

Parshotam Mehra

# From Conflict to Conciliation Tibetan Polity Revisited

A Brief Historical Conspectus  
of the Dalai Lama-Panchen Lama Standoff,  
ca. 1904–1989



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The signet shows a demon's noose.

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**For**  
**Professor Ernst Steinkellner**  
**Distinguished Academic**  
**Generous Friend**



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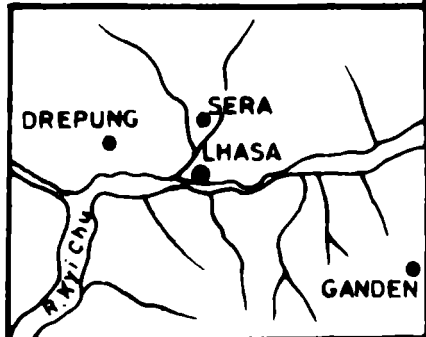
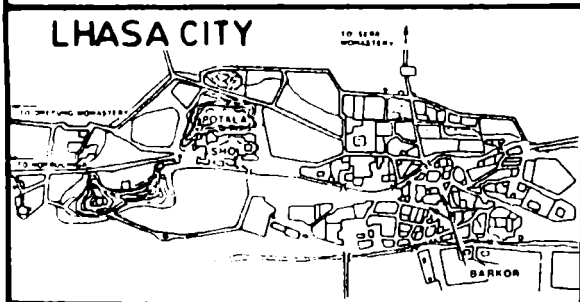
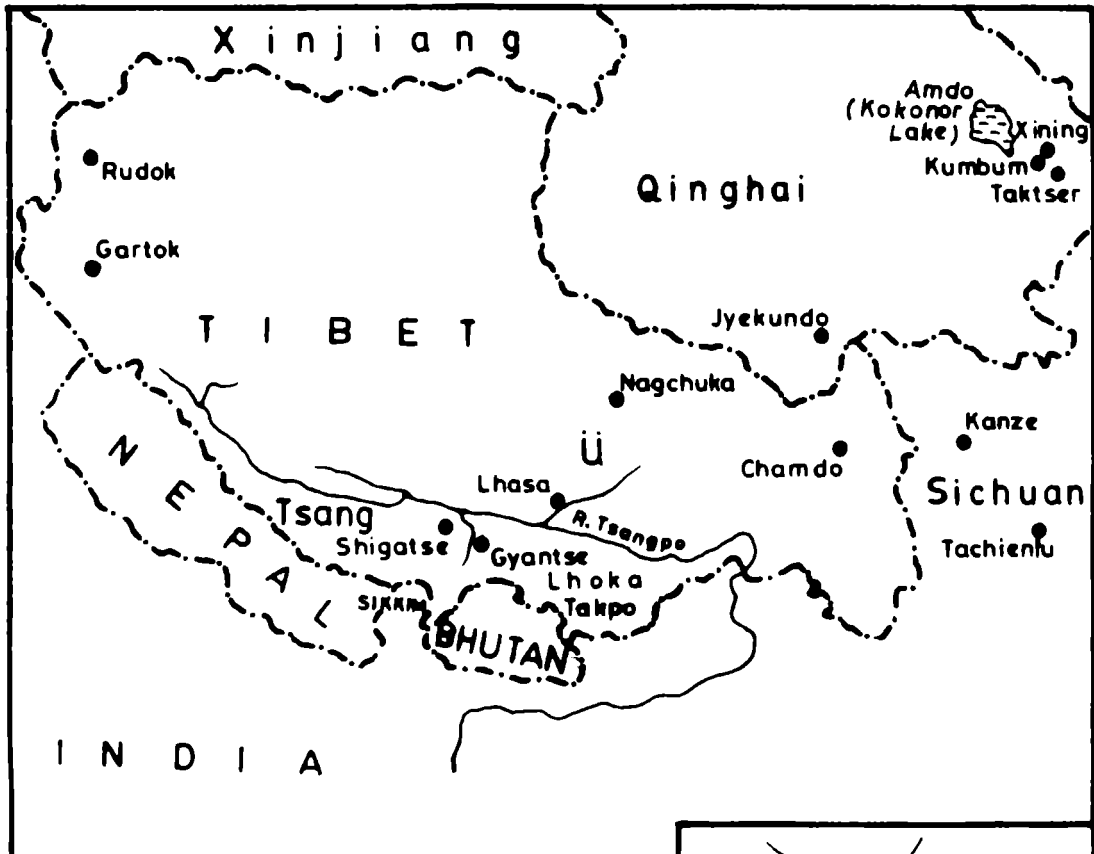
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## **Abbreviations**

