinese in Kham, and continued:

Spontaneous uprisings broke out all over the country, with revenge as the prime motive in almost every instance. It was known to be a hopeless fight but we could no longer contain ourselves. In one place aeroplanes bombarded us for five days in three waves of bombers a day. Everywhere there were scenes of slaughter and promiscuous butchery. What could small, ill-equipped groups of Tibetans do against innumerable Chinese soldiers equipped with everything? Monasteries, towns, heaps of human corpses and ruined fields presented a picture of chaos and bleak gloom. There was no end to the Chinese offensive. On the sixth day pamphlets were dropped urging the people to repent of the wrongs committed . . .

Without warning the Chinese bombed the monastery of Ba-chyo-De, the chief seat of the *Tsong-ka-pa* sect, fifteen times until it was levelled to the ground. Some of the rarest books of the *Gelugpa* doctrine vanished in the bombardment. Not content with this, the soldiers

followed it up by burning the remnants. Tashi Naljor, who was conspicuous by his bravery in the fighting, was beaten to death along with others. A gigantic statue of Gewa Jampo, Maitrya Buddha, measuring three storeys high, was desecrated and smashed to pieces with axes. Sacred prayer leaves enclosed within the statue were thrown into the river . . .

One of the people deeply involved in the Litang revolt was the Khamba rebel leader, Andrutshang Gompo Tashi. He came from a village near Litang and had built up a large following of Khambas, consisting of over 1,000 men in small striking units, led by eighteen commanders. He had formed a Kham resistance group called *Chu-zhi Kang-dru* – ‘Four Rivers, Three Mountains’, derived from an ancient name for the Kham region. Andrutshang had linked up with the Dalai Lama’s brother in Kalimpong, Gyalu Thondup, when Rapga disagreed with his idea of small Khamba units, hopefully to be supplied by Nationalist airdrops.

Gyalu Thondup, prompted by his American CIA and Nationalist Chinese contacts, secretly smuggled six *Chu-zhi Kang-dru* Khambas out of India and Pakistan to Taiwan. There they received training in the use of radio transmitters, parachute-jumping, and the application of modern weapons, and were then flown back into Tibet to link up with the spreading Khamba revolt. On landing they joined up with Andrutshang’s forces, and Andrutshang sent word to the Dalai Lama, through an important official, Thupten Pala, the Lord Chamberlain, regarding what had happened. He also arranged for other secret reports to be given to the Dalai Lama through Pala.

Little of this filtered through to the outside world. The London *Times* correspondent sent a dispatch from Nepal reporting that some fighting had taken place in east Tibet and a few hundred Chinese had been presumed killed. A few other papers carried an inside half-column of some vague rumours picked up in Kalimpong.

In Kalimpong, Rapga Pandatshang was disillusioned. After secretly meeting with the Americans, no further word had been received. He had spoken with Shakabpa, as the leading official of the Dalai Lama residing in Kalimpong, urging help for the Khambas, but Shakabpa claimed that he had given up all politics and was now just an ordinary citizen. Strangely enough, only a week after Rapga’s conversation with him, Rapga had a visit from a high Indian official warning him against participating in any politics while he was in India, and telling him the gist of what he had discussed with Shakabpa. Rapga decided that there was nothing to be gained from further talks with Lhasa Tibetans in India.

In Lhasa the *Mi-mang Tsong-du* stepped up their activities, with

peaceful demonstrations, and placarded the walls of Lhasa with anti-Chinese leaflets. The Chinese ordered a wave of arrests. One of the leaders of the *Mi-mang Tsong-du*, Alo Chondze, had his house surrounded by Chinese troops armed with machine-guns, and he was arrested without warning. Another two leaders, Bhunthang Drunyee and Lapchuk, were also arrested and Lapchuk died in prison. Chinese troops in Lhasa were increased to 35,000, and heavy concentrations of tanks and armoured cars encircled the city. Food prices shot up to as much as thirty times the previous prices, due to the new influx of Chinese personnel.

The *Mi-mang Tsong-du* leader, Alo Chondze, managed to escape from Lhasa to Kalimpong, where he and a monk commissioner of Gyantse in west Tibet, Tubthen Ningje, made full statements regarding the conditions inside Tibet and appealed for help. According to them, the fighting had spread from the Golok, Batang and Litang areas to Nyarong, Taofu, Chatreng and Mili, an area of some 10,000 square miles involving two million people. Bridges had been destroyed and the roads made impassable for Chinese transport.

In August 1956 the Chinese authorities in Peking finally admitted that a rebellion had taken place in Tibet; or, rather, in true Chinese Communist fashion, they announced that 'there was no rebellion but fighting had taken place in some areas of Western Szechuan'. The New China News Agency report stated:

A categorical denial of the rumoured rebellion in Tibet was made by Liu Ke-ping, a member of the Government concerned with the affairs of the minority nationalities of China . . .

The report went on to admit that Liu did, indeed, mention that there had been a 'rebellion', but claimed that the reports published in the West were based on 'distorted and grossly delayed information'.

A lull in the fighting was occasioned by the visit of the Chinese Prime Minister, Chou En-lai, to India, and he decided to send a 'Peace Mission' to Tibet to investigate the cause of the unrest. At first, the Peace Mission, under the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister Chen Yi, sought to negotiate with its own quisling Tibetans. The Kham and Amdo rebels refused to be represented by the hand-picked Chinese puppets of Ngabu and Karmapa, and demanded that their own Khamba leader, Topgyay Pandatshang, represent their interests. They even sent a messenger to Kalimpong in July 1956, to ask Rapga Pandatshang to return and represent them as their elected Governor of Markham. But Rapga was too astute, suspecting the Chinese intentions and knowing that he could do more to help Tibet at this point by being outside the country. But he did

have personal talks with the Chinese trade agent in Kalimpong, and with the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta.

In September, Chen Yi made his report on the visit to Tibet: he said that it had been agreed that Tibet should take the road to Socialism. But it would be a long road and would have to be travelled slowly. Democratic reforms would be carried out, but peacefully, and the Chinese were to leave room for guarantees about the 'political position and living standards of the Tibetan nobility and the lamas'. The State would support religious schools.

On 8 November the 'Preparatory Office of the Tibet Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference' was set up in Lhasa, with Chang Ching Wu addressing the inaugural gathering. It consisted of fifteen members, including Trichang Rimpoche, the tutor of the Dalai Lama, Surkhang Wangcheng Galei (the secret collaborator with the Pandatshangs during his visit to Kham *en route* to Peking) as Director of the Office, and Puntshok Wangyel, former Batang Communist leader and the top Chinese Communist collaborator, as Vice-Director.

Revolt in Tibet and Escape of the Dalai Lama

In late 1955 I was once again facing a personal crisis. My wife, Meg, had become seriously ill with abdominal pain, which rapidly worsened. She diagnosed an intestinal obstruction of some kind, which, had it been someone else, she could have operated on successfully. But there was no other surgeon in the Kalimpong area, and by the time I was able to get one there eight feet of her bowel had become gangrenous, and she almost died. The surgeon did a temporary emergency operation and advised that she return to Britain for corrective surgery.

We were in Scotland, therefore, where she was convalescing, when news of the Dalai Lama's visit to India reached us. He had accepted Prime Minister Nehru's confirmation of the invitation by the Maharajkumar of Sikkim to visit India for the 2,500th anniversary of Buddha's enlightenment, and he arrived in New Delhi on 26 November 1956. While *en route* in Gangtok there had been an amusing incident when an anonymous Chinese stepped out of the watching crowds and surreptitiously removed the Tibetan flag flying on the Dalai Lama's car and replaced it with a Chinese one. This was exceeded as farce only when the Chinese Ambassador at New Delhi airport insisted on personally introducing the Dalai Lama to the Indian President and Prime Minister and other members of the diplomatic corps – until they came to the US Ambassador, when he suddenly disappeared.

In New Delhi the Dalai Lama also met the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-lai, who 'happened' to be passing through India at the time. The Dalai Lama was accompanied by his two brothers, Thupten Norbu (Taktser Rimpoche, to use his priestly title), and Gyalu Thondup, and they presented to Chou En-lai the Tibetan case for independence. In response Chou offered to withdraw Chinese troops 'gradually' from Tibet. In return he requested that the Dalai Lama reject the persuasion of certain Tibetans that he remain in exile in India.

While the Dalai Lama was in India he received a cable from the Chinese representative in Lhasa, Chang Ching Wu, requesting him to return to Lhasa urgently. The situation there, he said, was serious: '... spies and collaborators were planning a huge revolt'. Chou En-lai confirmed this at another hastily arranged meeting, and made it clear that if the reported revolt was not controlled and put down then the Chinese Liberation Army would use force. The Dalai Lama said that he would see what could be done, but that the inhuman treatment and oppression of the Chinese

occupation forces must come to an end.

While Meg was in hospital in London I had got in touch with Guy Wint, who had corresponded regularly with me while I was reporting the developing situation in Tibet for the *Manchester Guardian*, for which he was a leader writer at the time. I had stopped sending reports to the *Guardian* when the editor objected to them on the basis that Prime Minister Nehru had stated they were untrue. The *Guardian* was very pro-Nehru, as was their regular reporter from Bombay, Taya Zinkin, and I rejected the bias and refused to write any further reports.

Guy Wint had left the *Guardian* and joined the *Observer*, but he had a good friend and colleague, Roderick MacFarquhar, who was responsible for Asian affairs at the *Daily Telegraph* and the BBC, and he introduced me to him. Through Roderick I was recruited to write for the *Telegraph* and to broadcast on the revolt in Tibet on a series of programmes for the BBC; and through Guy I met a number of top Government officials in order to discuss the situation in Tibet. It quickly became apparent, however, that the Foreign Office was not interested in helping Tibet. Mr Nehru was definitely the man to be cultivated, and he was due in London shortly for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference and should not be embarrassed by any premature outcry over Tibet. The other man to be cultivated in Asia was Mr Chou En-lai, and he was in India with Mr Nehru, and it would be politically insensitive to raise the issue of Tibet at such a time.

That Tibet was a country where tens of thousands of people were dying without aid of any kind – even of the medical kind – and were being ruthlessly ground into oblivion between the upper and nether millstones of self-interested Chinese and Indian policy, did not seem to come within the purview of British official consideration. Everyone seemed thankful that its peculiarly remote situation was such that it could be conveniently shelved with the minimum of possible political repercussion.

I had had three books published by this time, most of them dealing with some aspect of Tibet. My initial considerable journalistic activity had diminished because of the demands of writing these books, studying the language and the politics of Sino-Indian and Sino-Soviet relationships, and lay preaching among indigenous Indian groups. But with Roderick MacFarquhar's commitment that the *Telegraph* would publish everything about the Tibetan situation, as long as it was factual, I was now ready to be the publicity 'point man' of the Tibetan revolt.

When Meg was recovering she received a letter from one of the doctors who had finally attended to her in India, Dr Bromley of the Darjeeling and Dooars Nursing Home, better known as the 'Planters' Hospital', asking if she would be interested in taking over his position as Superintendent.

Since Darjeeling lay only forty miles from Kalimpong, on a parallel ridge, with the same accessibility to my sources of information from Tibetan friends, she agreed and was quickly appointed. However, she made one condition – that the hospital governors should agree to the nursing home becoming a general-purpose hospital, serving the whole community, poor as well as rich, instead of being a facility for tea-planters only. They agreed.

With an established outlet and steady demand for news about Tibet and the Himalayan countries, I expanded my network of contacts inside Tibet. I arranged with the key figures in the spreading Khamba revolt that they should pay as much attention to collecting and providing me with information as they did to the armed fighting against the Chinese inside Tibet. Also, I was able to provide simple cameras to some Tibetans and show them how to use them, and this gave me photographs of events in Lhasa, which infuriated the Peking authorities, who until then had been able to dismiss all reports as ‘bazaar rumours put out in Kalimpong’.

A few days before leaving England for India, on 12 October 1957, it was reported in the *Guardian* by its Hong Kong correspondent that China had withdrawn 91.6 per cent of her Communist officials from Tibet and had temporarily abandoned her attempt to turn the country into a Chinese province. With all the typical face-saving Communist verbiage, it was still a considerable admission of defeat but a confirmation of what Chou En-lai had conceded to the Dalai Lama in India.

On the evening of 4 August 1958 every Tibetan official and Khamba leader of note in Kalimpong, including Gyalu Thondup, met to draw up a final appeal to the United Nations. The more extreme elements wanted immediate physical action of some kind, such as an attack on Sikkim, Bhutan or Nepal, which would attract worldwide attention, but they were outvoted by the more moderate elements.

On 5 August over 300 copies of the ‘Appeal and Manifesto’ were posted to countries represented in the UN media, political and religious organizations. Declaring Tibet an independent country with sovereign powers, with a long cultural and peaceful history, the document denounced the savage repression by the Chinese occupation forces in Tibet and appealed to everyone to assist in stopping the Chinese actions in Tibet.

This Appeal and Manifesto was accompanied by a separate declaration from the *Chul-ka-Sum* rebel organization, which summarized Chinese atrocities in Tibet, concluding with a report on ‘the revolt against the Chinese in February, 1956’, detailing the use of poison gas, the desecration and plundering of monasteries, the slaughtering of monks, women and children, and at least 15,000 deaths and tens of thousands of homeless refugees.

The Indian Government moved swiftly to counteract the effect of the Appeals, and all Tibetans in the Kalimpong/Darjeeling region were warned that any further attempts to issue public statements would bring an immediate expulsion order. Personal warnings were also delivered to the twenty-five leading Tibetan officials and Khamba leaders.

The Tibetans, while stunned and disappointed, were not unduly surprised, for they were becoming accustomed to Indian and British vacillation and political betrayals with regard to Tibet. But the Khambas were made of sterner stuff and were not prepared just to lie down meekly. Many of those not committed to active participation in local organizations returned to east Tibet to fight alongside their fellow-countrymen and, if necessary, to die with them.

In India Nehru's anti-Tibetan policies were not allowed to go unchallenged. Copies of the Appeals had been sent to two respected Indian leaders who had always expressed sympathy for the Tibetan cause, Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Kripalani, and both took up the issue publicly. In a speech in India's parliament, Kripalani said, 'Perhaps I will not be misunderstood when I say that this great doctrine [*Panch Shila*, or 'Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence'] was born in sin, because it was enunciated to put the seal of our approval upon the destruction of an ancient nation which was associated with us spiritually and culturally. The *Panch Shila* was annunciated on the eve of a nation losing its liberty.'

In his reply Prime Minister Nehru, repeating Kripalani's remarks about *Panch Shila* being born in sin, said that according to the Christian doctrine we were all born in sin. From a purely practical point of view there was no other course open to India, he maintained. India could not have challenged China's action over Tibet in 1950.

Whatever India may have thought of China's friendship and good faith, it quickly became obvious that China placed very little value on India's goodwill. Mr Nehru was curtly informed by Peking that it was not possible for him to visit Lhasa, as had been anticipated; and Peking added insult to injury by giving no reason for the refusal.

Although as much official silence as possible was observed on this subject, the cavalier treatment by China rankled in New Delhi. In a quicker diplomatic response than was customary, Mr Nehru countered with an announcement that he would continue with his intended and associated visit to the border State of Bhutan. This was a sensitive issue, for it meant that he would have to pass across fifteen miles of Tibetan territory in order to reach Bhutan, which made the Chinese specious excuse that the trip to Tibet was too dangerous look silly; also, it indicated a renewed interest in India regarding the precise status of Bhutan, in the light of India's treaty obligations to that country.

India had inherited her relations with Bhutan from Imperial Britain, until she made a treaty of her own, the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of 1949. This treaty read:

The Government of India undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal affairs of Bhutan. On its part the Government of Bhutan agrees to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations.

But in the intervening years since the signing of the treaty there had been little interference or interest on the part of both countries. With 7,000 unpredictable Khamba guerrillas and a militant Chinese army on Bhutan's northern borders it was now time to do something.

When Mr Nehru crossed from Sikkim into Tibet at the border town of Yatung the Chinese made elaborate preparations to convey an impression of normality in that part of Tibet. Only a few soldiers were in evidence as a guard of honour to receive Mr Nehru, but 3,000 troops were stationed in the mountains surrounding the area to keep rebelling Tibetans from breaking through. Rumours had been circulating that the Khambas intended to kidnap Mr Nehru, in order to have their predicament publicized and to impress upon him the seriousness of their situation.

The Chinese tried to get some of the leading Tibetan officials to meet Mr Nehru to tell him that everything in Tibet was normal, despite the news that was emanating from Kalimpong, but they refused. Shortly after Mr Nehru returned from Bhutan the road between Lhasa and Yatung became virtually unusable by the Chinese, as more and more groups of marauding Khambas laid booby-traps, attacked convoys and mowed down Chinese patrols.

The revolt in Tibet had at last spread to the western borders of the country, 2,000 miles of them contiguous with India. To make matters more ominous for India, a Soviet Union monthly journal, *The New Times*, followed up the Chinese publication, *New China*, with maps showing Ladakh, Kashmir and the North-East Frontier areas as belonging to China.

One of the Khamba guerrilla groups was under the command of Andrutshang Gompo Tashi, who had moved from east Tibet to west Tibet close to Lhasa, in the Shigatse area not far from the Indo-Sikkimese border. One of Andrutshang's reports recorded a three-day battle against large numbers of Chinese troops, by a small force of only about a hundred Khambas:

The Chinese had gathered in great strength; the nearby fields and houses swarmed with their soldiers and they were armed with cannons,

automatic weapons and grenades. They kept up a constant fusillade of gunfire and shelled us relentlessly. In this situation it became obvious to me that to remain in the camp was to invite certain death. I decided that our best course was to hack our way through the Chinese ranks.

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

Most of them had taken refuge in two large houses that contained an office and some telegraph equipment. We shot down every door and window in these houses and eventually had to burn them as this was the only way to destroy the Chinese who were hiding inside. It pained us deeply to learn later that some Tibetans, too, were in the buildings and were burnt to death along with the Chinese. I believe at least 700 Chinese were killed in this battle and many more were seriously wounded. We captured a large number of automatic weapons and grenades and large quantities of ammunition.

These signs of co-operation between Lhasa and Kham Tibetans began to have an effect on the Tibetans living in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, and there were some moves towards unity there. But the crippling Indian Government ban on all publicity, under the threat of immediate expulsion, meant that little could be said.

Meanwhile, in Kham and Amdo the pace of fighting had stepped up in response to Chinese threats. The Kham and Amdo Tibetans were convinced that they had nothing left to live for – their homes were gone, their lands confiscated, their herds slaughtered, their parents and wives and children were either killed, or raped, or starved, or banished – and all that was left to them were the horses they rode, the guns they carried, and a raging thirst for revenge against a hated aggressor.

Within a few months it was reported that they had destroyed 500 miles of roads, 400 miles of railways, hundreds of bridges and thousands of Chinese. From the time the fighting started in 1956 until mid-1958 over 40,000 Chinese died in the fighting in east Tibet alone. The Khambas lost about 15,000, the disparity being explained by the tactics used by the Khambas, who refused to meet the Chinese in set battle engagements but attacked them in ambushes, at night, in convoys, isolating garrisons, striking at passes and river crossings and narrow trails. The Chinese had better equipment, and were formidable when fighting at sea-level in China or Korea, but at 15,000-foot altitudes in the vast, accordion-pleated

mountain-and-valley territory of Tibet they were reduced to gasping uselessness before a merciless opponent.

No prisoners were taken on either side. With all the roads and bridges being destroyed in order to incapacitate the Chinese army, there were no supplies coming in from China to the isolated Chinese forces in Tibet, and air drops could only be irregular at the best of times. Whenever Tibetans were seriously wounded, they were killed rather than left to fall into the hands of the Chinese, who were torturing prisoners for information or killing them horribly as examples to others not to join the rebels. The Tibetan rebel groups had no medical aid of any kind, were continually on the move, and could not burden themselves with prisoners, so all Chinese were put to death.

The Khambas believed that in these circumstances they could hold out longer than the Chinese, so they destroyed crops, herds of livestock, and buildings. The tactics were successful, for reports increased of discontented Chinese troops threatening mutiny unless their conditions were improved. The Chinese authorities reacted swiftly and 5,000 Chinese merchants, troops, officials and others – 1,068 in Lhasa alone – were arrested.

As the Khamba revolt swept towards Lhasa, with an estimated sixteen major rebel groups operating independently in a wide crescent from north to south, the Chinese officials in Lhasa showed signs of panic. The Lhasa Tibetans no longer bothered to attend the puppet meetings arranged by them, and there were even defections from among the hitherto acquiescent quisling Tibetans.

In a crude psychological attempt to bludgeon the Dalai Lama into cooperation the Chinese kept up a steady stream of official visitors, demanding that he declare the revolt only 'a tribal affair', dissociate the Government from it, and send the 'Tibetan army' against the rebels. The Dalai Lama resisted the pressure, still seeking to bargain for a peaceful solution to what he saw as an inevitable Tibetan tragedy. He would describe it later:

Then they suddenly changed their policy. Hitherto, it was they, the Chinese army, who had taken reprisals against the guerrillas in the east, and threatened them elsewhere. Now they insisted that our government should take action against them. We should send our own Tibetan army to crush the revolt. They would provide us with reinforcements and supplies. But this the Cabinet absolutely rejected. They pointed out that the Tibetan army was much too small and not well enough trained or equipped, and that it was needed to keep the peace in Lhasa; and above all, they said they could not possibly guarantee that the Tibetan army would not simply join hands with the

guerrillas. And I have no doubt that would have happened. It was unthinkable to send out a Tibetan army to fight against Tibetans who were committing no worse crime than to defend Tibet. So at last the Cabinet was forced into firm defiance of a major Chinese order.

The Chinese representative in Tibet now declared that it was 'imperialists' who were the cause of the disaffection in Tibet, and put out a statement in the Dalai Lama's name making the ridiculous assertion that his two brothers, Thupten Norbhu and Gyalu Thondup, with seven others, including the former Prime Minister, Lukhangwa, were the leaders. They also issued arms to Chinese civilians in Lhasa, and reinforced the barricades in the city, publicly stating that they would be responsible only for the safety of Chinese nationals.

The Dalai Lama was forced to send a five-member delegation to meet the Khamba rebels and to tell them to stop the revolt. Instead, the five members of the delegation joined the rebels on reaching Kham. The Dalai Lama confessed that at this point he was near despair because, he said, 'I have no doubt the Khambas believed the Cabinet was more or less in league with the Chinese, and the Chinese believed the Cabinet was in league with the Khamba guerrillas.'

The Dalai Lama was closer to crisis than even he suspected. The members of his Cabinet, especially the senior ministers Surkhang and Yuthok, were making plans for the Government, including the Dalai Lama, to escape from Lhasa. They had been in touch with the approaching groups of Khambas and had arranged to link up with them in an attempt to get out of Lhasa and across to the nearest Indian border.

Two groups of Khamba rebels were already within forty miles of Lhasa; one to the north-east and the other, the largest, to the south in the Lhoka area. The rebel group to the south had had several striking successes against the Chinese, and had captured an area of almost 10,000 square miles. With fifty-five *dzongs*, or district administrations, under their control, they had their armed force of some 20,000 guerrillas and several hundred thousand civilian sympathizers well organized. In order that they might not be infiltrated by Chinese spies, or paid Tibetan quislings, they had created a simple but effective administration to issue passports, collect taxes, ration food, requisition animals and carry out all the tasks necessary in such guerrilla warfare over a vast area.

To their rear they were in touch with other rebels, reaching back all the way to Litang – incorporating the area over which I had travelled on my journey to India – who were also in control of a similar huge territory. All these, with their rebel associates to the north and west of Lhasa, comprised a tightening encirclement of the capital.

In Lhasa the population had increased with the influx of refugees from the wide area of hostilities, and it was estimated that there were at least 10,000 Khambas in the capital. These represented an obvious threat to the Chinese occupation forces, and the Chinese leaders in Lhasa put pressure on the Dalai Lama to have them removed. The Dalai Lama, still hoping for a peaceful solution to the looming catastrophe, tried to reduce the mounting tension by appealing to the Khambas to return to Kham, with no success.

It was too late. The Khambas now had the bit between their teeth, and both the *Mi-mang Tsong-du* and the *Chu-zhi Kang-dru* revolutionary organizations were convinced that they had the Chinese on the run. In panic the Chinese began taking a census of the Khambas in Lhasa, and many Khambas left – to join the guerrillas, who were drawing nearer every day.

The Lhasa Government countered the Chinese moves by increasing the Dalai Lama's bodyguard from the usual 500 to 1,000. Also, they ordered the Tibetan army, under trusted commanders, to conduct manoeuvres and rifle practice. Three young Tibetan officials, Shudrun Lobsang Yeshi, Sampo Jigme and Manang Abu, a relative of the Pandatshang family – all of them friends whom I had known when they visited Kalimpong – secretly began to recruit Lhasa civilians to join the guerrillas.

The Tibetan students who had been taken away to China to study Marxism for five years used their new political skills to organize resistance groups in the city. Nine sons of leading Tibetan families, one of them belonging to the Pandatshang family, were arrested for this activity, and the Chinese refused pleas for their release unless they publicly confessed their errors. All nine remained obdurate.

The Indian Government moved to seal off completely any possible news leakage of what was happening inside Tibet by keeping a close watch and issuing threats against the resident Tibetans. All stories being printed by newspaper correspondents were dismissed as 'bazaar rumours emanating from exile officials and former missionaries'. It had been obvious to me for some time that some sort of action would have to be taken against me; for, having warned all other journalists against false reporting, the Indian authorities could hardly allow me to go ahead as I was doing, giving authentic reports in a steady stream to the *Daily Telegraph*, and having these picked up and published in Indian newspapers.

In mid-February 1959 I was invited to lunch with the British Deputy High Commissioner in Calcutta, Sir Alec Bishop, a good friend. He informed me that the Indian Government had decided to take action against me for the articles I had been writing about the happenings in Tibet. There had been no specific allegation, but the Ministry of External

Affairs had claimed that I was guilty of sending misleading and exaggerated reports. Sir Alec had not been asked officially to see me, but in view of the gravity of the action to be taken against me – and I should bear in mind that it was Mr Nehru himself, and the External Affairs Minister, who had taken the decision; and I would be the first Commonwealth citizen since independence to be expelled – he wanted, as a friend, to appeal to me to refrain.

I refused to agree, even after two hours' persuasion. I had thought the matter over for some years now, I told him, with all its possible implications, and was prepared to take the consequences. My reports were as factual as possible, short of witnessing the actual events, and I was prepared to stake my reputation on their veracity. I agreed that it was obvious that India would do nothing to help, and would not permit others to give military assistance. I agreed that it was obvious that no one was prepared to bring pressure on China to withdraw from Tibet and that the United Nations would stand aside, as it had done in the case of Hungary. But having said that, I would not agree to sully my conscience by associating with a government that could deliberately connive in the murder of a gallant nation which had befriended me.

On 20 February I was ordered to attend the office of the Deputy Commissioner in Darjeeling, and there I was told that:

[unless I] discontinued sending misleading and exaggerated messages about Tibet to the *Daily Telegraph* or other foreign papers, the Indian Government would be constrained to interdict [my] residence in the districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar.

I would be permitted, however, he said, to send 'normal and objective reports', but he would not define what this meant.

Nor did he explain what was 'misleading and exaggerated' about my articles. I had never been investigated with regard to my material or sources at any time, and the Indian intelligence people knew that I had contacts beyond anything they possessed inside Tibet. The Indian officials in Lhasa were confined to the embassy quarters, their people were disliked and suspected because of their Government's policies, and they had told me often that they knew little or nothing of what was happening in Tibet. I told the Deputy Commissioner, therefore, that I was rejecting the Government's demands, that I would continue to send reports as I received them, until they took action against me, that I would wait until I was arrested and defend myself in a law court against the charges, and that I would counter-charge that it was Indian officials who were misleading their country.

The matter caused an immediate outcry, especially in media circles, both in India and abroad, and Mr Nehru was eventually forced to hold a

press conference to face questions regarding the Government's actions against me. He stated that my newspaper reports about revolts in Tibet 'were grossly exaggerated as a rule, for the simple reasons that the persons who give the news are refugees, who seldom are accurate witnesses – apart from being partisans who believe every rumour'.

This was a remarkable statement from any point of view. In addition to the fact that what I had written he himself had been told by the Dalai Lama while in India, and later in a memorandum delivered to him by the Dalai Lama's trusted minister, it also begged the question where he and his Government obtained their information, if not from the same sources.

As the public debate grew in Britain, India and other countries, so did pressure on me from journalist, politician and diplomatist friends. Malcolm McDonald, the British High Commissioner in New Delhi, sent for me to add to Sir Alec Bishop's persuasions to desist from publishing material on Tibet which was so unacceptable to the Indian Government. To make matters worse, he said, my wife had just been recommended for an MBE in the Queen's Honours' List 'for her outstanding medical work in India', just as I was in danger of being the first British citizen to be expelled from India. In as polite but firm a manner as possible, I said that my personal spiritual convictions, as well as my professional principles, would not permit me to withdraw what I had written or was writing – especially when no one, Mr Nehru included, had produced any evidence to the contrary.

On 1 March 1959 the Dalai Lama went to the Jokhang Central Cathedral in Lhasa for the important celebrations of the Monlam Festival, at which he was due to take his final examination as Master of Metaphysics. This was an examination by dialectical debate before a vast audience of monks, lamas and lay people. To the Dalai Lama this occasion was more important than any of the political issues facing his country at the time. He had declared emphatically, 'Through all our political misfortunes my religious education had been continuing. It was still my greatest interest . . . I was entirely preoccupied at that moment with religious questions.'

Right at the most critical part of the Dalai Lama's final test he was informed that two Chinese officers wanted to meet him. They were two junior officers who said they had been sent by General Tan Kuen-san, who wanted to establish a date when the Dalai Lama would attend a theatrical show in the Chinese army camp. The Dalai Lama, who had previously said he would attend, was annoyed at the insensitivity of the interruption of his examination, and said he would discuss it when the celebrations finished in ten days' time. The two junior officers were insistent that he fix a date immediately, but were ultimately sent away without a commitment.

The visit, its timing, the trivial nature of the invitation, the insulting manner of its delivery through two junior officers to the sacred temple, the deliberate ignoring of accepted protocol all seemed to indicate to the Tibetans that the Chinese were trying to precipitate a crisis of their own devising. However, no more was heard from the Chinese when the Dalai Lama left Jokhang Cathedral on 5 March for the Norbulinka palace.

This was usually the occasion of a public celebration, and in previous years the Chinese representatives had participated. It was noticed that on this occasion the Chinese did not turn up at all. Two days later, on 7 March, the General, through his interpreter and the Chief Official Abbot, repeated the invitation and the Dalai Lama confirmed that he would attend the show on 10 March.

On 9 March, at eight o'clock in the morning, two Chinese officers turned up without warning at the house of the Dalai Lama's commander of the bodyguard, Kusung Depon, to say that they had come to take him to see Brigadier Fu, the Chinese military adviser. Kusung Depon said that he had not yet had his breakfast and would be there at ten o'clock. An hour later they returned to say that he had to come immediately, as the brigadier was waiting impatiently.

When Kusung Depon finally met the brigadier he was told that during the visit of the Dalai Lama the following day there was to be none of the usual ceremony. No armed men were to attend him, no Tibetan soldier was to come beyond the Stone Bridge, outside the Chinese garrison. When Kusung Depon protested that there would be a public outcry if they even attempted to persuade the Dalai Lama to accept such conditions, the brigadier dismissed his objections and insisted in turn that the whole matter of the visit was to be 'kept secret'.

When the news was conveyed to the Dalai Lama and his officials they were immediately suspicious of Chinese intentions. There were now over 100,000 people crowded into Lhasa, all of them in a state of high tension, and it was impossible to conceive of the Dalai Lama travelling the two miles from Norbulinka to the Chinese army camp without anybody knowing. However, it was finally decided to comply with the Chinese conditions, and Tibetan guards and police were to be posted along the route to the Chinese army camp to contain any public demonstration should it arise.

Another suspicious matter was that the Chinese authorities in Peking had suddenly announced without warning that the Dalai Lama was due to visit Peking within the next month for a meeting with the Chinese National Assembly – something the Dalai Lama had not agreed to do. This announcement, together with the now escalating rumour that the Dalai Lama was due to visit the Chinese army camp with insufficient protection,

enraged the Tibetans in Lhasa. To make matters even worse, a report arrived from east Tibet that four high lamas had been invited to functions by Chinese army commanders and had never been seen again; three had been killed, and one imprisoned. When the formal invitation cards were delivered by the Chinese on the evening of 9 March, it was noted that none of the usual high Tibetan officials who accompanied the Dalai Lama on such occasions had been invited – excluding even the Dalai Lama's senior chamberlain, who accompanied the Dalai Lama everywhere.

On the morning of 10 March the Dalai Lama got up at five o'clock and went to the small side-chapel dedicated to Mahakala, the militant guardian deity, as usual for morning meditation. Afterwards he went out into the garden for a quiet stroll and to collect his thoughts for the noon appointment with the Chinese. He was disturbed by sounds of shouts and increasing noise from the city. Officials rushed in to tell him that thousands of people were pouring out of the city towards the Norbulinka palace 'coming to protect him'. By the time his hastily summoned ministers arrived there were an estimated 30,000 people outside the walls of the Norbulinka, who were so angry that they threatened the lives of the Chinese drivers of the ministers' cars.

By the time the Chief Minister, Surkhang, arrived in his jeep he could not find a way through the crowds and had to be escorted to a side gate by a Tibetan official. The people were now chanting rhythmically, 'The Chinese must go', 'Leave Tibet to the Tibetans'. It was reported that the crowd had already stoned to death one notorious monk collaborator called Phakpala Khenchung, and were in a mood to take revenge on others.

The Dalai Lama decided that he could not go to the camp in the face of such public resistance, and he asked Surkhang to go out and meet the leaders of the popular demonstration and tell them this, in order to keep them from any further rash acts. The crowd was jubilant but refused to disperse, saying that they wanted an assurance also that the Dalai Lama would accept no more invitations from the Chinese to the army camp. The Dalai Lama agreed. The popular leaders left the scene, but the crowds remained.

The three Cabinet ministers – Surkhang, Liushar and Shasur – informed the Dalai Lama that the crowds were determined not to disperse and that they were organizing a round-the-clock watch to keep any Chinese away from Norbulinka. The fourth Cabinet minister, Ngabu, the Chinese puppet, it was reported, was with the Chinese at the army camp. They decided that the three ministers should go to the Chinese and report personally on the events.

They found Ngabu with ten Chinese officials, and he sat silent and separate while they waited for General Tan Kuen-san to arrive. When he

did appear he was very angry – ‘speechless with rage’, they said later – and paid no attention to the Tibetan ministers. Surkhang informed him of what had happened, and he paced the room in fury. Finally, he erupted in a harangue against all Tibetan reactionaries, using abusive language against the ministers, accusing them of secretly organizing revolt, helping the Khambas, encouraging resistance. He was joined by the other Chinese military officers in threatening that the time had come ‘to destroy all reactionaries. This is the breaking point. We shall act now, so be prepared.’ Ngabu sat silent throughout.

The violence of the reaction, and the language of the Chinese military men, was such that the Cabinet ministers gathered that immediate military action against the Norbulinka was imminent, including possible bombing. When they returned to the Dalai Lama’s palace at about five in the late afternoon they declared that it was now imperative to consider their recommendation that the Dalai Lama leave Lhasa. His person was no longer safe.

There were still large crowds outside Norbulinka, but there were equally large crowds in the streets of the city, holding demonstrations denouncing the Seventeen-Point Agreement of 1951, and demanding that the Chinese leave Tibet. At six o’clock a meeting was held in Norbulinka with seventy members of the Government and popular leaders of the people’s organizations, protected by the Dalai Lama’s bodyguards. They endorsed the meetings that were being held in the city, and declared that they no longer recognized Chinese authority. The Kusung bodyguards also stated they would no longer take orders from Chinese military personnel, and changed to wearing Tibetan dress.

The most important decision was to get the Dalai Lama out of Lhasa safely. But the Dalai Lama refused to go. He even objected to the people appointing commanders to patrol the Norbulinka to ensure his safety. As he wrote later:

This development distressed me very much. I felt it was one more step towards disaster. So I decided to speak to the people’s leaders myself. I sent for them, and all seventy of them came, and in the presence of the Cabinet and other senior officials I did my best to dissuade them from their actions . . . I said I was not in any fear of personal danger from the Chinese, and they must not create a situation which could have such serious consequences for the people. I knew this would offend their feelings, but I had to tell them what I felt in the sincerest hope that the normal peace of Lhasa might be restored to some extent.

The Tibetan leaders respected the Dalai Lama’s wishes regarding his person, but they were not impressed by his arguments. They met outside

the palace and made plans for what they saw as the inevitable escape from the city.

On 16 March the Dalai Lama received a third letter from General Tan Kuan-sen, containing the same Chinese demands as the others. But inside the letter was another from the quisling Ngabu. This advised the Dalai Lama that the Chinese were aware that there were plans being made for his escape, that these were certain to fail, that if he attempted to do so he would never return to Lhasa, and finally, the threat:

If Your Holiness with a few trusted officers of the bodyguard can stay within the inner wall, and hold a position there, and inform General Tan Kuan-sen exactly which building you will occupy, they certainly intend that this building will not be damaged.

It confirmed what the Cabinet ministers had suspected: that the Chinese planned to bomb the Norbulinka into submission. The Dalai Lama replied in conciliatory tones to General Tan Kuan-sen's letter, hoping to gain a few day's grace while decisions were made. But reports were coming in that military equipment was being brought by the Chinese to within range of Norbulinka and the city. It was time to go. Still, the Dalai Lama would have sacrificed himself, being prepared to go to the Chinese camp and throw himself on the mercy of the Chinese if that would save them from the catastrophe about to break; but the ministers could not accept that this would help.

Writing of this moment of acute personal and national crisis, the Dalai Lama later commented:

It was I who had to find the answer and make the decision; but with my inexperience in the affairs of the world it was not easy. I have no fear of death. I was not afraid of being one of the victims of the Chinese attack. I honestly believe that my strict religious training has given me enough strength to face the prospect of leaving my present body without any apprehension. I felt then, as I always feel, that I am only a mortal being and an instrument of the never dying spirit of my Master, and that the end of one mortal frame is not of any great consequence. But I knew my people and the officials of my government could not share my feelings. To them the person of the Dalai Lama was supremely precious. They believed the Dalai Lama represented Tibet and the Tibetan way of life, something dearer to them than anything else. They were convinced that if my body perished at the hands of the Chinese, the life of Tibet would also come to an end.

That same day, 17 March, in the Indian parliament, the Prime Minister,

Mr Nehru, was scheduled to make an official statement regarding my pending expulsion from India for writing alleged 'misleading reports of the situation in Tibet'. He said that 'the warning given recently to Mr George Patterson is the kind of thing we do with reluctance'. Events in India, he went on, were often misreported and misconstrued by foreign writers, but the Government preferred to put up with criticism rather than interfere with the freedom of the press. They might have done the same in Mr Patterson's case 'if we alone were concerned', but Mr Patterson's reports had been so full of exaggeration that they had simply been compelled to warn him – 'he accepted every bazaar rumour for fact'. In his (Mr Nehru's) opinion, the situation in Tibet was 'a clash of wills rather than a clash of arms. I do not say that there is any large-scale violence there'.

This statement appeared on the front pages of many international and Indian newspapers at the same time as my report in the *Daily Telegraph* that the revolt had at last reached Lhasa and that large-scale demonstrations were taking place there. Unknown to both Mr Nehru and myself, at four o'clock that same day, about the time Mr Nehru was making his statement in the Indian parliament, the Chinese fired several shells in the direction of Norbulinka, all of them falling harmlessly into the muddy ground beside the pool in front of the Dalai Lama's palace. In the subsequent shelling the Indian Consulate was hit and all communication with India cut off; but not before news was sent to New Delhi and Mr Nehru announced it to a first stunned, then outraged, parliament, as they accused him of 'misleading the House' recently in the case of Mr George Patterson's obviously factual reports. Either Mr Nehru knew what was really going on, as did Mr Patterson – in which case he was deliberately misleading parliament and the Indian public, and, worse, placing Indian security and policy in jeopardy; or he did not know – in which case what were Government officials, especially security officials, doing? What about *Panch Shila*, the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence', signed so recently with China?