FO	Foreign Office
HMG	His (Her) Majesty's Government
HMSO	His (Her) Majesty's Stationery Office
IMMR	Indian Mission (Lhasa) Monthly Report
IOR	India Office Records
P&EF	Political & External Files
PRO	Public Record Office



## Preface & Acknowledgements

Over the many years since starting to update my earlier monograph- *Tibetan Polity, 1904-37*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1976- I have incurred no end of debts. A number of friends helped and encouraged me in this venture. While naming names would be invidious, a few do stand out. The foremost, my old colleagues, Dawa Norbu and Pema Yeshe, the latter heading the Library for Tibetan Works and Archives at Dharamsala. Here is perhaps the best collection, outside of Tibet, of books and research material appertaining to the modern- and not only modern- history of the land of the lama. The Public Record Office and the India Office Library (now the British Library) in London were of no small help in tracking archival sources. So was the National Archives in New Delhi.

Discussions with friends and a broad exposure in terms of some recent seminar papers on inter-related themes helped clarify my ideas and were no mean help. A few spring readily to mind. The one at Hyderabad in 1987 sponsored by the prestigious Institute of Asian Studies, with a broad discussion on Tibet's place in Sino-Indian relations: "The Elusive Triangle: Tibet in India-China Relations, A Brief Conspectus."<sup>1</sup> Another outside Delhi (1999) under the rubric, "Tibetan Autonomy and Self-government: myth or reality?"<sup>2</sup> The most recent was the one at St Andrews (31 August- 5 September 2001), "From Conflict to Conciliation: Tibetan Polity Re-visited"<sup>3</sup>, where the assemblage of international scholarship on the broadest range of Tibetan history was truly formidable. An earlier paper prepared for an international conference at Shanghai (1993)<sup>4</sup> and a talk on the boundary dispute with China (1996)<sup>5</sup> made for useful inputs.

As if to test the waters, I availed of a most gracious invitation by the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Vienna to deliver a series of talks (May 2002) based on the themes spelt out in the text. While Professor Ernst Steinkellner who heads the Institut für Kultur- und geistesgeschichte Asiens of the Academy at the university was a stimulating interlocutor, the talks provided a most rewarding experience in terms of interaction with a galaxy of distinguished scholars and researchers. A visit to St Petersburg (June 2002) at the invitation of the Institute for the History of Science and Technology and a Russian friend, the distinguished historian, Alexandre Andreyev, proved to be an equally fruitful encounter.

What a pleasure to acknowledge my deep debt of gratitude to Professors Warren W Smith and Dawa Norbu who were good enough to scrutinize the Typescript in its final stages and made some useful suggestions.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Elusive Triangle: Tibet in India-China Relations. A brief conspectus". *China Report*, 26:2 (1990), pp. 145-56.

<sup>2</sup> "Response and Comments" (on Dawa Norbu's "Tibetan Views of Tibetan Autonomy") in *Tibetan Autonomy & Self Government: Myth or Reality?*, Tibetan Parliamentary & Policy Research Centre (New Delhi), 2000, pp. 267-78.

<sup>3</sup> "From Conflict to Conciliation: Tibetan Polity Re-visited", paper presented at the *Conference on Tibetan History*, St Andrews, 31 August- 5 September 2001.

<sup>4</sup> "China and South Asia: Some Reflections on the Past and the Future". *China Report*, 30:3 (1994), pp. 295-307.

<sup>5</sup> "The Sino-Indian Boundary Dispute: An update", *Indian Press on India-Tibet-China Relations*, TPPRC, 1997, pp. 78-104.