In Lhasa, frantic preparations were being made for the departure of the Dalai Lama and key members of the Government. It was an almost incredible venture. There were tens of thousands of Chinese troops in and around Lhasa, and the bulk of a 300,000-strong Chinese army to the south and west of Lhasa, reaching to the borders of India. Almost 50,000 Tibetan civilians roamed the streets, committed to keeping the Dalai Lama safe in his palace. The nearest Khamba guerrillas were forty miles away, in Lhoka, to the south of Lhasa.

With the firing of the shells at Norbulinka, plans to move the Dalai Lama and immediate members of his family – his mother, elder sister and husband, who was commander of the bodyguard, and his younger brother, Ngari – were set in motion. They would be accompanied by four members

of the Cabinet, and others would follow later and meet up at a pre-determined point. All would have to be disguised to get through undetected by Tibetans as well as Chinese in the city. The Dalai Lama would be dressed as an ordinary soldier, and his mother and sister as Khamba men.

When everything was ready the Dalai Lama went into his favourite side-chapel dedicated to Mahakala for final prayers. Then, with a rifle slung over his shoulder, he left Norbulinka in the company of two other soldiers. He was met at the first gate by his bodyguard commander, joined by the Chief Abbot and Lord Chamberlain, and then the small group made their way to the river. There they were joined by the remaining members of his family, and by the ministers and others who had come hidden under the tarpaulin of a truck.

It had been arranged that the second-in-command of the bodyguard, a minor official called Sekshing, and 200 men would remain behind with Manang Abu and Sampo Jigme. They would join up with Tibetan army troops in Lhasa and whatever Tibetan armed groups were available, and would act as cover for the escape as long as possible.

At Ramagang Ferry, eight miles from the city, they boarded yakskin coracles to cross to the far side, where they were met by thirty Khambas, led by my former Kalimpong friend, Shudrun Lobsang Yeshe, who had enough horses for the whole party. Shudrun Lobsang Yeshe returned upriver with some of the Khambas, and on the way they were accosted and killed by a Chinese force. The Dalai Lama's party travelled through the night to reach the next planned meeting-spot, where Wangchung Tsering, a 20-year-old Khamba leader, was waiting with 400 Khambas to act as bodyguards for the Dalai Lama during the rest of the journey.

Inside Norbulinka palace in Lhasa everything went on as usual, for only Sekshing had been informed of the planned escape. They were so successful in disguising the real nature of events that the Dalai Lama's official photographer, Jigme Tering, living in the next room to Sekshing in the Norbulinka, did not know for three days that the Dalai Lama had gone.

Fighting began in Lhasa on the night of 19 March. Tibetans claim that the Chinese fired first, with the bombing of the Norbulinka, and that some 800 shells destroyed many buildings and surrounding houses and killed thousands of Tibetans. The Chinese claim that the Tibetans launched an all-out attack on the Chinese garrison on the night of 19 March, and that it was only at ten o'clock on 20 March that the troops of the Tibetan Military Area Command of the People's Liberation Army were ordered to take punitive action.

That the Chinese knew nothing of the Dalai Lama's escape was obvious from their claim that he was being held 'under duress of the upper-strata reactionaries and traitorous clique', by this statement preparing the way for

them to 'recover' him at the first opportunity. They also asked the Indian, Nepalese and Bhutanese Consulates in Lhasa for permission to search their premises for the Dalai Lama, indicating that they had no idea where he was – and even that they suspected these countries' representatives of 'kidnapping' him.

At this stage the Dalai Lama had no intention of making for India, and hoped to remain somewhere inside Tibet. It was out of the question to take either of the two usual routes to India from Lhasa, as they were heavily patrolled by the Chinese. But the Lhoka area to the south had been made almost impenetrable by the Khambas over a vast area, with access to India difficult but (as I had proved) possible.

During the dangerous and physically demanding journey through Lhoka territory the Dalai Lama and his ministers, together with the Khamba leaders, discussed the implications of staying on in southern Tibet, or of going on to India for asylum. The latter option was not attractive because of the experiences of the previous Thirteenth Dalai Lama, and was strongly opposed by the Khambas, who argued that the Thirteenth Dalai Lama had not had the alternatives open to the present Fourteenth Dalai Lama, such as a united Tibetan nation fighting, and even defeating, the Chinese invaders in support of him. The Dalai Lama, however, in addition to his personal religious convictions regarding non-violence and a possible peaceful solution, was also aware of the lack of international support for Tibet's cause, and wondered whether and for how long Tibetan armed resistance could continue in the face of ruthless Chinese destruction.

It was decided to make for Lhutse Dzong, a place with a huge fort not far from the Indian border and with good communications with the whole of south and south-east Tibet. There, it was hoped, they could establish a headquarters from which the Dalai Lama and his ministers could conduct negotiations with the Chinese authorities in Lhasa, without interfering with the Khamba rebel plans for extending the areas of resistance. (It was an unknown irony at the time that chance circumstances had brought the Tibetans to the very solution proposed by Rapga Pandatshang to American and Indian officials: that a bridgehead should be established in southern Tibet, where the Khambas could receive military aid from India and the West to launch and maintain their national revolution against China.)

But by the time the party had reached Lhutse Dzong the Dalai Lama had decided against the plan, and was in favour of asking India for asylum. The precipitating factor was an incident near the end of their journey when – for the first time in almost three weeks' travel – a Chinese spotter plane flew over their caravan. When they had heard its approach the party

scattered widely, and for the next two days waited tensely for some signs that they had been detected. When nothing happened they relaxed, but the Dalai Lama was now convinced that it would not take long for the Chinese to establish where they were, and that the Chinese would be more interested in bombing them than in talking reasonably with them about Tibetan independence.

Before leaving Tibetan soil the Dalai Lama and his ministers drew up a proclamation of an independent, if temporarily exiled, Government of Tibet, and had copies sent to all areas of the country, including the Panchen Lama in Tashilunpo in west Tibet. They then departed for the Indian border town of Tezpur, in Upper Assam.

In India, no one knew the route of the Dalai Lama's escape, although there was intense worldwide speculation. Even Tibetan and Khamba officials in Kalimpong had no idea where to expect him to arrive. From my own experience I deduced that the most likely route was through the south, and I also knew that the Dalai Lama's brother, Gyalu Thondup, had come this way in 1952 when he decided to leave Lhasa secretly after a visit there. I was further convinced of this when, after watching Gyalu Thondup's home, I found him slipping away quietly to the airport at Siliguri, forty miles away.

More than twenty newspaper correspondents had gathered in Kalimpong and Darjeeling to cover the story of the developments inside Tibet, with more reporters arriving every day in New Delhi and Calcutta. The more affluent among them had placed watchers on my movements, for they knew that I had inside sources of information, so it was necessary for me to get rid of them if I wanted to be free to move on my own.

I made arrangements with my wife to send a cable to the *Daily Telegraph* asking the editor to send a back-up journalist to help cover the story. Then, in the middle of the night, I slipped away from Darjeeling to a tea-planter friend's house sixty miles away. With his help I chartered the Tea Association's private plane for the next few days and flew from a tea-garden airfield to another at Tezpur. I had left word with my wife to tell my back-up journalist when he arrived how to do the same in order to join me in Tezpur. The main reason for the secrecy was not just to 'scoop' the story from the other journalists, but primarily because I wanted to reach the Dalai Lama first, before he was met by any Indian Government official who would shut out and shut up the Dalai Lama from making his country's predicament known while he was on Indian soil.

The route which I expected the Dalai Lama to take, I had calculated, would bring him out at the border town called Tsona Dzong. From there he would be several days from Indian territory, but still in tribal areas within the Inner Defence Line of the North-East Frontier Agency,

forbidden to everyone – foreigners and Indian nationals alike. The Inner Line started forty miles to the north of Tezpur.

While I was still getting supplies together for this trip my *Daily Telegraph* colleague, John Osman, arrived. Unfortunately he brought with him – to help with the expenses! – three other journalists, Noel Barber of the *Daily Mail*, Bertram Jones of the *Daily Express* and Henry Bradsher of the Associated Press. This was an unexpected and unwelcome complication, for whereas two people might have a slight chance of getting through the forbidden area unseen, five people had little hope of doing so.

However, in the event we had to call off the trip, for the native guides flatly refused to take us the first part of the journey through the jungle at night, and without guides it was impossible to make the trip. Next day, Tezpur began to fill up with journalists from all parts of the world, until there were some 200 sleeping on couches, billiard tables in the Planters' Club and wherever they could find a bed and meal.

The *Daily Mail* correspondent, Noel Barber, had a few weeks earlier filed a 'world scoop' from Kalimpong, based on a few conversations with local people in the bazaar. Now, on arriving in Tezpur, he informed me with relish that he had just filed another 3,000-word world scoop from Calcutta, with a self-conceived account of the Dalai Lama's escape based on the news that I was in Tezpur. He had covered himself by dreaming up a scenario in which the Dalai Lama sent a 'decoy' party from Lhasa to Sikkim, and another from Lhasa to Tezpur; so whichever route turned out to be the true one he was in the clear. He had done this, he said, because he knew that I was in Tezpur and had travelled that way before.

I arranged for him and another correspondent to hire my chartered plane to fly over the North-East Frontier Area to take photographs, while I returned to Kalimpong. I knew that there would be no chance of seeing the Dalai Lama in Tezpur, and John Osman could cover the story while I observed what was happening in Kalimpong, and I could pick up the story later. Noel Barber made the flight, but could not use the photographs – as I was well aware – and as punishment for flying over a Defence Area was expelled from India. Heinrich Harrer, of *Seven Years in Tibet* fame, was sent by the paper to replace him. Barber's false story became part of the many accepted myths about Tibet.

When the Dalai Lama finally arrived in Tezpur on 18 April the Indian Government imposed a total blackout on all information from his party. He was not permitted to meet the media, but he issued a short statement for publication, in which he rejected the Chinese announcements that he had been abducted from Lhasa against his will.

The world's press, discouraged but still in pursuit, continued to Mussoorie, the hill station in northern India where a house had been

prepared for the Dalai Lama and his party. There Mr Nehru arranged to meet the Dalai Lama for the first time since his arrival in India. The media were permitted fifteen minutes for filing and photographs, but no interviews. Most of the media left Mussoorie afterwards, but a few reporters stayed on, among them Heinrich Harrer and myself, still hoping for a private interview with the Dalai Lama. But to no avail; the Indian Government was determined that no one would get near the Dalai Lama to reveal any details of his escape.

Opposition leaders to Mr Nehru's Tibet policy were vocal in their condemnation. Jayaprakash Narayan declared that India should be leading world opinion against the aggression of China in Tibet.

In China, after weeks of playing down reports of the Dalai Lama's escape, the New China News Agency said that Chang Ching Wu, Vice-Chairman of Tibet's Preparatory Committee, had assumed the powers of local government under the Panchen Lama. He declared that the Tibetan rebels in Lhasa 'had been closely linked with the rebels of Sikang' (Chinese name for Kham), and that proof of this 'was the large quantity of materials acquired during the course of putting down the rebellion'.

Officially-sponsored Chinese publicity attacks against India mounted until they covered the entire country in a co-ordinated campaign. They alleged that 'Indian expansionists and British imperialists have not given up their ambition to invade Tibet and enslave its people.' The centre for this supposedly subversive group was said to be 'Kalimpong, the commanding centre of the revolt', and they claimed that:

During the past eight years, under the support of imperialism, the traitorous clique headed by Lukhangwa, Surkhang Wangchen, Shudrun Lobsang Yeshe, Pala Thubten, Liusha Thupten-Tarpa, Shakabpa, Gyalu Thondup, Yuthok and Kundeling Tzasa, have conducted a series of traitorous and subversive activities.

They went on to describe how I had laid the groundwork of the revolt in Kham from 1947 to 1950 and then, with my contacts through the Pandatshangs and other Government officials, had organized the revolt which had just taken place. Their account of the precipitating cause of the revolt roughly tallied with my own in some places, even giving details of the secret arrangements made in Kham in 1955-6. In an article entitled 'Facts of the Khamba Rebellion' the New China News Agency reported that:

In the summer of 1955 Surkhang Wangcheng Galei, and Tserijong Lozong-Yeihsi and other rebel elements for Tibet, after following the

Dalai Lama to attend the National People's Congress in Peking, passed through the Szechuan Province on their way back to Tibet. Surkhang Wangcheng Galei and Tserijong Lozong-Yeishi went by separate routes to the Northern and Southern parts of the Kansu Autonomous Chou to instigate and direct rebellion along the way. Data now at hand proves that Surkhang Wangcheng Galei directed the reactionaries in the area . . .

On 20 June 1959 the Dalai Lama called a press conference in Mussoorie. To 130 media representatives from all over the world he answered ninety-two questions from fourteen different sources. He was outspoken in denouncing the Chinese actions in Tibet, commiserated with the Panchen Lama in what he claimed were enforced statements and activities, expressed his gratitude to India for her help until now, and appealed to the world to take some action to assist Tibet. He ended his statement with an appeal to the representatives of the world's press to help in publicizing Tibet's struggle for freedom and her very existence.

Afterwards I was granted an audience with the Dalai Lama. 'I have heard many things concerning *Khamba Gyau* ['the Bearded Khamba'],' he said, smiling, 'and of the great help you have been to Tibet. But even more than in the past you must help us now, in whatever way you can.'

In November 1959 a three-member Tibetan delegation went to the United Nations, discreetly helped by former British officials with Tibetan connections. They received some support from Ireland and Malaya, but the United Nations was reluctant to help. The matter got on to the agenda in 1959, 1961 and 1965, and resolutions were passed urging that the human rights of Tibet should be respected, but no effective action was taken.

The International Commission of Jurists, however, agreed to establish a Legal Enquiry Committee to investigate what had happened in Tibet. Relying mainly on Chinese public statements, and interviews with large numbers of Tibetan refugees, they concluded that while there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate an attempt at genocide on the part of China, there was sufficient proof to show that the Chinese 'had violated the Tibetan right to exist as a religious group . . . but not their right to exist as a national, ethnical [sic] or racial group'. This they classified as 'cultural genocide'.

In the introduction to their preliminary report, 'The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law', they stated:

The danger in such cases as that of Tibet is a feeling of impotence and powerlessness overcoming people in the face of a *fait accompli* – a

mixture of indifference, lack of moral courage and determination . . . What happened in Tibet yesterday may happen in our own countries tomorrow. The force of public opinion, however, cannot be disregarded; ideas will penetrate where bullets will not.

Departure from Tibet

Although the response of Governments to the issue of Tibet was a disgrace by any standard, many individuals and aid organizations were quick to help. A Tibetan Refugee Relief Organization was set up in India, with a committee of Tibetan officials and Indian associates. Unfortunately, it was seen and used by the Tibetan officials as a means of furthering their personal and political interests. Before long there was rampant misuse of aid, and abuse of responsibilities, as the leading officials recruited followers on the basis of help provided, sold medicines and clothing on the black market, and added money to their personal accounts.

This corruption and nepotism exacerbated the rising tide of complaints among the exiled Tibetans, as time passed and nothing seemed to be done to help them return to Tibet. The leading Tibetan officials, such as Surkhang and Yuthok, who had cooperated with the Khambas in planning the revolt, refused to participate in any of the proposed schemes, as did Raga Pandatshang, and they were left to their own devices. Others, such as the Khamba revolt leaders who had come with the Dalai Lama to India, became disillusioned and angry. They had supported the proposal to leave Tibet and come to India in order to make the case for Tibet known to the world, and not to sit around and plead for hand-outs from Gyalu Thondup, the Dalai Lama's brother.

Thondup had worked himself into control of the Dalai Lama's treasure, which had been sent out of Tibet earlier and was kept in Sikkim. He had it moved and the gold, silver and jewels changed into cash. There were varying estimates regarding the value of the treasure, with Thondup claiming it was worth 'only six or seven million US dollars'. Yangpel Pandatshang, who was one of the three made responsible for it by the Dalai Lama in 1951, told me that it was worth 'at least thirty million dollars'. Other Tibetans estimated it at eleven million dollars.

What *was* known was that it was Gyalu Thondup who, with the Maharajkumar of Sikkim, the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji, and Indian business associates in Kalimpong and Calcutta, appropriated and invested huge sums in dubious business ventures which never materialized, or which collapsed through lack of sufficient funding or expertise. The Khambas, who were supposed to have benefited, were furious and protested vociferously to the Dalai Lama. Eventually the Dalai Lama was forced to disassociate Thondup from the treasure, but considerable damage had already been done.

The other main source of funding came from the Indian Government, which provided land, housing, food, medical and general aid. Then there were the Western agencies, such as the International Red Cross, the Swiss Red Cross, CARE, Save The Children Fund, and a host of others. 'Friendship Funds' were set up in several countries, including Britain and the United States.

While all the Western, and most of the national Government, funds were free of nepotism and corruption, they were dependent in the early stages on the advice of leading Tibetan officials who, as with their own Tibetan Refugee Relief Organization, manipulated them to their own advantage.

The increasing tensions and protests from Tibetans excluded from benefits, or from those who suspected that the exiled Tibetans were enjoying a lifestyle which diminished their interest in doing anything regarding a return to Tibet, were only obliquely directed at the Dalai Lama himself. There was his brother, Gyalu Thondup, of course, prominent in every decision and every delegation, and his claimed authority from the Dalai Lama. But the main focus of complaint were the groups of aristocratic and ecclesiastical factions close to the Dalai Lama, who were demonstrably improving their own and their families' circumstances in every way.

I watched the deterioration of the Tibetan situation with dismay. I was urged by Tibetan friends to do something about it, and I investigated the seriousness of the corruption and wrote articles about it. This brought the wrath of the Indian Government on me once again, and the Home Minister, Mrs Kripalani, declared that I was 'a yellow-rag journalist' – after I had been to see her and shown her my irrefutable proof of the extent of the corruption. Within a few months there were complaints from the United Nations organizations, the Swiss Red Cross and others.

I concluded that there was nothing further I could do for Tibet, and that the time had come for me to leave the country to its accepted fate. Meg and I decided to return to Britain, where I would take up a political career and try, like Karl Marx, to change society and not just to talk or write about it, like philosophers and journalists.

Over the past few years, I had become increasingly involved with the Naga situation, because of a meeting with some Nagas in the Carey Baptist Church in Calcutta. The Nagas were a former head-hunting tribe located in the North-East Frontier Area of India, who in the past century had become actively Christian, following the preaching of American Baptists in the area. They were a martial people, and the British authorities in colonial India had not been able to subdue them, having to settle for appointing headmen to be responsible for keeping the peace. They had helped Britain

in fighting the Japanese, and Field Marshal Slim was reported to have said that 'the war in Burma could not have been won without them'. They had accepted no compensation for their assistance, simply asking Britain not to hand them over to India when they were leaving the country. The British representatives agreed, and then proceeded with their usual perfidy to do just that. Even Mahatma Gandhi agreed that the Nagas should have their independence, as did Jayaprakash Narayan, but Nehru was against it and the Nagas were made Indians against their will. They refused, armed themselves and at Kohima, their capital, in 1954 they defeated the Indian armed police, and the Indian Government sent in the army to recover the situation. They had been fighting ever since.

When I first met the Nagas at Carey Baptist Church they knew of my involvement with Tibet, because of the wide publicity I had received, and they asked if I could not do the same for their cause. I had written several articles from time to time as they sent me information, but at that time I was too intimately involved with Tibet to do justice to their cause. They were now in a more serious situation, however, and in urgent need of help. Their 'President', A.Z. Phizo, had gone underground, as the Indians had put a high price on his head, and was somewhere in Europe seeking support.

I was working on my new book, *Peking Versus Delhi*, and planning to leave for England to do further research on it. Guy Wint was encouraging me to come to St Antony's College, Oxford, where he was a senior research fellow, and complete the book there. Also, he wanted me to work with him as assistant editor and major contributor on an *Asia Handbook*, to be published by Anthony Blond and Penguin.

Before I left India I went to New Delhi to seek an interview with the Indian Prime Minister to discuss the substance of my book. I was arguing that his whole China policy was misconceived, that there was no basis for agreement with China because of China's actions in Tibet; and I wanted to do justice to his point of view. But in New Delhi I found that no official in the Government was prepared to risk Mr Nehru's anticipated displeasure in forwarding my request. Even the British High Commissioner, Malcolm MacDonald, a close friend of Mr Nehru, and with whom I was on the friendliest terms, said it was not worth while to ask. Mr Nehru had just been attending the UN, the Congress Party elections were due, and he was seeing nobody – not even Malcolm MacDonald. The Indian Joint Secretary of External Affairs, Jagat Mehta, also a good friend of mine, said sardonically when I asked for his help, 'George, a Government may forgive you for being wrong; it will not forgive you for being right.'

However, I was convinced that Nehru was not the kind of man to hold a grudge, and so I wrote out a request for an interview, explaining my

purpose and its importance, and went to his house and asked the guard at the gate to deliver it personally, giving him a generous tip. Next morning I had a reply by special messenger saying that Nehru would see me the following day.

He was very pleasant and cooperative when we met, and answered frankly all my most pointed questions. He was confident that in the dispute over Tibet, and the Sino-Indian border, 'India has a strong case'. In Asian politics a Sino-Indian *entente cordiale* was part of India's destiny in international affairs. 'For my part I am always more concerned with the future. It satisfies one's conceit to imagine that one might mould it . . . The future which I dream is inextricably interwoven with close friendship and something almost approaching union with China.' I left him sadly, suspecting that the issue of Tibet and the increasing Sino-Indian border tensions had critically devitalized his hitherto highly acclaimed statesmanship, and that not only Tibet, but also India, was in serious jeopardy if he pursued his private vision.

On our return to Britain I pursued a Liberal constituency in Edinburgh West as a political candidate, and as Guy Wint's assistant I worked on my book in Oxford, and conducted interviews in London, until the Naga 'underground' President, A.Z. Phizo, turned up in London and appealed to David Astor, the editor of the *Observer*, for help. I had done some writing for the *Observer*, and David Astor and Guy Wint suggested that I invite Phizo to stay with me while I checked out his allegations against India.

When I did I found him a very disappointing witness; he never told the same story twice. I informed Guy and David of this, and recommended that Phizo be told to bring some Naga colleagues to corroborate his story. This would help us to verify the mounting seriousness of the Naga charges. Before leaving India there had been reports of burned villages, lists of victims raped, murdered and tortured, and a pamphlet had been published, entitled *The Fate of the Naga People*. The allegations had been forcefully denied by the Indian Government, although the Indian press claimed that guilt was established in at least twenty-two cases of alleged atrocities. The Indian Government had then banned all journalists from visiting the area.

To my concern for the fate of the Tibetans and the Nagas there was now added the concern of the Reverend Michael Scott for the Nagas and several tribes in Africa. He was a close friend of David Astor, and David and Guy now proposed setting up a group to represent the interests of minority people whose cases could not be raised directly in the United Nations. This was done, and the 'International Committee for the Study of Group Rights' (ICSGR) was formed, and I was made its first director, with special responsibilities for Tibet and Nagaland.

Before leaving the Himalayan region I had made arrangements to keep in touch with Tibetan and other friends by various means. My high-profile conflict with the Indian Government had led it to post notices in the Calcutta, Darjeeling and Kalimpong post offices that all my mail was to be censored, and I had made alternative arrangements for those who wanted to keep in touch with me. I now wrote to key figures telling them of my position, and asking them for any important information that might help Tibet or Nagaland. I also sent word to important individuals there to ask if they might come to Britain to advance their country's cause.

Among those I contacted was Surkhang Wangcheng Galei, the senior Cabinet Minister, who had met the Pandatshangs in Kham to plan the revolt, and who had played such a prominent role in the last days of the Dalai Lama's escape from Lhasa. I had known him and his family well over the years, and had been instrumental in having his two children sent to England through two wealthy friends, Major Richard and Pamela Knight, to be educated. They agreed to fund the visit of the Surkhang family, his wife and his brother, General Rimshi Surkhang, to Britain.

In Britain and in the United States almost all official interest in Tibet had dissipated. The Tibetan leadership in exile had chosen to be advised by old-school, establishment 'Tibetologists', who were better known for their names and associations than for their expertise or influence. They were able to introduce Gyalu Thondup to 'second-level' officials who seemed impressive, and who said all the right things, but these were 'old-boy' meetings conducted informally, with 'understandings' which passed by Thondup and other Tibetan officials, who thought their case was being given serious consideration. I was superciliously dismissed as 'too emotionally involved, particularly with the Khamba guerrillas' – and I had the wrong accent, the wrong pedigree and the wrong school. It did not bother me, for I had seen how these colonial civil servants, diplomats and military men lived and operated in the East, and was not impressed by their qualifications as 'advisers'.

The diplomatically programmed ignorance of the British officials was paralleled in all other Western nations dealing with India and China. The political platitudes of the suave and elegant Prime Ministers of India and China, Nehru and Chou, as they advocated internationally the superiority of the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' governing relationships between countries, easily hid from the Western representatives the ugly reality of imminent war between the two Asian giants. They ignored the evidence of the increasingly bitter tone in the diplomatically concealed Sino-Indian communications and – adding to their official gullibility and culpability – the mounting number of serious border clashes between the two Asian armies.

I persuaded David Astor to send me to the Sino-Indian border to assess the situation on the spot. I travelled from Kashmir along the length of the Himalayas to Burma, and concluded that what I had always said was a possibility – war between India and China – was now imminent. Returning to Oxford, I ended my book, *Peking Versus Delhi*, with this highly unpopular conclusion, which aroused considerable scepticism. In August 1962, however, serious fighting broke out between China and India, and in October of that year, large-scale engagements took place, and the Sino-Indian war was a reality.

In May 1962 I received a telephone call from the Pakistan High Commission informing me that 153 Naga soldiers, two generals, Kaito and Mowu – both wanted by the Indian Government – and two top officials of the Naga underground movement had just shot their way across Assam in north-east India and had arrived in east Pakistan ‘searching for Mr George Patterson of the *Observer*’. Could I please tell them what was going on?

David Astor telephoned President Ayub Khan to explain the situation, and it was agreed that I should go to east Pakistan and arrange for the group leaders to come to London to make the Naga case known to the world. It was anticipated that there would be strong opposition to this from the Indian Government. What was not expected by us was that the British Government would intervene at the request of the Indian Government and put a stop to their arrival. The ICSGR promptly retained the services of a noted senior legal counsel, Sir John Foster, and the *Observer*’s legal adviser, Louis Blom-Cooper, to take the British Government to court for violating the rights of the Nagas, as ‘citizens of a former British colonialist territory’, to come to Britain to have their complaints heard. We won the case, and the Nagas arrived in London amid a blaze of publicity. They were interrogated by noted Burma generals Snelling and Christianson, aides to Field Marshal Slim, and were spoken to by Lord Louis Mountbatten at the Burma veterans parade in Whitehall. Later, Lord Mountbatten contacted Nehru on their behalf and advised making an agreement with the Nagas, as they would not be overcome by force.

Meanwhile, the Surkhang family had arrived in London, and asked to live with us rather than on their own. This meant that the senior Surkhang Shapay (his official title), his wife, his brother, General Rimshi Surkhang – and the four Naga leaders – all wanted to stay with us rather than in hotels. We had a small flat in Clapham, and we had to spread mattresses on the floor to accommodate everyone. To make matters more interesting – and more crowded – I received a cable from Yangpel Pandatshang asking if I would arrange for him to visit London ‘for medical treatment’. When he arrived it was in the company of his new young wife, his young son of three

years and a manservant. They, too, wanted to live with us. We found a larger place in which to live, but still with only enough space for mattresses on the floor.

The reports they brought from Tibet were devastating. Following the revolt, the Chinese had in reprisal launched savage attacks on towns, villages and monasteries in an orgy of mass killings to wipe out their humiliation before the world. Tens of thousands of Tibetans had been killed without trial of any kind, mostly for 'not renouncing their religion'. They had been shot, beaten to death, crucified, burned alive, drowned, vivisected, starved, strangled, hanged, scalded, buried alive – mostly in public, with others made to watch. Children had been forced to shoot their parents. Lamas had been especially persecuted, 'because they were unproductive and lived on the money of the people'. They were tortured, harnessed to ploughs like animals, whipped, beaten and humiliated. Large numbers had been taken away to other places, or to China as 'labour reform gangs', and many had committed suicide in despair. Children had been taken away from parents and transported to China for 're-education'.

I arranged for Surkhang to appear before the Tibet sub-committee of the ICSGR (later to be renamed 'The Minority Rights Group'), with me as interpreter. Then he addressed gatherings at St Antony's College, Oxford and at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, at Chatham House in London; and he broadcast on radio and television. His calm and thoughtful appraisals went a long way towards redressing the damage done by the complacent maunderings of the traditional 'Tibetologists' of the establishment circles. But it was obvious that Tibet was a dead issue.

Surkhang and Yangpel were in despair. They spent hours discussing endless combinations of possibilities, but the gap between the awesome intensity of the death-struggle by the Tibetans against the Chinese Communists, and the expedient acceptance of the status quo by the pusillanimous representatives of the exile officials, by India, Britain and the United States, seemed too great to span. These nations accepted at face value Chinese assurances that all was now peaceful in Tibet, that the Tibetan people were happy with their situation now that the 'bad elements' had gone, and that the only problem was the self-serving propaganda of the exiles and their friends.

This propaganda was being believed and quoted by those whose policies were to avoid embarrassing involvement with Tibet and consequent trouble with India and China. It seemed to me, therefore, that what was required was definite *visual* proof of what was really happening in Tibet, and I discussed this with Surkhang and Yangpel. It would require a team willing and able to do what only a few mountaineers could do – climb 20,000-foot Himalayan mountain passes twice, going and returning,

while carrying film equipment. The members of the team would have to include somebody who spoke adequate Tibetan to communicate with porters and guerrillas. They would have to be able to make contact with, and be acceptable to, the Khamba guerrillas reported to be operating in remote mountainous areas. They would need to be skilled enough to avoid detection by the security agencies of five countries – Nepal, India, China, Britain and the United States – all of which had a vested interest in keeping matters under wraps. Finally, if the filming was successful, the film would have to be smuggled out of Nepal and India. In its favour, such a film would at a stroke destroy Chinese propaganda, show the continuing potential of the Tibetan revolt and remove the supercilious assumptions of India and the West.

Surkhang and Yangpel were sceptical of finding such a team, and I was reluctant to argue in favour of it. I suspected that, if I convinced them of its possibility, I would be the one ‘chosen’ to lead it, and I had come to a decision that I was tired of ‘hazarding my life in the high places of the field’, as it was said of one Biblical character. I had hoped, on my return to Britain, to see something of the spiritual power I had observed among national Christians in China and India, and whose principles I had come to believe were dynamically reproductive, as opposed to the ongoing sterility of Western Christendom. However, I had come to accept that British Christians were satisfied with sitting back and attending their various church services and waiting for the return of Jesus Christ to do something about their situation. There were many who flocked to congratulate Meg and me on our suddenly acquired fame, and to assure us that they had always known we would ‘make it’. It was easier to accept the distant, and at times frigid, politeness of those who felt that we had thrown away our spiritual birthright for a mess of secular *potage*; at least, they were honest, if neither kind nor just.

My central objection to the Christianity of the West was its bland acceptance of the lack of power among its adherents. There was no consciousness of the Apostle Paul’s categorical dictum: ‘The kingdom of God is not in words, but in *power*’; nor even of the words of Jesus himself: ‘You shall have *power* –’. I had been living both inside and outside Tibet in an atmosphere of spirit power, divine and demonic, and I found the inertia and apathy of Western Christendom too much to bear.

Ironically, three of the four Naga revolutionaries were highly committed Christians; the fourth, General Kaito, was one of the few Nagas who was not but he believed, like Cromwell, that his army should have prayers and preaching. They loved to sing hymns, attend church and read Bible stories to our children. They agreed, with the Tibetans, that religious belief and spiritual power – not always synonymous, as was evident in their own

countries as well as in Britain – were superior to the atheism of the Communists, and worth fighting for.

I was finding the struggle against dead orthodoxy – in Government, in Church, in society – and against complacent acceptance of unrighteousness, injustice, oppression and exploitation hard to sustain. I was tired of addressing congregations and audiences of complacent, well-fed, middle-class people; complacent, well-fed working-class people; complacent, well-fed upper-class people – and all their complacent, well-fed children. I was even tired of Tibet, and the demands it made upon me.

I poured it all out in a bitter tirade to Meg, and declared that I was going to give up all the involvements with spiritual, political and social revolution that had absorbed most of my life. I would retire to the country, find something simple to do, read, study, keep regular hours, and enjoy family life, like a 'normal' person. She disagreed. She, too, had been unhappy about trying to bring up a family, work in a hospital and keep up with my activities. We had seven revolutionaries living with us, thirteen people in one small house; and while Mrs Surkhang loved helping with the children, Rimshi Surkhang washed the dishes and Surkhang Shapay did the shopping, I was seldom at home because of my commitments. But Meg knew that I would never be happy with the pipe-dream I had described, and in a traumatic episode we reached a personal crisis – and decided that the will of God must be accepted; and that meant Tibet, for our commitment had never been withdrawn.

I read the words of the Marxist-turned-Christian philosopher, Nicholas Berdyaev, in a new light:

. . . Those who have known a limitless freedom of spirit cannot efface from their soul this experience or deny its existence. Freedom, with its own interior dialectic, that tragic destiny which it bears within itself, is an experience of a particular order inherent in Christianity itself. A man who has achieved a definite victory over the seductive temptations of humanism, who has discovered the hollow unreality of the deification of man by man, can never hereafter abandon the liberty which has brought him to *know* God, nor the definite experience which has freed him from the power of evil . . . Those whose religion is authoritarian and hereditary can never hope to understand those who have come by this way, through the tragedy immanent in their life's experience . . . The suffering that has been once lived through cannot possibly be effaced . . . The man who has travelled far in the realm of the spirit, and who has passed through great trials in the cause of his search for truth, will be formed spiritually along lines which must differ altogether from those pertaining to the man who has never shifted his position and to

whom new spiritual territories are unknown . . . I am enriched by my experience, even if it has been fearful and tormenting; even if, to cross the abyss which lay before me, I have been forced to address myself to powers other than human . . .

I finished writing *Peking Versus Delhi* and the *Asia Handbook* (Guy Wint had had a stroke, and I had to complete it on my own), and made preparations to do something positive about Tibet. I had been approached by a television producer, Adrian Cowell, to see if the ICSGR could do something to help the Xingu Indians of Brazil, where he had been filming their plight. When I told him about the Tibetans and Nagas he became very interested and suggested doing a series of films in Asia on the subject of revolts of minority peoples against their larger neighbours. He knew of a brilliant young cameraman, Chris Menges, who would be interested, if I would go as adviser and scriptwriter.

The trouble was that nobody believed we would be able to do it; or, if they did, they were so appalled at the monumental personal, as well as political, implications that they would not support the film. David Astor said he could not in good conscience, as a friend as well as an editor, commission articles, knowing the risks I would be taking. Eventually, Granada Television put up £10,000 for British rights only, and we sold off all our Tibetan artefacts, insurance policies and whatever, in order to finance the project.

Revolution was all right for a young bachelor, and the vision had burned with a hard, gem-like flame while I was on the roof of the world, but on a wet night in London, struggling with young children and a pram to get on a bus, it looked very different.

I left Meg in January 1964, with some of the money, a will, two sons, Lorne and Sean, and a five-week-old daughter, Myrrh (named after the sweet and bitter perfume, offered to Jesus at his birth and death), to find out once again what could be done for Tibet – and what God had in mind for me in all this.

With the Khamba Guerrillas

Following the escape of the Dalai Lama from Tibet in March 1959, many of the Khambas who had remained behind in Tibet to carry on the revolt had fallen back into scattered isolated areas of resistance, difficult for the Chinese to reach. The Chinese troops controlled the main highways across Tibet, with garrisons every few miles, and in the cities and towns, but in the savage and remote 15–20,000-foot mountains they were no match for the Khamba guerrillas. Without supplies of ammunition, however, and after five years of constant fighting the guerrillas could no longer maintain the same revolutionary momentum, and they were restricted to sporadic attacks on the Chinese forces.

The main groupings of these rebels were in south-east Tibet, south Tibet and west Tibet. The largest concentration was in Kham, but there was little information available about their activities. The most active and effective group was operating in the high Himalayas, in the north of Nepal. Here two units were in action against the strategically important north-south highway linking north-west China through Sinkiang, Ladakh and west Tibet with the more direct east-west Chamdo-Lhasa-Sikkim highway. A third highway was being built from Kathmandu in Nepal through the border village of Kodari to Lhasa, to the east of the Khamba guerrilla position.

One of these Khamba units was located in the Mustang area of Nepal, and was supported by Gyalu Thondup and his party; the other comprised a group of independent Khambas, who were disillusioned by Gyalu Thondup's devious activities and were located in Dzum, some distance to the east of Mustang. It was my intention to make contact with this second group, mainly because I was from Kham and sympathized with them, and had letters of introduction to the leaders from Yangpel and Surkhang; but also because I did not trust anyone working with Thondup, for he was likely to pass on information to the CIA, Taiwan or whoever suited his current interest.

Our aim was simple – at least, in conception: to make contact with the Khambas and persuade them to take us with them in their attacks on Chinese convoys inside Tibet. Our film would then demonstrate to the world that the Tibetan revolt was far from dead, that the Khambas were still a match for the Chinese occupation troops inside Tibet, that given aid on a large scale they could be a formidable resistance force in containing the aggressive Chinese, and that they were a far worthier ally for the West than

either Korea or Vietnam – which had to have foreign troops as well as military aid to help in their defence. The whole project would, if successful, serve to dramatize internationally the question of Tibet once more.

When we arrived in New Delhi I found that the Prime Minister of Bhutan was there, and I arranged a meeting with him. We were good friends and I wanted to discuss the possibility of an alternative route into Tibet through Bhutan, and also to get from him an update on a Chinese proposal for a ‘Confederation of Himalayan States’, which they had raised some years before and which I wanted to use in Nepal as a ‘cover’.

Nepal had been a ‘closed’ country until the mid-1950s, and had passed through a series of political crises since then. I had been in and out to report events over the years, and had come to know many of the leading figures. The King, Mahendra, had taken over ‘direct rule’ in December 1960, and had put several of the leaders in jail. Soon afterwards, the Chinese Government announced that it approved his action ‘in the circumstances’, and that it was prepared to extend further aid to Nepal. A boundary agreement had been drawn up and signed, diplomatic relations between Nepal and China were begun for the first time, and China offered to build a highway from Kathmandu to Lhasa.

There was little doubt that it was King Mahendra’s intention to equalize the balance of power between his two giant neighbours, India and China, by making these arrangements. Until then India had taken advantage of the special relationship which had existed between Nepal and imperial Britain, to Nepal’s increasing irritation; and the King was anxious to reduce the Indian presence and influence in Nepal.

When I arrived in Kathmandu I found that the redoubtable Nationalist revolutionary, Dr K.I. Singh, and the able socialist, B.P. Koirala, whom I had known in the past, were in prison; and that the chairman of the council of ministers was Dr Tulsi Giri, whom I had never met. However, Dr Giri’s private secretary, Juddhabir Lama, was known to me; and I found that his brother, Amir Lama, whom I knew even better, was in an influential political position. Amir had been brought by his anxious family to my wife’s hospital in Darjeeling at the point of death one night, with a condition requiring immediate and complicated surgery. There was no compatible blood available for transfusion, but my wife tested me and found my blood was compatible, so I was hooked up while she operated on Amir. His life was saved and the family was extremely grateful to us.

I now asked Juddhabir to arrange an interview for me with Dr Giri, to discuss ‘the possibilities of the proposed Chinese Confederation of Himalayan States’. I did not confide to him that it was only a ‘cover’ for my real aim of getting into Tibet. I was sufficiently well-known in Nepal for there to be considerable speculation in Government and diplomatic circles

as to my purpose in being there, so I had decided that the Chinese proposal, with which I had been identified in my journalistic reporting some years before, would lull any suspicions. But my visit would have to be credible, so I made several high-level appointments with Nepalese officials, and with diplomatic representatives of other countries, including the British Ambassador, Anthony Duff. With every representative I varied the emphasis, so that the rumour mill would throw up a confused picture.