A word on the structure of the updated 'Polity'. To start with, the earlier 'Foreword' running into a bare couple of paragraphs has been replaced by a much larger piece, which seeks to offer a sum-up of all that the study is about. And is designed principally to give the uninitiated reader a broad sweep of what Tibetan polity meant in the past hundred odd years. The introduction too has been considerably expanded both to offer a bird's eye view of Tibet's geography as well as a brief outline of its relations with its two principal neighbours, to the south and the east. An attempt has also been made to take note of and plough in some recent research as well as fresh insights into the time span of the earlier narrative, a little over three decades intervening between Younghusband's expedition to Lhasa and the death of the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama in exile. In the event, the original text of the rest of the "Polity", now spanning Parts I-III, has been left well nigh undisturbed. The earlier Epilogue has been replaced by a fresh one and relates largely to the discovery (1995) of two rival reincarnations, by Dharamsala and Beijing respectively, of the late Panchen Lama. A much larger 'bibliographic note' has taken the place of the old 'bibliography.'

A new addition that may prove useful is the appendices. These are, for most part, exchanges- not always direct- between the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama spanning the decade 1923-32. The first is a set of instructions which the Abbot of Tashilhunpo left for his followers on the eve of his flight in December 1923; the last, the Dalai Lama's letter to his estranged colleague in October 1932. The text of the May 1951 Agreement between Beijing and the "Local Government" of Tibet should help to put the post-1937 decades into sharper focus. The Dalai Lama's letters to the Chinese commander in Lhasa, in March 1959, provide a useful backdrop to the tumultuous days to which the Tibetan ruler and his seat of authority were witness. While the Panchen Lama's views on reincarnations should help in viewing the epilogue in its proper perspective.

The principal themes in a little over the half-century that elapses between the deaths of the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen and his luckless successor, the tenth Abbot of Tashilhunpo (1937-89), have been divided into five broad sections/ parts, each sub-divided into chapters. These comprehend the discovery, and installation, of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and his near contemporary, the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama. The one that follows narrates the story of the Chinese "liberation" of Tibet and the May 1951 Agreement between its "Local Government" and their new masters in Beijing.

Parts six and seven relate largely to the crowded eight years, 1951-59, literally jam-packed with events. They mark the advent of the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army into Lhasa (October 1951) and the flight of the Dalai Lama (March 1959) in the wake of the rebellion in the Tibetan capital. It is for most part a tale of growing Chinese pressures to pull the Lamas apart (1952-8) and in the process build up the Panchen Lama while cutting the Dalai Lama, and his "Local Government", to size. There are also the small beginnings (1958-9) of the Lamas' inching closer towards each other. The penultimate section takes note of the mounting ground swell of resentment against Chinese rule culminating in the March (1959) Rebellion and the Dalai Lama's last-ditch efforts to salvage what he could of his precious inheritance. Literally, the wreck that still remained.

The finale is the tale of the Dalai Lama's flight from Lhasa and an increasingly explosive if impossible situation. And of the Panchen's rise- and fall. The latter's partial rehabilitation by Beijing just prior to and in the aftermath of his sudden death (January 1989) served only to heighten the tragedy of his life. And underscore the not unpleasant truth that now virtual exiles from their land and its people, the Lamas' earlier differences

had largely melted away. For towards the end of the Panchen's days they had, in fact, drawn closer to each other.

A number of friends have helped in making this work possible. On the book front Professor A R Sethi and his colleagues at the Panjab University Library were untiring in their efforts to meet my not always reasonable demands. So also the Director, Dr O P Kejariwal and the staff of the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library at Teenmurti House. A pleasant discovery was DELNET whose chief Sangeeta Kaul proved singularly resourceful in tracking books and journals not easily accessible especially to a non-Delhi user.

On the more mundane level Sunil and Pankhaj and their colleagues helped to convert my rough drafts into a well-turned TS. And gave shape and form to formatting the end-product. Jagan Nath Dhiman prepared the sketch map with his usual skill and competence.