When I eventually met Dr Giri his appetite was whetted and he showed keen interest in the sources of my proposals. I told him what I knew of Chinese approaches to Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nagaland, even Kashmir, while he pointed out India's lack of interest. I countered by suggesting that India might be more interested if the Chinese could be persuaded to withdraw the bulk of their military forces from Tibet – which Chou En-lai had already agreed to in 1956, anyway – in return for the withdrawal of Indian influence from the Himalayan States. That aroused his interest.

I followed up by suggesting that Nepal could sound out China, and if the Chinese agreed, he should invite the Dalai Lama to Nepal for a Buddhist celebration, and the Dalai Lama could make a 'peace proposal' of his return to Tibet in exchange for Chinese military withdrawal. Nepal could then take up this proposal in the United Nations, as the only accredited member of that body among the Himalayan States. Dr Giri nodded thoughtfully, and began a thorough discussion of the implications of such a confederation. Finally, he sat back and said, 'If the Dalai Lama will make the statement, and offer the proposal you describe, then you can be assured of Nepal's full cooperation. But the Dalai Lama must make the first move, and there must be full cooperation between Tibet and Nepal as to the next step.'

I was both stimulated – and flabbergasted. I had wanted only an effective 'cover', and I had landed myself with a diplomatic initiative and a journalistic scoop – neither of which I was in a position to use. Then, fortuitously, I discovered that Gyalu Thondup was on a visit to Kathmandu, and I sought him out at his hotel. Despite our differences, we had always been friendly, meeting often for meals and playing tennis twice a week while I was in Darjeeling. He listened with interest to my report of the meeting with Dr Giri, and I urged him to follow it up over the next few days, which he agreed to do.

The next day I discovered that he had left that morning, without warning to his Tibetan colleagues in Kathmandu, who were mystified by his sudden departure. A few days later the Dalai Lama's representative in Kathmandu was recalled to New Delhi 'for consultations' – and nothing more was heard or done about the proposed confederation.

Meanwhile, I had another problem. While I was trying to keep a low

profile I suddenly became front-page news again in India. My book, *Peking Versus Delhi*, had been published and very favourably reviewed by the critics in Britain, including those of the *Times Literary Supplement*, where it appeared on the front page. It had also been favourably reviewed by several reputable Indian journalists and scholars in Indian newspapers. However, a leading Indian politician, Minoo Masani, had tried to read some excerpts from the book in support of a speech he was making in the Indian parliament, when the Speaker stopped him and said that the book in question had been banned by the Home Secretary. There was an immediate uproar in parliament, partly because the Speaker was interfering with the rights of a distinguished member, and partly because of the Home Secretary's arbitrary action. The issue quickly became a *cause célèbre*, while I sought to keep out of sight in Kathmandu. A few days later I sent word to Adrian and Chris, who were waiting in New Delhi for my signal, to say that all was now ready in Kathmandu.

The full account of the events that ensued in Nepal and Tibet were published some years ago in my book *A Fool at Forty*, so I will only write here of the highlights of our trip. It took us seventeen days to travel through the foothills of the lower Himalayas, carefully picking our way so that we could 'lose' ourselves without our disappearance being noticed by the authorities. We made for the 'sacred' valley of Dzum, right under the 20,000-foot Khojang Pass on a spur of land jutting into Tibet, where I had been told the Khambas we were seeking were thought to be operating.

We were there several days and no one in the small village or monastery gave any sign of knowing anything about Khambas in the vicinity. But Dzum monastery held the famous third patron deity smuggled out of Tibet, an idol that, it was claimed, had 'spoken' twice in the past and would 'speak' again to a liberated Tibet. Where such a famous idol was to be found there were bound to be Khambas around as 'guards'. It was said in the village that supporters of Gyalu Thondup had tried several times to move the idol down to Kathmandu or to India, but this move had been rejected. Only the Khamba guerrillas could have taken such a stand against Thondup.

Adrian, Chris and the others had left camp one day to do some local filming, and I was on my own reading and writing up notes in the warm sunshine, my back against a large rock overlooking the valley, when there was a rustle of movement in the camp as the lounging porters stood up or moved out of the way. A tall figure, preceded by the village headman, strode up to where I was sitting and gave a smart salute. The easy, independent carriage, the magnificent physique, the broad, handsome features with the piercing eyes, all indicated his Khamba origin. This was Tendar, the legendary commander of the Khamba unit who I would never

forget. His combination of ruthless efficiency, physical toughness, brilliant intelligence, devout religious belief and spiritual despair made a profound impression on me from that first meeting.

I invited him to be seated and, after ordering the customary Tibetan tea, we chatted casually for some time about my association with Tibet, some of which he had heard about, and of his experiences fighting in Kham. Eventually he got around to asking if I had any medicines and, when I told him we had a little, he asked if I could help one of his men, who had incurred gangrene of the foot through being caught in a blizzard.

Adrian and Chris returned and we accompanied Tendar to his camp which, as I had suspected, was not far away in a nearby village. There we found several scattered yakskin tents, with heavily armed Khamba guerrillas moving around. The sick man lay in one of the tents, his leg wrapped in rags and stinking from decomposing flesh. I called for plenty of beer and asked his friends to get him drunk, then to hold a limb each. I had no anaesthetics, no surgical instruments or antibiotics, such as I had had while living in Kham, so I had to use Tibetan beer, a razor-blade stuck in the end of a whittled wooden branch, and crushed sulphanilamide tablets. While I removed his toes and pared away the rotting flesh, his friends held him down, Chris filmed the scene – and a Khamba came into the tent behind me and exclaimed '*Khamba Gyau!*' I glanced over my shoulder at a tough character I did not recognize, and asked how he knew my Khamba nickname. 'I was there in Litang when you rode the grey horse,' he said. 'I was only a young boy at the time, but I never forgot it.'

When I had finished we sat around talking, and I gave Tendar and Assang – my Kham friend from Litang, who was Tendar's second-in-command – the letters of introduction from Surkhang and Yangpel. While Tendar read them I talked with members of the group, and found that they were an élite group who had been fighting in Kham since the early 1950s under Tendar's leadership. He had been the monk-steward of a famous monastery, whose family had all been killed by the Chinese, and he had taken to the mountains with a picked group of some thirty friends. Over the years they had joined up with others, but always the original group had stuck together as a fighting unit, and each member was famous for individual acts of daring and the group legendary for its successes.

When Tendar and Assang had finished reading the letters they asked what we wanted them to do. I told them that we wanted to go with them on their next raid against the Chinese to film the whole proceedings, so that we could use the film to make Tibet's case known to the world. The two main emphases of the film would be: first, to provide evidence of the continuing revolt in Tibet; and, second, to show the vulnerability of the two main arterial highways in Tibet carrying the Chinese supplies.

The Khambas were reluctant to agree, even with the persuasive letters of introduction from Surkhang and Yangpel and my own known record of help for Tibet. This, they said, was not just due to the difficulties involved in the physical demands of getting us and our equipment over the high snow-bound passes into Tibet, and through the Chinese-occupied territory on the other side, but also because of the problems of arranging an ambush close enough for us to film without losing our lives. We discussed the complications for some time, then they decided 'to leave the decision to the gods'.

They had never lost a man from their guerrilla unit in their twelve years of fighting all over Tibet, they said, because they had never failed to take a decision without consulting the gods. They would make their traditional offering now in the local monastery, the oracle-priest would 'call down' the god in possession, and they would abide by his decision. To make doubly sure, they would also use the 'spiritual ball' method of negative and positive answers contained in flour balls. The first event we would not be allowed to film; the second we could.

Both oracle-priest and spiritual flour balls indicated that we should be allowed to go with the guerrillas, and the auspicious date for our departure was to be 6 June, a few days hence. We moved out of our camp in the village and into the tents with the Khambas to make final preparations, and then travelled with them high up into the mountains just under the Khojang Pass, where we awaited the arrival of our scouts returning with their reports of the proposed ambush scene.

Late one afternoon, when Adrian and Chris had gone for a walk up the valley, I was sitting in the tent talking to Tendar. The man fascinated me, for in so many ways his story, such as I had heard, paralleled mine, in its spiritual high-points anyway. Yet he never spoke about it to us. He was always polite and friendly, but kept everyone at a distance in personal terms – an unusual characteristic among the Khambas. When he wasn't giving orders or instructions regarding guns and tactics he seldom talked much, and his face in repose was always sombre and introspective.

'The trail ahead is very difficult,' he said to me suddenly out of the quietness of the tent, as it darkened while we sat silently drinking tea. 'I have sent six men to reconnoitre the three trails from here to the place of ambush. I am now about to send a seventh to have a look at the place itself. We have to cross one very high snow-covered pass, and some smaller passes with dangerous places. On this side of the pass we will use torches occasionally as we climb in the darkness, when I think it is safe; but on the other side of the pass we will not use torches at all. The Chinese soldiers who guard the frontiers are very clever, very tough, and very well-armed, and it is difficult to outwit them. We are few, poorly armed, and cannot

afford to make mistakes. When I think of the guns and ammunition we handed over to the Indian officials when we arrived with the Dalai Lama in 1959 I could weep.' He shook his head regretfully, lapsing again into silence.

I looked at his handsome, brooding face, lit now by the light of the flickering fire. 'What were you before the revolt in Tibet?' I asked him.

At first he said nothing, and I thought he was not going to reply. But after a little while he turned his gaze from the fire to meet mine, and with a jolt of surprise I saw his eyes were filmed with a sheen of tears, and in their depths was a grief that caught suddenly at my own throat. I recalled the words of Berdyaev again. This man, too, had travelled far in the realms of the spirit, and had learned lessons of suffering that could never be told.

'I was not born for this kind of life,' he said, spreading his arm in a sweeping gesture that took in tents and guns and everything that went with them. 'I wanted to live in peace, to practise my religion. I was steward in a large monastery, and I loved the life. As a monk I had no wife, but I had brothers, a sister and parents, and uncles, all of whom I loved and respected. They are all dead – killed by the Chinese Communists. The Chinese plundered my home, destroyed my monastery, took away my friends and companions to build roads, starve and die. I was left with nothing but to fight for my country, my religion and the Dalai Lama. Later, because I had forfeited my right to be a priest by killing Chinese, I married a wife and so further betrayed my religious vows. She, too, was killed, and now I have nothing but what you see here.' His bitter protest was like an exposed wound in the grey-dark tent.

I sat silent. There was nothing one could say to assuage such private grief, and any trite comment would have been a crude impertinence. I felt that he could sense my sympathy, my understanding, or he would never have unloaded that suddenly unbearable, lonely outcry of protest at the circumstances which had made a sensitive man of peace into a ruthless machine of war.

'So now I know little beyond fighting the Chinese in these mountains,' he continued reflectively, 'and how to handle guns and men. It is now five years since I and these men entered Lhasa and brought the Dalai Lama safely to India, and I have been fighting and killing Chinese and nothing else all this time. What for? Sometimes I despair, but what else is there for me to do? I cannot live in a refugee camp in India. I am too old to go abroad for studies. I can only fight for the freedom of my country, my religion, and for the return of the Dalai Lama.'

He smiled suddenly, shyly almost, as he turned to face me. 'That is why I am doing this for you. You are one of us, sent by God to help Tibet, and so I have agreed to take you on this mission, despite its dangers. In a few days

we may all be dead, but it will be in a good cause. I have given orders to the men that, whatever happens, you three must be safeguarded in a rearguard action after the attack. This film must be made, this book must be written, so that the world may know of our deep desire for peace and freedom to worship. Although it will be small, this will be the most important attack I have led since we brought the Dalai Lama out of Tibet, for so much depends on its success.'

'I thank God that I am here to share it with you,' I said to him simply, and let the conversation end. Enough had been said for now.

Shortly afterwards, Tendar called to the Khambas to stoke the fire in the tent, and the leaping flames lit up a scene of casual but efficient military preparation. Guns were disassembled, cleaned and oiled with yak butter. Bren-guns, machine-guns and rifles of different kinds gleamed dully in the firelight as they were turned over in obviously expert hands. Tendar was a different man from an hour before. The most expert of all, he had a word of advice to each of the others about correcting previous mistakes in sighting, gauging and trajectory. His own weapon was an American Springfield, and he held it like an extension of his arm as he demonstrated his points.

Saturday, 6 June 1964. It was 4.30 a.m. when we were awakened with the whispered information that our Khamba porters had arrived and were ready to move off. We ate our last 'good' meal for some time – hard Tibetan scones and cold boiled mutton – and by 5.30 we were on our way. The Tibetan porters who had carried our equipment from Kathmandu, and who were to wait in the valley for our return, watched with unsmiling faces as the line of armed Khambas took the extra loads on their shoulders. The villagers had come with gifts, and special prayers were murmured by them and the priests who formed a farewell group to see us depart.

The day before had been cloudy and cold, but dawn broke clear and it looked like being a beautiful day. The trail wound past huge boulders, with snow in the crevices, and there were ice-patches and icicles at the side of the brawling stream to our left, as we climbed upwards towards the rose-pink peak of the Khojang Pass towering above us.

The darkness of the valley gradually gave way to a quickly lightening grey, and we saw that we had been joined by armed scouts adding to our number. There was little talking among the men, breath being saved for the stiff climb rather than from caution, at this stage. We climbed out on to a flat tableland just under the sharp V of the Khojang Pass directly ahead, where the scouts informed us that there were Chinese guards at each side of the V, so we would have to cross over either in the darkness or in a snow blizzard, if we were to avoid being seen.

Mid-morning we stopped for a break and to eat, while discussing tactics with the newly arrived scouts. Everyone took part in the discussions

according to Kham custom, but when all had been said it was left to Tendar to draw all the suggestions together and outline a plan that was acceptable. The greatest problem was the one they had never experienced: how to get a film team close enough to film the action without getting them so close that they were in danger of being killed. A spot twenty yards away from the planned ambush was determined, and the Khambas looked at us with a new respect.

After the break, we climbed again and soon had reached the perpetual snowline at 17,000 feet. Breathing at that altitude, while carrying loads of upwards of fifty pounds, was becoming very difficult for Adrian, Chris and me, and every hundred yards we had to stop for a rest. But the chilling, relentlessly blowing wind from the pass soon had us on our feet again. Early in the afternoon we reached a saucer-shaped depression just below the top of the pass, and as we rested and looked back we could see a magnificent panorama of snow-peaked mountains falling away to the plains of India in the misted distance. Beside us the sun slanted and glinted through heavily moving, grey-and-white clouds pouring through gaps in the mountains like a huge waterfall.

I looked uneasily at those massive waves of cloud pouring over mountains and into valleys, and at the snow drifts ahead of us, reaching right to the top of the 20,000-foot Khojang Pass. I saw that Tendar was also looking at them thoughtfully, and he gave a sudden command to move on quickly, leading the way himself on to the virgin snow of the drifts.

He sank almost immediately to his thighs, but continued to plunge confidently forwards – or, rather, upwards, for the slope to the top of the pass now tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees or more. One by one we followed in his steps, each succeeding footprint making it easier for the one following behind in a kind of ice-stairway.

At almost 5 p.m., breathing painfully, we reached the top of the pass, just as thick clouds came billowing over. A howling gale was blowing in our faces, and I guessed that this was what Tendar had been estimating lower down. Despite the reported closeness of the Chinese troops on the other side of the pass, the Khambas cheerfully put up prayer-flags and stood openly beside them for Chris to film them.

Tendar had stepped aside to gaze at the long drop of unbroken snow falling away downwards into the thick grey curtain, starting only a few yards in front of him. There was no sign of a trail in that deadly white tablecloth forming a thin treacherous cover, hiding crevasses, gulleys, precipitous drops, into which a thousand men might disappear without trace. I comforted myself with the thought that he must have done this many times in the past.

He walked over the shoulder of the pass, swept clear at this point by the

sustained, howling wind, for about a hundred yards, gradually becoming less and less distinct until he disappeared from sight altogether. We plunged into deep snowdrifts after him – and I was back inside Tibet.

The drop down was even steeper than the climb up had been. No one could keep his balance, for we had to lie so far back on our heels to compensate for the steep angle that as soon as we lifted one leg we either fell forward or back. Visibility was reduced to five yards or so, and to lose sight of the man ahead might mean being lost for ever in the mountain and snow wastes.

Then to the howling of the blizzard was added a new sound – and I could not believe it! The shadowy shapes of the Khambas appeared at either side of Adrian, Chris and me, plunging past in long slides and yelling exuberantly at the top of their voices. We could only assume that the extroverted Khambas were convinced the Chinese might believe these were wind-sounds, or perhaps even spirits of the mountains! After an hour of this chaotic, sliding nightmare we emerged out of the clouds on to a trail of sorts – and there lay Tibet in front of us, for as far as the eye could see. It was a breathtaking sight; for hundreds of miles the green-clothed mountains fell away to distant barren and yellow slopes, softened now by the dying evening sun.

We plunged ever downwards into a long valley, and the Khambas moved ahead with their tireless stride eating up the miles. My legs were rubbery at first after that demanding climb and descent, but soon I, too, was settling into the steady swing I thought I had forgotten in jostling city streets. It was mind-taxing, dangerous, strength-sapping stuff, but it was also highly enjoyable.

Soon night fell, and still we kept up the steady pace. Almost thirty heavily armed men, and three foreigners, were now moving openly through territory occupied by thousands of Chinese troops, patrolling the mountains in sizeable groups. No torches were allowed, and we followed the barely discernible outline of the man or his rifle in front. The Khambas seemed to have cats' eyes and feet, and it was a strain trying not to stumble on the rough, unseen trail underfoot.

Bushes and winding path gave way to a steadily climbing, rock-strewn track, which in turn gave way to a heart-stopping, loose shale slope dropping straight down into an audible, but unseen, river far below. No word was spoken.

We walked on through the night, stopping only occasionally for short rests, without unloading, until after the sun was up. We were in a long valley, hidden by the rolling waves of gulleys, and Tendar suggested an hour or two of sleep while some kept watch. Then we went on again, with scouts pushing ahead in front of the main column.

We continued through another night, pausing now at every bird call, every suspicious sound, every blacker shadow ahead. Tendar was everywhere: ahead, behind, beside us on the trail. We tripped over stones, blundered into boulders, slipped into bushes where sharp thorns filled our hands even through our thick gloves, scrambled back on to narrow ledges after slipping over edges and being grabbed by hands from behind.

Tendar slid in beside me as I lay panting after one particularly rough stretch. 'We still have ten or twelve hours to go to the place of ambush,' he whispered, 'and about two hours to the top of the next pass at the head of this valley. Can you make it?'

I shook my head, as I looked at the equally distressed Adrian and Chris. 'No,' I said. 'Or, if we do make it to the place of ambush, there is no way we can make the return journey feeling like we do now.'

He was silent for a few minutes, then he whispered decisively, 'Then we must lie up for the night and tomorrow somewhere, then attack the next day.'

We did that, and the long rest and cat-nap sleeping helped us to a better frame of mind. We went through the night again as before, and once again Tendar came alongside me.

'Gay-bo says that there is a deserted monastery just ahead. If there are no Chinese billeted there we will make tea, sleep for three hours, then make for the place of ambush.'

We followed Tendar down a long slope, over a rubble-strewn courtyard, through a dark doorway, and Tendar took my hand to guide me into a room where a Khamba was moving around with a torch on. The building was an eerie sight in the torchlight. It had obviously been a fairly wealthy monastery, for it was solidly built and the wall murals showed signs of having been well-executed; but it had been viciously vandalized, gutted and burned and looted. The Khambas swore savagely and threatened vengeance the following day.

We slept a little and then got up during the night, so that we could move into the ambush position in darkness. Tendar appointed a Khamba, Tseten, to remain with us as our guard and we took up two positions: Chris and Adrian were at a point where the striking unit of Khambas were to stop the convoy and shoot the drivers; and I was with a second unit at the side to take still photographs of the Khambas who were with me, attacking the convoy from the side.

As the sun rose I could see that we were on a steep slope of the mountain, on a shale-and-dirt exposed ridge where the khaki gowns of the Khambas were almost invisible behind their stone ramparts. Below us the narrow valley was mostly filled by a large river, this side of which wound the main road built by the Chinese, passing some thirty yards away from

our ambush point. The slaty, grey-brown hillside, with its scattered, stratified and grotesquely shaped rocks, lent itself admirably to the camouflaged stone covers for our television cameras. When the sun came up to flood the valley with light we were ready for the attack.

In the first few hours I was tense with expectation and excitement; but gradually, as the sun rose and bathed us with its heat, I became less tense and even drowsy. The slope was so steep that I had to jam my feet against embedded stones to keep from sliding down to the valley in an avalanche of loose shale, and this did not lead to easy dozing.

I came awake suddenly, trying to sort out a new sound – a strange whine – from the constant moan of the wind. The Khambas sat up expectantly. Tseten looked over the top, nodded his head – and the first rifle shot rang out, followed by a fusillade of shots.

I looked at my watch and checked the time – 1.50 p.m. – then grabbed my cameras and scrambled to my filming position. Directly beneath and across from us four trucks of a Chinese convoy had stopped within a hundred yards of each other; three together, and one separated by a larger space. With no cover anywhere, the Chinese soldiers who were still alive had jumped down and were lying underneath trucks, firing at the Khambas hidden on the mountainside.

After an exchange of fire, two grenades thrown by the Khambas silenced the Chinese under the second and third trucks; but those underneath the fourth broke away and made towards us, firing as they ran. One of the Khambas broke from cover to cut them off, firing as he zigzagged at them. They all dropped, dead or wounded, except for one, who ran for the river behind him. The Khamba who had broken from cover stumbled and fell, and Tendar left cover to run and pick him up, signalling to our guard to go.

I looked at my watch again – 2.10 p.m. – twenty minutes of action. We threw cameras, films and discarded clothing into the backpacks, the three Tibetans with us swung them on to their shoulders, and we plunged suicidally down that vertical moving mountainside in a long, sliding, striding dash for the narrow valley below. Reaching the stream at the bottom, without pausing for breath, we strode at a fast pace up the trail we had come down so cautiously that morning. Tseten, the guard, left us to return down the valley and to help cover our retreat.

After about fifteen minutes we stopped for a drink of water from a stream. The porters, heads up, motioned us to keep still. Soon Tseten appeared at a quick trot, accompanied by the tall, gangling Gesang. When they reached us Gesang said, 'Gay-bo has been badly shot and requires medicines. Tendar, Assang and Tsambala are with him.'

We quickly dropped the packs and I got some medicines ready, not

knowing what to expect in the way of wounds, for Gay-bo had clearly been exposed to the Chinese fire when we ran out. But when Tendar, Assang and Tsambala arrived Tendar said starkly, 'He has gone. We could do nothing. He was shot in the heart, shot in the face, and he had lost a lot of blood.' They had not had time to bury him, but had covered his body with stones. There was no question of bringing his body with them.

There was a long silence among the men. He was the first loss, the longest-serving, the best rifle shot – and they had been told by the gods that this was an auspicious date. They were obviously shattered by the loss. Finally, Assang said, 'All right, we must go quickly, or the Chinese will find us all.' The man who ran to the river had been the only survivor, but he might have had a radio with him or in the truck, and he could call for reinforcements at any moment.

There were three difficult passes to be negotiated before we could consider ourselves safe. The first, just ahead of the monastery, lay at about 15,000 feet. Then there was a long dip down, and a sudden rise again to about 17,000 feet and the second saddle-like pass. This, too, involved dropping down for several hours, then it rose up to the terrifying climb to the Khojang Pass back into Nepal. Caution was ignored as the group took the most direct route, up and down steep short cuts, at a punishingly fast pace.

We topped the first pass by 3.30 p.m. and, except for the savagely steep climbs, I was moving easily and lightly on my feet and felt that I was good for several hours. Adrian and Chris felt the same, and we said little, saving our breath for the climb.

We crossed the second pass at 5 p.m., and dropped down at the same swift pace into the long valley leading upwards to the dreaded wall-face of the Khojang Pass. Tendar ordered a stop for a quick meal, as that would be the last chance to eat. Just as the valley was darkening we left, keyed up with excitement and tension.

By 8.15 p.m. we were picking our way among boulders beside a steeply dropping stream to avoid the long, zigzagging trail over the first shoulder. It was strenuous going, as we had to keep changing pace, jumping from rock to rock, climbing all the time without a break as darkness closed in. At one time we all stopped automatically as we heard behind us, faintly but distinctly, the sound of dogs barking. From the reaction of the Khambas they presumed it was the Chinese with dogs and not just some nomad mastiffs.

It galvanized them. They moved swiftly, struck off from the stream bed at a long angle straight up the mountain. Soon we were a staggering, stumbling line – silent, except for the sighing of great sobbing breaths. I could no longer lift my head to look at the immovable black outline against

the now shell-grey sky that was the top of the pass. I was vaguely conscious when the figures around me dropped to the ground; and I, too, dropped to the ground, flat on my face, immobile, even at times falling asleep despite the piercing cold, and only dimly conscious when Tendar called out, or pulled me to my feet, to stumble on. How he was able to keep moving at all times, sometimes behind, sometimes ahead, sometimes alongside, scouting and keeping the line moving safely, was beyond me.

We passed into the snows, and it was an added torture to our leaden limbs. The Khambas threw caution to the winds and flashed their torches indiscriminately, in order to find a way through the snowfields and ice-packs. We could no longer sit down, and dropped our weary legs from snowy step to snowy step of that ridged stairway going endlessly upward. We inched closer and closer to the limits of human endeavour as we struggled to make the summit.

Later, much later, I noticed numbly that it was lighter. Away to the north a mountain peak was rimmed with splintered light, spreading upwards and outwards, phasing into a glorious palette of colours as dawn touched Mount Everest to the south.

'We are almost there,' Tendar said encouragingly, and I turned to see some of our Khambas disappear over the hitherto unreachable rim of the pass. There was no sound other than the moan of the wind, so the Chinese frontier guards must be sleeping or had not yet been warned.

In time, too, I dragged myself up and stood swaying in a circle of indescribable splendour. To the north, south, east and west stretched range upon range of snow-capped mountain giants, their iridescent peaks with small tufts of clouds and deep purple blackness far below. The words of Wordsworth, in *The Excursion*, came to mind:

*What soul was his when from the naked top
Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
Rise up and bathe the world in light: He looked,
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay,
Beneath him: far and wide the clouds were touched
And in their silent faces could be read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle: sensation, soul and form
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live
And by them did he live, they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour*

*Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed, he preferred no request;
Rapt in still communion that transcends
The imperfect office of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him: it was blessedness and love.*

I stood with Tendar, our arms around each other's shoulders, with a sense of closeness rarely, if ever, experienced. We had shared danger and grief and vision; and there, at 20,000 feet on the roof of the world, we stood together with God and the breaking beauty of a new day. I felt immortal.

We moved away from the summit without talking, dropping down several thousand feet before Tendar called a halt. 'We are safe now,' he said, 'It would have been good if Gay-bo had only lived. We lost a good friend, and a good gun. He was a brave man and we shall miss him very much.' The others listened in silence, their thoughts far away.

In another few days, with others of the 5,000 Khambas scattered among these mountains, they would be taking part in similar actions along the 2,300-mile stretch of Nepal's frontier with Tibet against overwhelming Chinese forces occupying their country, and Gay-bo's fate waited for them somewhere in the snowy wastes of their lost land. It was a hopeless cause.

Yet, was it? Something lived in Tendar, in the Khambas, in me, in Adrian and Chris, which had grown a little more, had blazed a little brighter. The physical evidence of despair was overwhelming wherever we looked, yet our very existence in the midst of it, our presence there with the Khambas in their cause, despite all the odds, added up to something. Not something negligible, but something profound and far-reaching. There was no greed, or selfishness, or arrogance, or exploitation, or injustice, or hubris, here among them, but comradeship, love of country and each other and of religion, and a willingness to die for them. To the Khambas, commitment even to a hopeless cause was of greater value than the complacent hypocrisies of political expediency.

Forty-eight hours later, as we were sitting at ease in Dzum, a messenger rode madly into the village shouting that Gay-bo was on his way, and we should bring medicines immediately. Tendar and I grabbed our horses, with Adrian and Chris following with the cameras, and some miles up the trail we found Gay-bo stumbling blindly downwards, covered with dried blood from his wounds.

We took him into a nearby tent, and stripped off his clothes while he mumbled his fantastic story. He had become conscious to find he was

covered by a pile of stones. When he had freed himself and begun walking back up the trail after us he found that the Chinese soldiers were between him and us on the way to the pass. He took off at a tangent to cross over the Himalayas at another pass, and when he reached this he found the Chinese were there. He came down once more, then climbed up to an even more remote peak, and finally crossed over – higher than 20,000 feet – without the Chinese seeing him. He had a huge hole in his back where the bullet had gone through, and scraps of metal in the wound as I cleaned him. The bullet must have passed close to his heart, had certainly passed through his lungs, and he had walked and climbed over three 20,000-foot Himalayan passes. There was great jubilation in the village and Khamba camp, for this deliverance from death demonstrated to them once more that the gods had indeed looked after them as they had promised.

We got the films safely out of Kathmandu after a series of further adventures, in which I was detained by order of the Government, the King dismissed several of his leading ministers when he heard that we had a film about the guerrillas fighting on the borders, and all travel in the high Himalayas was forbidden for three years.

The film was awarded the *Prix Italia*, the highest award in television, as the best television documentary of the year, and was shown in over forty countries to millions of people. But when all the publicity had died away it did little or nothing to help the cause of Tibet.

I Return to Tibet

I was detained in Nepal by the authorities for some time after we got the films away safely, held under house arrest, while Adrian and Chris slipped away safely to Calcutta ahead of me. When it looked as if I might be delayed for some time, while the Nepalese authorities desperately tried to find and confiscate our film, Adrian and Chris went on to the Shan States of north-east Burma to film the Shan tribal revolt against the Burmese Government. We had decided not to proceed with the Naga film because, following Prime Minister Nehru's death, the Indian Government had decided to initiate peace talks with the Nagas, and we did not wish to prejudice them by encouraging Naga intransigence. While Adrian and Chris were in the Shan States I was to go on to Hong Kong and Taiwan to make arrangements for the later films.

Although I was subject to house detention in Nepal I was not restricted to the confines of the house, and I was able to continue meeting with Tibetans who had arrived from inside Tibet. They reported that the Chinese were still decimating the Tibetan population and replacing them in many places with Chinese 'colonizers'.

The region where the Khamba revolt had begun in the 1950s, the Golok tribal area, had been especially brutally treated by the Chinese in reprisal for their humiliation at Golok hands. It comprised six districts, and the estimated number of people there in the mid-1950s was in the region of 120,000. Between 1958 and 1962, 21,000 Tibetans had been massacred by the Chinese, another 20,000 executed in local prisons on trumped-up charges, and a further 20,000 died from imposed starvation policies. Only about 5,000 were left in 1963. Chinese civilians had been brought in in great numbers to replace the local Tibetans. This pattern was repeated in many other places in east Tibet. In Lhasa, it was claimed by the Tibetans, 87,000 people had been killed in the few years following the revolt.

When I arrived in Hong Kong, after being released by the Nepalese authorities without any charges being brought, as they found no proof, I became one of the many 'China-watchers' among the international media correspondents. I was fortunate that, in addition to the usual official sources of information about China, which we all had, I had introductions to two Chinese journalists and editors of Chinese newspapers and journals, Jack Chow and Timothy Yu. Jack Chow was a member of the Christian 'Little Flock' groups which had been so helpful to Geoff and me when we first arrived in China and Tibet; and Timothy Yu was also a publisher,

whose father I had known when I was living in central China. Through them I had immediate access to direct Chinese sources of information that were not available to other Western journalists.

It was with Jack Chow's help that I was able to meet the leaders of the Chinese Nationalist Government in Taiwan to discuss our proposed landing on the mainland with the Nationalist guerrilla troops for our next film. But I was not able to come to a satisfactory arrangement regarding this with the Taiwan authorities, and the project was dropped.

When Adrian and Chris arrived in Hong Kong they had been able not only to film the Shan revolt in Burma but also, secretly, to film the Shan and Chinese Nationalists' cultivation and distribution of opium in what was later to become known as the 'Golden Triangle'. Some 14,000 Shan National Army and former Chinese Nationalist soldiers were growing and moving about 700 tons of raw opium a year to support the local rebellion, as well as making private fortunes. This opium was processed into morphine bricks or heroin powder by Chinese chemists, and sold by Chinese secret society gangs in Hong Kong for a profit of about two billion US dollars a year. Adrian and Chris had filmed the 'opium trail' from the Shan States through Thailand to Bangkok, and we now filmed the second stage of the distribution process in Hong Kong, from where it was transhipped to the West by arrangement between the Chinese syndicates and the Mafia.

When the film was completed Adrian and Chris left Hong Kong, but I decided to stay on. I had been asked to write a book about the increasingly important Sino-Soviet dispute, and I also wanted to pursue my research into the significance of the mounting drug problem, especially into how such vast profits were laundered and how they influenced the politics of Asia.

But none of these other interests obscured for me the ongoing 'question of Tibet', if, for no other reason, than that the subject was constantly in the Chinese reports arriving in Hong Kong from the mainland of China. Also, it was brought home to me personally by a shattering episode in the complacent security of Hong Kong.

When it looked as if my writing commitments were going to keep me in Hong Kong for some time, I sent for my wife and children to join me. Shortly afterwards I received a letter from Yangpel Pandatshang asking me to arrange permission for him and his family to come and stay in Hong Kong. He had extensive business interests there, he said, and an apartment presently leased but which he could obtain quickly by pre-arrangement. I asked a lawyer friend, Brian Tisdall, to obtain the necessary permits for Yangpel and his wife, his young child and manservant, and to arrange the lease of his apartment.

Yangpel arrived as we were moving into a flat of our own and getting our own family settled, so I saw nothing of him for a few weeks. When I had some spare time I telephoned Brian Tisdall to obtain news of Yangpel's present whereabouts, and the lawyer said that he had disappeared – or, at least, Yangpel had been due to keep an appointment with him regarding his final arrangements, but he had not turned up and Brian had been unable to contact him since. He gave me the address of his offices, and his manager in Hong Kong, P. T. Lee, whom I had met while living in Kalimpong.

For several weeks I tried to find Yangpel, but no one, including his office staff, knew anything about him. P. T. Lee said he was worried because Yangpel had arranged to meet him in Macau, the adjacent Portuguese colony, but had never appeared.

I wrote to Rapga in India to ask if he had any news of Yangpel, and he wrote a worried letter in return saying that he was supposed to be with me in Hong Kong. He certainly was not in India. When Yangpel left India he had had to place a deposit with the Indian authorities of 100,000 rupees as surety against his return; this had not been collected, which Yangpel was certain to have done had he returned to the country.

To cut a long and involved story short, after being stalled and lied to by the Hong Kong police and Government officials, I eventually sought the help of some Chinese Nationalist contacts in Hong Kong. They found out through their intelligence sources that Yangpel and his family had been abducted by the Chinese Communists while he was *en route* to Macau, and had been taken across the border to Peking. This confirmed for me the extent of continuing Chinese interest in Tibet.

With the launch of the Cultural Revolution in China in November 1965 by Chairman Mao Tse-tung there were repercussions in Tibet as well as in Hong Kong. In August 1966 the fanatical Red Guards led campaigns against the 'four olds' (ideology, customs, culture and habits), to replace them with the 'four news' (the same four, but following Mao's 'revolutionary line'). Mao's portrait was put up everywhere, compulsory study groups were enforced, the respected Jokhang cathedral in Lhasa – Tibet's most sacred temple – was attacked and plundered. The Red Guards' declared purpose in Tibet, as in China, was: 'To rebel, to rebel, and to rebel through to the end in order to create a brightly red new world of this proletariat.' They commandeered all the media facilities, and by the end of 1969 they had extended their savagely repressive control over the whole of Tibet.

In his eleventh Anniversary Address of the Tibetan People's National Uprising on 10 March 1970, the Dalai Lama stated:

The Tibetan situation has been deteriorating, and conditions worsened with the advent of the so-called Cultural Revolution. Eleven years may

not seem long to those of us who have been able to escape into free countries, but to those of our countrymen who are still in Tibet it has been a period of unending terror and suffering. In 1969 alone, we learnt of ambushes and raids by Tibetans on Chinese military camps and ammunition dumps in the areas of Chamdo, Poh, Lhoka, Tolung, Nyema and Shang. There were also incidents when many Chinese officers were killed and many were held prisoner by the Tibetans during meetings organized by the Chinese. Above all, the Communist Chinese must have been shocked to find opposition from the young Tibetans, many of whom had been educated and indoctrinated by the Chinese themselves in Tibet as well as in China . . . Many of these Tibetans may be ideologically Communists, but they are definitely Nationalist Communists. To these Tibetans their nation comes first, ideology second . . .

Reports arrived in India and Hong Kong from a variety of sources of thousands of temples and shrines in Tibet being destroyed by the Red Guard vandals in their fanaticism. In Lhasa itself, in the four main monasteries of Sera, Ganden, Drepung and Jokhang, the golden idols, the jewelled statues, the priceless scrolls were either desecrated, destroyed or stolen. Many of these irreplaceable artefacts turned up in the antique shops of Hong Kong at fabulous prices. All appeals for moderation by Chinese leaders, such as Prime Minister Chou En-lai, were ignored. In the purges Yangpel Pandatshang was paraded through the streets of Lhasa, along with other Tibetan officials considered 'traitors', and murdered. Topgyay Pandatshang was exiled to Peking.

In 1970 the fighting in Tibet stopped. But, unfortunately, the quarrelling among the Tibetans in India increased. The open nepotism and corruption of the early years of exile had been modified to some extent because of the adverse publicity, and also by the direct involvement of the various international aid organizations in Tibetan communities in Mussoorie, Dharmasala and elsewhere in India. This foreign supervision of aid and administration increased the number of schools, handicraft units and clinics for the exiled Tibetan refugees. They also absorbed a considerable number of the more gifted young Tibetans who had been educated in good Indian schools or had had a Western education. But there were still widespread complaints regarding the slow pace of aid for the scattered communities of Tibetan refugees.

To make matters worse, in 1972 the Indian Government toughened its attitude against the Tibetan Government-in-exile, as it was known. The Indian Minister of External Affairs, Swaran Singh, declared categorically, 'The question of Tibet's "sovereignty" or "suzerainty" is for the Chinese to decide.' Also, in response to a 'request' from China, the Indian Govern-

ment agreed to stop referring to the Tibetans as 'refugees' – thereby effectively excluding them from all official United Nations aid. In 1973 the Dalai Lama was banned from making his Anniversary Speech commemorating the Tibetan revolt, and all Tibetan demonstrations in India were stopped.

In July 1972, in the face of mounting despair and frustration, more than 110 representatives from twenty-nine communities in India, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan attended a 'Tibetan Freedom Conference'. It was the culmination of a series of meetings begun in late December by Tibetan students of the 'Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies' at Sarnath. They had resolved 'to launch a mass movement to struggle for the restoration of Tibet's rightful independence'. To fund this mass movement it was agreed that every Tibetan would contribute one rupee a month, while Tibetan officials would give 2 per cent of their salaries each month. This, it was estimated, would bring in one million rupees a year. The leadership of the movement was to be in the hands of a sixteen-member 'Commission of the Tibetan People's Deputies', headquartered in Dharmsala in north India. Following the July meeting, a hard-hitting editorial was published in the *Tibetan Review* criticizing the lackadaisical attitudes of the past Tibetan leadership.

In Hong Kong, totally unexpectedly, I was drawn into direct participation in Tibet's affairs once more. One of my Indian journalist colleagues, B. W. Tiwari, of the *Indian Express*, whom I had known for a number of years in both London and Hong Kong, invited me to have lunch with him at the Foreign Correspondents Club. There was nothing unusual in this, it happened quite often, but his reason on this occasion was intriguing, to say the least.