It is pleasant to record my sincere thanks to the British Library in London for the illustrations that appear from their archival records. So also the Tibetan Information Network for permission to reproduce a few pages of the text from *A Poisoned Arrow*. The Foreign Languages Press in Beijing, publishers of *Concerning the Question of Tibet*, have raised no objection to reproducing facsimiles of the three letters which the Dalai Lama wrote to the Chinese general in Lhasa in March 1959.

Barring the more familiar Chiang Kai-shek, an effort has been made to put all Chinese names into Pin-yin. Understandably though, the nomenclature in official documents has not been tampered with.

A most pleasant task remains, to record my deep appreciation of the role of Otto Harrassowitz, the publishers of this volume. Mr Michael Langfeld and his colleagues in Wiesbaden have both been helpful and understanding in sorting out the myriad problems that go with book production. And it was a stroke of singular good luck that the publishers of *Tibetan Polity 1904-37* were readily forthcoming in undertaking to bring out its sequel.

As always, my wife's support has been strong and solid and not only in providing a happy home but also giving steady encouragement when most needed.

Last though by no means the least, it is no small a pleasure to dedicate this volume to Professor Ernst Steinkellner. His scholarship calls for no comment but his warmth and hospitality do. Above all, he and his colleagues provided a forum for the talks that eventually took shape and form in this thin volume.





## Foreword

An earlier monograph had sought to broadly map out the principal contours of the relationship between the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and his near contemporary, the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama. Both, sadly, unreconciled to the very end of their days. For by the time the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama breathed his last in December 1937 or, as the Tibetans would have it, retired to the Heavenly Fields, the issues that divided them had remained unresolved. The two representatives the absentee Panchen Lama had designated, on the Dalai Lama's initiative, to negotiate on his behalf did indeed arrive in Lhasa in June 1933 and engaged in long confabulations with the Tsongdu but the talks had led nowhere in particular. For even though the Dalai Lama himself is said to have been keen on a settlement, the failure of the mission was rightly or wrongly laid at the door of two of his closest advisors, Kunkel La (Dechen Chodren) and Lungshar (Dorje Tsegial). It may bear mention in this context that in Tibetan tradition, the Dalai Lama or the Panchen Lama for that matter, are blameless; the real guilt for harbouring any unpleasant thoughts or committing evil deeds is not theirs. And must, by definition, be visited on the heads of their advisors.

The four years that were to elapse before the death of the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama in December 1937 were witness to any number of attempts by the authorities in Lhasa, the Lama himself and, not unoften, by the Guomindang regime in Nanjing to bring the Panchen back. Nor was Whitehall entirely unconcerned. As a matter of fact, it made no end of effort both by pressurising the government of the Regent into accepting the Panchen Lama's reasonable demands and at the same time persuading the latter to be more realistic about the ground situation and climb down a notch or two from his near-precarious perch. And opt for a compromise of sorts. Both Williamson who died in Lhasa itself in November 1934 while helping to knock a settlement into shape and later Gould- and his successor Richardson- were deeply involved in bringing the two sides closer.

Try as they might, two stumbling blocks however seemed insurmountable. One, the Panchen Lama's stubborn insistence that he would return only with an armed escort of 300-500 well-acquainted soldiers. Nor was the Nanjing regime any the less keen that the Lama may not go unescorted.

Even as the Panchen Lama and his political supporters, the Guomindang regime in Nanjing, appeared to have set their heart on an armed escort, for the authorities in Lhasa it was the one demand they were not prepared to concede. Nor was their reasoning far to seek. Having had an earlier brush with Zhao Erfeng's levies which had poured into Lhasa in the wake of the return of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama from his first exile, in December 1909, they were now doubly circumspect. For however innocuous it may appear to be on the surface, the armed escort's presence in Tibet would be enough to subvert the authority of the government. And thereby endanger Tibet's independence.