He wanted to invite me to his flat for a meeting with one or two Chinese Communist journalists from the New China News Agency – at their suggestion! Tiwari knew the record of my relations with the Chinese authorities – they had named me on several occasions as a 'British imperialist agent' – and he was consumed with journalistic curiosity as to why they wanted me, at this time, to come to a meeting arranged by him. He was intelligent enough to realise that there might be some connection between the visit of his executive editor, Frank Moraes (whom I knew very well), to Peking at about that time and Frank's known interest in the Tibet and Sino-Indian border questions. Both Tiwari and I knew that the NCNA 'journalists' were also officials of the Chinese Communist Party and the recognized channel of contact between Hong Kong and Peking.

We all met for dinner at Tiwari's flat, and spent an innocuous time exchanging journalists' gossip. Just before we broke up one of the Chinese casually suggested to me that we should 'meet sometime', and I agreed. A

day or two later he called to invite me to a Chinese meal – ‘just ourselves’ – at a Chinese restaurant, and I accepted.

At this meal, after some verbal sparring, the subject of my interest in, and past reports on, Tibet was raised, and I was asked if I was still in touch with my Tibetan friends. When I said that I was, the conversation was guided towards the possibility of some *rapprochement* between China and Tibet and how I felt about the idea. I said I was for it, but that it would have to be agreed between both parties and have more advantages for Tibet than had been apparent so far. Eventually they came right out with their proposal: could I arrange a secret meeting in Hong Kong with influential Tibetans to discuss these possibilities? I said I could but try.

To say I was flabbergasted was a gross understatement. From full-blooded attacks in the media against Chinese activities in Tibet I was now being asked to be their representative in setting up meetings in Hong Kong to bring about a *rapprochement* between the two. After my initial incredulity, however, it began to make sense. The Chinese had no real official channels for establishing direct talks with important Tibetans. In Peking and New Delhi they either had only their own puppets, who were not believed, or mediating Indians, who were not trusted. They knew of my record, and they knew that if I carried the proposal to the Tibetan leaders it would be accepted as a genuine offer.

I persuaded Derek Davies, editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, for which I had written on occasions, to send me to India on behalf of the journal to do a story on Tibet. I needed a ‘cover’ to get through Indian officialdom’s suspicions, and I promised a story within the limits of my guarantee to both China and Tibet to keep the proposed meetings secret.

The Tibetans agreed to the Chinese proposal, and a series of meetings was held in Hong Kong in April 1973, led by a respected and trusted adviser to the Dalai Lama, Kundeling Kalon (who had earlier been named by the Chinese as a key figure in the Kham revolt). I drove the Tibetan representatives to the meetings, and then sat in a nearby restaurant drinking tea until it was time to take them back to their hotel. The substance of the talks was not divulged to me by either party, but I was able to gather that the Chinese wanted to discuss the possibilities of the Dalai Lama’s return to Tibet, and what pre-conditions would be required.

On 23 April 1973, I wrote my promised article for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* as a lead story, with a front-page photograph of the Dalai Lama, under the headline ‘The Long Journey Home?’:

The Dalai Lama still hopes he can return to Tibet from exile in India in time for the celebrations of his birthday on June 6. The journey home would depend on whether proposals thought up by some of his

followers prove acceptable to China. Peking would need to be driven by very special compulsions to accept them. Yet the men who have formulated them say they are not 'pipe-dreams', and they are hopeful that Peking will prove 'responsive' . . .

The proposals now being debated within the Government-in-exile for submission to Peking include resolutions that both sides should stop all 'arid' discussions of 'sovereignty', 'suzerainty', or 'autonomous' status of Tibet. They hope that within one year of the Dalai Lama's return there will be elections throughout Tibetan-speaking territories, supervised by a Chinese-Tibetan body, for positions at present held in Tibet by Chinese. They hope that this representative Government will be given responsibility for internal Tibetan affairs (including finance, education, and industry), while Peking would retain responsibility for foreign affairs and defence . . .

What I did not write about was my personal advice to the Dalai Lama and his officials during my visit that they needed to have some leverage to put pressure on China, in present or future negotiations, over Tibet. I suggested that one way to do this was for the Dalai Lama to make his long-promised visit to Mongolia, through Russia, as soon as possible. The Tibetans had been discouraged from considering this by the Indian Government, and I suggested to the Tibetans that this was because of their own high-profile relationship with Russia as a counter to the Chinese threat, and their determination to keep Tibet's affairs quiet. I pointed out that a visit to Mongolia via Russia at that time – even if the Dalai Lama only got off the plane for an overnight stop – would give Tibet some leverage, for neither India nor China would believe that he had not had some contact with the Russians.

Once again, however, the pusillanimous Tibetan officials, ever mindful of their own self-interest, recommended against going to Mongolia and Russia. Instead they persuaded the Dalai Lama to accept the Indian Government's counter-proposal of 'permitting' him an alternate visit to Western Europe – which until then the Indians had been actively discouraging. When the Dalai Lama went to Western Europe he and his entourage found that the Indian Government had sabotaged the visit by persuading the Governments in the countries visited to recognize his visit as 'personal only', and not 'official'. Later, when the Dalai Lama did visit Mongolia and Russia in 1979, nobody was bothered about it, because its significance had been lost.

Meanwhile, the Chinese had been welcomed into the United Nations Organization, and had had a highly publicized visit from the US President, Richard Nixon. They no longer needed the cooperation of the Dalai Lama

to mitigate possible adverse publicity in the UN and among Western nations, and they retreated from their previously expressed interest.

In 1976 Chairman Mao Tse-tung died, followed shortly afterwards by Chou En-lai, and he was succeeded by his wife and three colleagues, collectively dubbed the 'Gang of Four'. This, in turn, brought back to power in Peking the former influential Communist leader, Deng Xiaoping, whose policies towards Tibet had always been more moderate than Mao's. The Chinese authorities in Peking now declared that there had been 'errors' in previous policies regarding Tibet, such as:

- (i) the creation of a large number of unjust, false and erroneous cases;
- (ii) forced agricultural policies, unreasonably high targets of production, State purchases which led to the Tibetan people 'having difficulty in living';
- (iii) regional autonomy had been ignored and became 'a mere facility', and Tibetan culture and religious practices were forbidden ('most temples were destroyed');
- (iv) grossly incompetent capital investment in useless schemes had led to poor results and heavy losses.

Some Westerners from East European countries were now allowed to visit Tibet under the more relaxed policy; and the Eurasian writer, Dr Han Suyin, was allowed to travel and conduct interviews with prominent Chinese officials and accredited Tibetan puppets for material for her widely sold books and packed lectures in Western countries. She doubtless heard little about the true situation in Tibet from Tibetan sources, other than those produced by China, and concluded that the Tibetans had never had such a good life as they enjoyed under Chinese rule.

But Chinese opinion was altering. In late 1979 a senior vice-premier of China, Ye Chien-ying, declared at the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China that 'it is true the people's [i.e. Tibetans'] interests have sometimes been seriously harmed as a result of our mistakes . . .' Shortly after this new directions were issued on 'how to deal properly with minority peoples'. Several prominent Tibetan 'rebels' were released from imprisonment or banishment – Topgyay Pandatshang was one – and the Panchen Lama, who had been in disgrace because of his strongly condemnatory speeches against Chinese actions in Tibet, was reinstated to favour. Three groups of Tibetans – one of them including the Dalai Lama's two brothers, Thupten Norbu and Gyalu Thondup – visited China and Tibet for talks about their country.

In May 1980 a high-level Chinese delegation was sent to Tibet under the leadership of Hu Yao-bang, General Secretary of the Chinese Commu-

nist Party, and it included the famous Tibetan puppet official, Ngabu Ngawang Jigme. After the visit the group submitted a report in which all previous malpractices were admitted and denounced as the fault of 'the Gang of Four' and Mao Tse-tung, and a new set of policies was recommended: the creation of true regional autonomy, exemption from State purchases of grain, an increase in State subsidies, a renewed and developed Tibetan culture, education and science, and a commitment to make two-thirds of all the Communist cadres in Tibet ethnic Tibetans.

But even these theoretically radical measures were not sufficient to reverse the catastrophic destruction of the social and economic infrastructure of Tibet. At least 500,000 Tibetans were estimated to be living beneath minimum subsistence levels, and the new subsidies were inadequate to lift the remainder out of grinding poverty approaching famine. The replacement grain policy, which had proved so disastrous because the chief staple diet of the Tibetans was barley and not wheat, had brought the whole country to the edge of famine – which could only be avoided by sending in huge supplies from China.

In an article in a Shanghai journal, *World Economic Report*, in 1984, it was stated that 'Tibet's two million [*sic*] inhabitants are almost wholly supported by the State' – despite the claimed over £2 billion worth of subsidies. During the previous three decades, the article went on, while Tibet's agricultural and industrial output only went up fourfold, State subsidies had increased sixty-five times. The report concluded gloomily, 'Tibet does not seem to have an economic base.'

It was probably this record of total failure which caused the Chinese to rethink their policy on having the Dalai Lama return to Tibet. In 1982 the Dalai Lama had stated publicly that he might possibly return to Tibet in 1985. However, when yet another Tibetan delegation went to Tibet, it was mobbed by a huge welcoming crowd of Tibetans in Lhasa chanting their demand for the Dalai Lama's return, and as there were a number of foreign journalists there at the time watching and photographing the demonstrations, the Chinese authorities panicked and quickly removed the delegation back to China while playing down the significance of its visit.

The developing interest in the possible return to Tibet of the Dalai Lama was not shared by many of the exiled Tibetans. The *Tibetan Review* in New Delhi reported that 'the reaction of ordinary Tibetans to the trip continues to be undesirable on the whole'. The Dalai Lama himself admitted that there was considerable opposition both to his return and to his openness towards changes in Tibet involving acceptance of Marxism, when he said, 'There are already some Tibetans in exile who find it difficult to reconcile what they call my liberal ideas, my openness to Socialism, and the good points found in Marxist theories.'

In the summer of 1984 the Dalai Lama visited Britain to give a series of talks on Buddhism to packed audiences. Although his visit was primarily 'religious', he was asked in media interviews about reports of his possible return to Tibet. A leader article in *The Times* encouraged the proposal, stating:

... The Dalai Lama's government-in-exile in Dharamsala is an embarrassment to China, especially when – with an eye on Taiwan and another on Hong Kong – Mr Deng is stressing the need for national reconciliation. It is also an irritant in China's relations with India. In view of this the Dalai Lama would be well advised to provide further contacts between Dharamsala and Peking – and to encourage the idea that sooner rather than later he will make a trip home.

During his visit to London I received a telephone call from the Dalai Lama's representative for Europe and the UK, Puntshok Wangyel, whom I had known since his youth. He asked if I was free to come and see the Dalai Lama 'as an old friend'. I said I was delighted to do so. I had made no effort to see him on this occasion, as I had only just arrived from the United States, and I thought he was likely to be overwhelmed with requests for media interviews and spiritual audiences.

He greeted me with his usual smile and my Tibetan name, '*Khamba Gyau*. How are you?'

'I am well, thank you. *Ku-zu depo yin-be?* Is your honourable person at peace?' I answered him.

He gestured me to sit on the couch beside him and asked what I was doing now. I told him that for the past few years I had been helping my wife with her medical research into a new form of drug cure by electrical stimulation, and I gave him a copy of her recent book that I had helped her to write. He was interested and spent some time discussing the treatment, and my involvement.

I told him that my personal contribution was at the level of spiritual counselling for the particular problems of addictions of all kinds, and we discussed those.

'What are you doing about Tibet these days?' he asked. 'You have not been helping us as you did in the past.'

'No,' I replied slowly. I was not embarrassed, but I knew that what I had to say was sensitive. 'I became disillusioned about helping Tibet when the Tibetans themselves were too busy with their own affairs outside the country. What Tibet needed was strong political leadership, and a publicly declared strategy outlining their plans for return to Tibet; and no Tibetans were providing this for fear of offending India, China or the Western

nations. I went to Tibet because God sent me; I left Tibet when God took me away; and I am doing what God wants me to do now.'

'What is that?' he asked with interest, sitting forward.

I had a sudden feeling of *déjà vu*. I recalled vividly the night I stood on the bridge with Topgyay and he asked me to explain about 'God, the world, Tibet, you and me'. I had tried to make a simple statement about my response to God taking me from a local task of lay preaching in an obscure village in Scotland, through a China riven by civil war and opposing ideologies, to an exotic involvement with a revolutionary leader of fighting tribesmen who wanted me to represent their interests to the world. It had been difficult then because of my limited knowledge of Tibetan, among other reasons.

Now I had a better knowledge of Tibetan, and the Dalai Lama had an even better knowledge of English, but the scope and direction of my vision had enlarged and changed. The distance between the youth lying immobilized and apathetic on a bed in 1939 in Laurieston, and the person standing on the wooden bridge in Kham in 1949, was almost impossible to measure and describe when triangulated between God and Topgyay and me. How, in 1984, after all that had happened in between, could I now describe to the Dalai Lama that, in the divine perspective, Tibet was only as relevant as the bed of sickness had been, or the wooden bridge conversation? The bed, the bridge, my involvement in Tibet, the thrombophlebitis and earthquake experience in India, had all been God's means of leading me to a greater knowledge of Himself, a more intimate understanding of how He worked in individuals and circumstances. The Bible had been made to come alive: Abraham and Canaan, Joseph and Egypt, Moses and the Promised Land, David and Israel, Daniel and Babylon. I now knew how God worked in the twentieth-century world, and I had learned it in and through Tibet.

It all flashed through my mind in the few moments of silence. It would have to wait until another meeting, when we had more time. I knew he would be intensely interested, and by then I would have published books to let him read my theories.

'I am writing a series of books about how I see God working in the present world,' I told him, 'based on my experiences dealing with Tibet. Many years ago Topgyay Pandatshang told me that Tibetans said I was a reincarnation of a former Tibetan sent to help Tibet. I didn't believe that – I don't believe in reincarnation – but I did and do believe in a God who is personally interested in the details of the lives of individuals and nations. For a time I thought Tibet was central to that divine purpose for me, in a geographical sense. But later I came to realize that it was peripheral; that it was a kind of parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. What that

meaning is I am having to put into several books, which I hope to publish over the next few years.'

'I will be very interested to read them,' the Dalai Lama said sincerely.

We went on to discuss the reports of his return to Tibet, and I asked what lay behind his decision. He said that I would understand that what happened to him as 'Dalai Lama' was not important in Sino-Tibetan politics. The position was only a man-made institution, a few hundred years old; and he could very well be the last Dalai Lama, as the prophecies foretold. What was more important to him as spiritual leader was the continuity of Tibetan Buddhism and its culture. There was a difference between the essence of Buddhism and the cultural part of Tibetan Buddhism; in that the essential part was more or less the same everywhere, but the cultural part was distinctive.

Looking back over the years, he had no regrets that he had followed the path of non-violence. From the all-important point of view of Tibetan Buddhism it was the only possible policy; and he still believed that if his people had been able to follow it with him, then the condition of Tibet would be better than it was now. In spite of the horrific nature of the crimes committed by China against Tibet, he still had no hatred in his heart for the Chinese people. What the Chinese had demonstrated in Tibet was all that could be expected of a people without religious belief, and it was up to him to help them to rise towards Nirvana.

How could I, as a practising Christian, argue against such an attitude? I had known the conflict myself ever since I was brought into touch with the situation in Tibet. Jesus, too, had said that his kingdom was not of this world; that the principles of his kingdom were not lordship and domination, but love and peace and truth and righteousness and justice; that those who took up the sword would perish by the sword.

But the professional side of me told me that it was necessary for Tibet to use political destabilization and armed struggle in order to be heard and helped in a jaded and cynical world. Look at Afghanistan. Look at Northern Ireland. Look at Iran. Look at Nicaragua. But, also, look *closely* at them. What had been gained by the ordinary people, the poor, in any of these places? Peace? Love? Justice? On the other hand, they were still alive – and Tibet was dying of neglect.

So, the Dalai Lama continued, if he were to return to Tibet as part of a deal with the Chinese, he did not object to opting out of political leadership as a part-condition, as long as there was freedom to preach and practise the Buddha's teachings. The Chinese had already destroyed most of Tibet's monasteries, and had killed or imprisoned or dismissed most of Tibet's monks, but now had cause to regret this, were re-building some of the monasteries and allowing the recruitment of some monks. Therefore, if

there were any adjustments to be made to help further this process, he saw no serious obstacle to becoming like a Pope, or a Patriarch.

He had not set tough conditions for his return to Tibet: total freedom of speech and travel; a preliminary visit for him of a few months only, with a large entourage of media journalists to monitor the visit's effects on the Tibetan people; some means of establishing the wishes of all the Tibetan people, including those from Kham and Amdo.

We discussed the possibility of my returning with him to make a film, and he agreed that there should be no difficulty about that. But he went on to say that he was not optimistic about the possibility, that the Chinese would do everything in their power to limit the publicity demonstrating his popularity in Tibet and their own unpopularity.

However, the greatest obstacle to any agreement, in his opinion, was his insistence that *all* the Tibetan people – including the many millions in Kham and Amdo – would have to be consulted and agree to the terms of his return. The Chinese, if anything, were increasing their 'colonizing' of Tibet, especially in those areas, and seemed determined to absorb all of the territories and Tibetan tribal peoples there.

There was also the problem of China's tourist policy in Tibet, which was proving very popular and was highly successful in creating an international image of an open society with nothing to hide. But it was doing little to help the Tibetans living in Tibet. The average annual income of the rural and urban population of Tibet was only about £28 per person. It had been calculated by the Chinese themselves that even if Tibet's total financial revenue – amounting to a mere £4 million in 1983 – was used for relief purposes, it would still be £5 million short of what was necessary for minimal help. To help bridge the gap the Chinese were pursuing a crash programme of tourism, especially for rich Westerners, spending about £100 million on the necessary infrastructure of hotels (built by Chinese labour) and transport (with Chinese tourist guides and personnel). In 1983, 5,000 tourists willing to pay £75 a day visited Tibet, 50,000 were expected in 1985, and 100,000 soon afterwards. The main hotel in Lhasa, with 200 beds, was built by 800 imported Chinese workmen, and franchised by Holiday Inn of America. Exiled Tibetans were said to be welcome, but not many chose to return.

As I listened to the Dalai Lama give his quiet but intense description of how things were with Tibet, I had a growing conviction that our experiences were remarkably similar. Sitting in a foreign land (he was the guest of the Dean of Westminster), talking in a language that circumstances had forced him to learn, discussing national and international politics that he had had to acquire outside his spiritual vocation, his inner vision did not hold the political independence of Tibet in high priority.

The machinations of politicians – Tibetans, Chinese and others – seemed only of interest to him in the context of practising higher spiritual values rather than in pursuing political ends. It was more important to him that people change for the better than that the politics of Tibet or China or the world change. His vision was to change the world, not just act as spiritual ‘god-king’ of Tibet (an appellation I knew he disliked anyway). My vision also was not just to change Tibet but the world, too.

‘Are you saying that you can live in a politically Marxist Tibet, so long as both Tibetans and Chinese learn to love and forgive each other?’ I asked.

‘I can live with Marxism either inside or outside Tibet,’ he replied firmly, ‘and have said and written this on a number of occasions. What the Chinese have done in Tibet is fundamentally due to ignorance – ignorance of Tibetan history, culture and religion, and even an ignorance of some of Marxism’s own theories. Their being without religious belief means that it is my responsibility to help them rise towards Nirvana, rather than sink to lower levels of rebirth because of their present deplorable conduct. My faith is still in the ultimate triumph of truth, hope and justice. In the final analysis, the hope of all men is for peace of mind; and it is my task to help them towards this.’

‘You sound like a Christian preacher I know,’ I said laughingly. ‘When I try to argue this point of view not many – in Tibet and outside it – accept it. I think they like it, but they see it as an impossible goal, a hopeless ideal, spiritual foolishness.’

‘I know,’ the Dalai Lama agreed. ‘It is human experience to live in competitive hate rather than loving unity, yet the need for simply human-to-human relationship is becoming increasingly urgent, otherwise our very survival is threatened. Basically, universal responsibility is feeling other people’s suffering just as we feel our own. It is the realization that even our enemy is entirely motivated by the quest for happiness. So, in spite of the horrific nature of the crimes committed by China against Tibet I must still have no hatred in my heart for the Chinese people. The kind of love I advocate is the love you can have for someone who has done you harm.’

‘The Apostle Paul, a follower of Jesus, said almost the same thing about Jesus,’ I agreed. ‘He said: “When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”.’

‘There you are, then,’ the Dalai Lama smiled, ‘we are not so different, are we, in this at least. How do you see the future?’

‘Of Tibet, or of the world?’ I asked whimsically.

‘I would like to say “both”, but we would need more time to discuss the world. What about Tibet?’

‘I am not optimistic,’ I conceded. ‘Too much time, and too many opportunities, have been wasted. Tibetans have a higher mountain to climb, from further down a valley, than in 1959. From a political point of view, there are only two points of leverage left for Tibet: Hong Kong and Taiwan – and Hong Kong is almost settled. If somehow it could be shown that Tibet, with its six million inhabitants, is still not “settled” after thirty years of Chinese-controlled government, then the five million people of Hong Kong due to be “assimilated” in 1997 might still present China with a major headache sufficient to make concessions.’

We discussed this for a time, then said our goodbyes, promising to keep in closer touch.

In early 1987 I had a telephone call from a well-known film producer, Iain Smith. He wanted to discuss a possible film about Tibet, and he had been told by our mutual friend, Chris Menges – now an Oscar-winning cameraman – to talk to me about it. Iain had worked with Chris and David Puttnam on a series of world-famous films, such as *Chariots of Fire*, *The Mission* and *The Killing Fields*, and the next project was a film about Tibet.

When we met and discussed Tibet, Iain proposed that I join the film team as a consultant, and I agreed. We then left London for a month’s reconnoitring trip of Tibet and Ladakh at the end of May. On 1 June we crossed the border between Nepal and Tibet at the Kodari checkpoint on the Lhasa–Kathmandu highway, and I was back in the country again – legally! – forty years after I had first entered it on the eastern border.

We spent fifteen days in west and central Tibet – travelling, talking, filming, photographing, researching – and my eyes and ears confirmed what my mind had been concluding for several years: Tibet as a nation was doomed. Where, in the past – despite feudal exploitation – there had been colour and excitement and merriment and friendship, now under Chinese occupation there was dreary dullness, apathy, conformity and sadness, sullenness, fear and despair. It had something, but only a little, to do with the topography of west Tibet, with the vast, barren plateaux, the mind-numbing uniformity of the Chinese presence in buildings and garrisons, endless roads and truck convoys.

The configuration and type of country was completely different from the savage beauty of snow mountains, forested valleys, and grass-and-flowers plateaux of east Tibet, which I had known and loved. From Nepal to Lhasa there were mostly eye-achingly flat and barren, stony and sand-swept plateaux, occasionally riven by 18,000-foot passes. It had a solitary, majestic grandeur, but was totally bereft of colour and movement – and of people. The words ‘God-forsaken’ leapt to mind as the eye searched unavailingly for signs of long lines of jangling, colourful mules and yak

caravans; for swift-riding, swashbuckling, grinning horsemen; for smiling, coquettish, gaily dressed women in fields and streets. Where had all the Tibetan life gone?

The Chinese-chaperoned journey through the desolate landscape with our taciturn tour guide, who was either unwilling or unable to provide appropriate information about the country, only intensified the sense of desolation and isolation. The Chinese guides admitted that they were only in this land they hated because they were being paid double what they would have been paid in China.

The hotels and inns on the way to Lhasa were like the tour guides – all façade and no substance. In Zhangmu, Shigatse and Lhasa an elaborate hotel front, foyer and reception desk – all staffed by Chinese personnel – fraudulently hid the beds without clean sheets, the toilets which did not flush, the lack of cold or even running water, the poor food served tepid-cold, and the grudging disinclination to do anything about it. The attitude was supercilious and contemptuous: the tourists had already paid their money, Peking was far away, and the local Chinese tourist officials and staff had jobs for life and could not be sacked. They just shrugged their shoulders and walked away from complaints. Only the leading Lhasa Hotel – operated by a Swiss manager under American franchise – was exempt from such criticism.

From Zhangmu to Shekar, Sak-ya to Shigatse, to Lhasa, we drove, twisted, descended and climbed through empty wastes, ghost villages, sacked monasteries, depressed villages, barren fields; a land without hope, without life, whose only activity was the endless line of Chinese trucks moving to the borders. In Lhasa there was life of a sort, but not Tibetan. Long, straight, wide streets were filled with commercial trucks and military vehicles and bicycles, and lined with three-storey buildings and tenements of stupefying and drab uniformity. The only remaining Tibetan quarter was a ghetto around the famous Jokhang Cathedral. Here the narrow streets were lined by hundreds of small traders' stalls selling tawdry Tibetan trivia to eager tourists, with strolling Tibetans muttering the sacred prayer formula *Om Mani Padme Hum*, with devout pilgrims prostrating themselves lengthways and sideways in a fanatical religious commitment. Other Tibetans strolled around looking for a living, or a lost contact, chatting with acquaintances, exchanging news, and there was not a Chinese in sight.

I moved among them all, my Tibetan language coming back with every conversation, every heard comment, every passing quip, and we were surrounded by small groups of interested, excited Tibetans wherever we went. The swaggering Khambas, still gowned and colourful amid the surrounding mass of grey and blue pseudo-Chinese population, were delighted to hear me use their own dialect, and to give me news of people

and places where I had been and was known.

In the drastically denuded and depopulated monasteries the few remaining monks went about their restricted tasks with mechanical routine, showing more interest in collecting money from the tourists taking photographs than they did in their religious rituals. Jokhang, Sera and Drepung were all open to tourists, and looked unrealistically clean by former standards, but had mostly elderly monks and a very few acolytes in the empty-echoing rooms. Ganden monastery was a devastated ruin, its many buildings reduced to rubble by the savage Chinese bombing at the time of the revolt, and only a few buildings were being rebuilt for tourism purposes. The elderly monks and abbots drew me aside as we walked around their desolate buildings and asked in low voices for news of the Dalai Lama, for news of what was happening in the outside world to help Tibet, for news of the Dalai Lama's return, for some shred of hope.

I found myself unable to provide any – hope, that is. News I could give, but it held a pessimistic message. Even if the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet, for short or long visits, even if some form of *rapprochement* were agreed with an arrogant China, what hope was there that this devastated nation could ever rise from the grave dug by a ruthless China? Tibet, as I had known it, was dead. The Tibet being shown to tourists by a hypocritical China was but the wreath on the corpse.

For Tibet to recover some form of meaningful existence would require far more than the trifling *mea culpa* admitted by China in recent years. The disgrace and humiliation of what China had done to Tibet, and was continuing to do, involved so monumental a loss of face that no Chinese leader could admit to it and survive. Stalin and his purges in Russia faded into insignificance compared with what China had done in Tibet. Stalin had used a corrupt Marxist system to destroy sections of his enemies, rivals and unwilling subjects; China had set out deliberately to destroy a nation, its culture, history and people. All that remained in Tibet were Chinese roads, Chinese buildings, Chinese transport, Chinese dress, Chinese education, Chinese Government. Even in Chinese-encouraged tourism there was no attempt to recount anything of Tibet's heritage or to provide any Tibetan cultural performances. Where were the Tibetan dances, the Tibetan singers, the Tibetan horse races, the Tibetan picnics? There was not even a Tibetan restaurant in Lhasa; no Tibetan dishes on Lhasa menus.

The fourth member of our film team, together with Iain Smith and John Williams, the American producer, was David Henry Hwang, the scriptwriter, who was an American-Chinese. He had been born in the United States, spoke little or no Chinese, and as each desolate day unfolded he said sadly, 'This is a nation whose heart has been torn out.' As we left Lhasa for the return journey to Nepal, and then on to Dharamsala for

important meetings with the Dalai Lama and his Government officials, we were a very depressed group.

As our Land Rover drove on hour after hour at a steady eighty kilometres over the flat, barren plateaux, I gazed at the empty amphitheatre and recalled how in the past I had travelled, ridden, drunk, feasted, starved, frozen, plodded, galloped, laughed, argued, joked, debated, with all classes of Tibetans in all sizes of caravans. Now, we never passed one in fifteen days. The Tibet I had known had vanished, wilfully destroyed by a debauching, unscrupulous and insensitive China – which boasted its 5,000 years of culture. The tourists – ourselves included – were like the high-circling vultures on the rocks and trees, watching and waiting for the twitching body to die.

The Dalai Lama was in spiritual retreat when we arrived at Dharmasala, but, breaking with custom, he agreed to meet us to discuss the proposed film. The situation in Dharmasala was much as I had known it in the past. There were the romantics: those who imagined a return to Tibet in some unspecified way which would allow things to go on much as they had been before. There were the pragmatists: those who recalled the exciting times of the revolt, either from participation or hearsay, and who imagined obtaining arms from India or America, from Taiwan or Russia, and this time throwing the Chinese out of Tibet. There were the idealists: those who imagined some form of *rapprochement* with China, arranged either by their own Tibetan leaders or by helpful foreign sympathizers, which would transform them without trauma from comfortable exile to comfortable authority in Tibet.

There were a few realists: those who were unhappy with the status quo conditions of exile, but accepted its limitations to some extent; who had cultivated contacts inside Tibet and knew that the precarious conditions which existed there did not hold the revolutionary promise of the 1950s; who were in touch with the radical Tibetans who wanted action, and wanted it now. Two of the realists were the Director of Information, Sonam Topgyal, and the President of the Tibetan Youth Congress, Lhatsang Tsering.

Three incidents stood out from the discussions. The first happened during the meeting with the Director of Information. Iain Smith asked him, 'I'd be very interested in your reply to a sensitive question – and please don't answer it if it is too sensitive – but which country did the most to help Tibet?' Sonam Topgyal thought for a few moments, then answered quietly, 'It was not a country, it was Mr George Patterson', and he nodded to me. I was disconcerted, embarrassed, and very pleased, feeling a distinct sense of satisfaction.

The second occurred during our talks with the Dalai Lama. He covered

much of the same ground in replying to the questions of the film team as he had done with me in our meeting in London. But when we had finished and moved out into the garden for some photographs he said to David that he was glad that it was a Chinese – albeit an American-Chinese – who was the scriptwriter for a film on Tibet, as it symbolized the need for all those involved to work harmoniously together in finding a solution.

The third episode occurred during our meeting with Lhatsang Tsering. He was impressive, articulate and passionate. He told us of several, if not many, young Tibetans who were no longer prepared to accept the anodyne decisions of their so-called leaders. The previous year they had been prepared to have a fast unto death to publicize Tibet's cause, which had been called off only at the last minute by direct personal pleas to desist from the Dalai Lama, and assurances that 'something will be done'.

Nothing substantive had been done so far, he said, and they were determined that they would go ahead, with or without the Dalai Lama's approval. They respected the Dalai Lama, but they had no confidence in some of the officials who advised him.

But what fuelled Lhatsang Tsering's own passionate commitment was the conviction that Tibet had one last chance, and it had to be taken within the next two to five years. Reports coming to him from Tibet indicated that the Chinese were working on a massive colonization programme which would effectively swamp the Tibetan population. According to Lhatsang Tsering, there were already 6 million Chinese soldiers and civilians in Tibet – that is, Amdo and Kham as well as the central province of U-Tsang – and it was expected that 20 million Chinese would be introduced within the next five years. There would then be no more 'question of Tibet'. What China had begun with 'cartographic aggression' – deliberately including large parts of east Tibet in their own territories on their maps – they were now concluding with 'ethnographic aggression' by deliberately imposing Chinese inhabitants on Tibetan territories. In five years' time it would be too late to do anything for Tibet. In his opinion something had to be done to save Tibet within the next two years. He was therefore thrilled to hear that our film was due to come out in that time. If Tibetans could develop an activist programme to take advantage of international publicity then perhaps their country would have one last chance.

And so the tragedy of Tibet moves towards its final *dénouement*: the people who could save the nation by armed struggle or political destabilization are led by a man of spiritual integrity who cannot approve their actions – like the High Priest Caiaphas of Israel, faced by a similar choice 2,000 years earlier, and concluding: 'It is expedient that one man die for the people.' The Chinese equivalent to the Roman crucifixion was metaphorical: personal and permanent exile for the Dalai Lama, and the death of

Tibet by means of a ruthless and totalitarian regime.

The final fate of Tibet hangs in the balance of choice between those who favour political pragmatism and those who favour spiritual values. The experience of history, if it is to be taken as a guide, is that Tibet is condemned to certain death.

Unless, of course, there is that last-minute miracle.

Epilogue

I never did have that rendezvous with God in Tibet that I set out to keep in my youth – at least, not in the sense of the single, cataclysmic, revelatory encounter that I had expected. Many times I had been brought up against circumstances and phenomena that had stopped me in my tracks, or brought me to my knees, literally and metaphorically; but these were ‘normal’, in that they were ‘in-character’ responses to unique situations that could have happened to me anywhere.

The revelation of the divine significance of my involvement with Tibet came to me in a land and place and circumstances far removed from Tibet; in hedonistic Marin County, in Northern California, famous for its mixed nude hot-tub bathing, its ‘pheasant-feather’ pleasure stimuli, its self-indulgent permissive sex, and its spoiled rich.

I had gone there with my wife in connection with the technical development of her medical device for the cure of drug addiction, and I had been crippled by a suddenly trapped pinched nerve between the calcified sixth and seventh cervical vertebrae, which totally incapacitated me. The medical prognosis was that I could have a surgical operation, with a 50 per cent chance of success; or no operation and little hope of recovery.

I was immobilized on a downstairs couch for several weeks, unable to do anything because I had only one position I could hold without experiencing blinding pain – a position which allowed me to see television, but not to read. I learned about American football and baseball for the first time, but for most of the time I just lay and thought over the eventful past and the bleak future.

About three months after the onset of the condition we received a letter from an American poet friend, Luci Shaw, in which she enclosed her latest, still unpublished poem. It read:

*Perform impossibilities
or perish. Thrust out now
the unseasonal ripe figs
among your leaves. Expect
the mountain to be moved.
Hate parents, friends and all
materiality. Love every enemy.
Forgive more times than seventy-
seven. Camel-like, squeeze by*

*into the kingdom through
the needle's eye. All fear quell.
Hack off your hand, or else,
unbloodied, go to hell.*

*Thus the divine unreason.
Despairing now, you cry
with earthly logic – How?
and I, your God, reply:
Leap from your weedy shallows.
Dive into the moving water.
Eyeless, learn to see
truly. Find in my folly your
true sanity. Then, Spirit-driven,
run on my narrow way, sure
as a child. Probe, hold
my unhealed hand, and
bloody, enter heaven.*

I reached for the nail-bloodied hand of my Lord, and walked into the future. A combination of faith, prayer and my wife's medical stimulator treatment for pain got me back on to my feet and back to a 'normal' life again. But before this took place, as I still lay immobile, there unrolled before me the path that I was to take, and the explanation of the path I had taken until then.

All that I had learned since that first divine call to Tibet was how God worked in humankind and the circumstances of the twentieth century. He had guided me to an understanding of my times, and to a new understanding of former times in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

In learning how Satan operated in the tantric demonism of Tibet, where the country was controlled in the interests 'of the gods, by the gods, for the gods', I had been shown by God how His purpose in the world was to be accomplished by a country and people controlled in the interests 'of God, by God, for God' – Israel. Not London or Washington or Moscow, not Peking or New Delhi, but Israel was God's geographical centre; Israel was His 'chosen people', their land 'the Promised Land', their destiny the 'enlightenment of all nations'. But Israel, like the tantric-dominated Tibetans, had been corrupted by the demonic powers of Satan ('Abraham is not your father; you are of your father, the devil,' Jesus had told them, and been crucified for it), had been scattered across the world as their God had said, and although some had returned to Israel, claiming it was the land promised to them by God, it was in unbelief, in a secular Government

without God, in outright rejection of the spiritual principles laid down by God, as could be seen almost every day in the media.

King David of Israel, in 1,000 BC, had shown Israel how to be a nation-state ideally governed of God, by God, for God, and the people had rebelled and lost their destiny ('You shall be perfect as I am perfect . . . you shall be holy as I am holy . . . and an enlightenment to all nations,' said Jehovah, their God) and their nationhood in a scattered diaspora.

Then John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and Paul of Tarsus, in the first century AD, had tried to turn Israel back to its destiny as 'a nation of priests' for God in the world – and all had been put to death by the unwilling professional religionists and uncaring cynical pagans.

Only in the tenth century BC under David, and in the first century AD through Jesus and Paul, had the divinely revealed spiritual kingdom of God existed in its purest form. From the founding of the Christian Church in the first century, through its decline from the second century to the Reformation of the debased ecclesiastical Catholic Church of the sixteenth century, to the sterile multiplicity of the Denominational Churchoids of the twentieth century, the original exciting vision of God had been corrupted.

Every so often individuals or groups would emerge who called Israel, and the new Israel, the Christian Church, back to its glorious vision and destiny. But nothing of great significance in revolutionary social or political terms – such as David's Judaism in the tenth century BC, or Jesus' and Paul's Christianity in the first century AD – had occurred during the twentieth century.

The vision had been passed to me. I had been uniquely equipped by God to speak for Him in a relevant way in the twentieth century. No – both my wife and I had been uniquely equipped to do this. She had developed a revolutionary new medical cure for chemical addiction – what the World Health Organization had described as 'the world's worst social evil'. Addiction of all kinds afflicted all nations, and we had been given the medical and spiritual cure – which the psychiatrists had signally failed to find and had even perpetuated and worsened with their inadequate theories and addictive drug prescribing.

As I lay with these thoughts crowding through my mind, God unfolded to me what we had to do to meet the challenge facing us. While my wife researched, developed and refined her device, so that it could be made easily usable by every nation, my task was to prepare the books that would be a necessary adjunct to our responsibilities. A rough calculation suggested that it would take about ten books to cover all the aspects of our work for God.

Seven years and some 2 million words later I had completed the first

draft of all the books. Six of them related to my wife's drug addiction work: first, the medical/scientific description of her NeuroElectric Therapy, *Hooked? NET: The New Approach to Drug Cure*; second, *The Power Factor*, how spiritual power works in the rehabilitation of those afflicted with addiction, as well as in all other individuals and circumstances; third, *The Paradise Factor*, how to address the problem of ecstasy experienced by addicts of all kinds; fourth, *The Prayer Factor*, how to pray for overcoming power, as taught by Jesus; fifth, *The Fear Factor*, how fear of God acts as a gateway to knowing and understanding His person and actions; and, sixth, a 'ghosted' autobiography of my wife, *Doctor Meg*. So much for the social/spiritual aspects.

The political/spiritual contribution of God at work in the twentieth century through my experiences was contained in two books: this one, *Requiem for Tibet*; and *The China Paradox: Christ Versus Marx* – the godly versus the ungodly in a modern society – together with a film, television or cinema, based on those experiences.

Next comes my major journalist/spiritual *magnum opus*, describing how, as I see it, God worked in the world in revealing His purpose, historically across the millennia, to the nations through selected individuals in Israel – a sort of *Journalist's Bible*. The first book, *Angel of God*, demonstrates how David established Israel as a theocratic nation-state; the second, *The Impossible God of Israel*, is an account of Israel's unique historical and covenantal relationship with God as His 'chosen people' to 'enlighten the world', and of how they failed in this destiny; the third, *God's Last Messiah*, gives a journalistic report of Jesus in the politics of his time as he sought to bring Israel back to its true destiny; in the fourth, *God's Twelfth Apostle, I*, as a modern journalist, describe the Christian Church, a spiritual body, in a totalitarian, pagan and antagonistic world; in the fifth, *John, God and the End of the World*, I present the rewards and punishments of the End Times, as if the Apostle John were explaining the meaning of his own visions; finally, with the sixth book, *Job's God*, I explore Job's personal view of the mystery of suffering in the world. These six books contain the revelation of the purpose of God from the beginning until the end of the world, through selected individuals chosen to speak for Him.

If I have got God's purpose for me right, then all these books and a film should be my divinely destined contribution to changing the world to a form more closely resembling His desire in the final years of this century. These Biblical servants of God had all changed their world for the better in their times, through what they knew and what they taught of God: why should not I do likewise?

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