Sadly for Lhasa, the post-December 1933 scenario did not inspire much confidence. As was not unusual, the pro-monk faction in the Tsongdu, even though it may not have been pronouncedly pro-Chinese, was prepared for all sorts of compromises. One, that from Nagchuka the Panchen Lama with his escort proceed direct to Shigatse, thereby bypassing Lhasa. Another, that the escort should beat a retreat as soon as it could- may be within six months of its arrival. It was also suggested that a third party (read Great Britain) guarantee the return of the escort, preferably by way of India, and by sea.

As in Lhasa, so also in New Delhi- and Whitehall- there were sharp differences of opinion. Broadly, the hawks suggested that Britain mediate in the dispute between the Lamas and guarantee a settlement; the doves, that while it may help bring the two sides closer, the Raj should refrain from playing an active role. And the parleys resume only when the Panchen Lama returned home, to Tashilhunpo. Once in Tibet, it was argued, the Panchen Lama would be amenable to reason, the outright Chinese support that made his stance rigid and intractable, having been removed. In other words, a mutually satisfactory solution may be easier to work out once the extraneous Chinese factor did not weigh in the balance.

All through the four years that separated the deaths of the two Lamas, the Chinese position seemed to be unambiguously clear. They did their best to exploit to its maximum advantage the gulf that separated the Panchen Lama from the post-Dalai Lama regime in Lhasa. For his part, the Panchen made no bones about the fact that the Nanjing government was keen that he take the escort. Nor for that matter was the Nationalist regime any the less insistent, if also enthusiastic. It had over the years wooed the Lama right and left- with generous, sizeable subsidies for himself and his large retinue. More, it had conferred on him high-sounding titles and, to underline his importance, given him a personal escort. Nor was the Lama found wanting in paying back for all the attention, and largesse, he had received. Thus he acted as Nanjing's unofficial ambassador both in Inner Mongolia and the predominantly ethnic Tibetan provinces of Qinghai (Amdo) and Xining (Kham). He had also sought funds from an almost financially bankrupt government for the education of his people, both in Tibetan and Chinese. And major highway construction linking Tibet, so as to forge closer links with the motherland.

True to tradition, the Guomintang regime rejected numerous British protests on Tibet's behalf and refused to entertain any concessions on the issue of an escort for the Panchen Lama. And overall, was prepared to go the extra mile to help the Lama regain his lost position- and status. The end game was clear, on the coat-tails of the Panchen Lama, China may yet reclaim its role as the ultimate arbiter in Tibet's affairs.

Sadly for it, in the final count, in September 1937, Chiang's China did yield ground to British protests- and Lhasa's obduracy. But only because of the compulsion of events beyond its control. Unashamedly, the Japanese had launched a frontal assault on the mainland and the most sensitive parts of the government in and around the Chinese capital. And for a regime driven to such sore straits, British support, moral as well as material, had become crucial. In the event, Nanjing halted the Panchen Lama in his tracks and deferred his proposed march into Tibet. Even though the Lama was sorely disappointed, the Tibetan government heaved a sigh of relief. And the tensions that had built over the past year or two happily dissipated.

For Tibet though it proved to be a temporary, short-lived reprieve. And this largely because China did not give up its long-term interests, nor yet relent its pressure on the post 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama regime in Lhasa. Two developments are of some significance in this context. One, the Nationalist regime's desperate efforts in the early 1940s to obtain supplies via a Trans-Tibet route designed to link up the plains of Assam with south-western Sichuan and all that was left of Guomintang China. This had become the more urgent after the Japanese had choked all coastal ingress and egress while the fall of Rangoon (March 1942) dried up the trickle that had poured through the Burma-Yunnan road. Sadly for Chiang and his men, despite the intense pressures to which they were exposed both by the British and the US, the

Tibetans stood their ground. And denied both transport of any military hardware and, at the same time, sternly refused to build any roads through their territory. In material terms, Lhasa may not have added up much to Chiang's war effort even if it had been more forthcoming. The important thing though was that the Chinese were unrelenting and invoked the urgency of the war. And the Tibetans were equally unwilling to be browbeaten into submission.

On the issue of the new incarnations of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, the battle lines remained firmly drawn. Happily for Lhasa, the new incarnation of Chenrezi, the incumbent 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, discovered in Qinghai had escaped the Chinese dragnet and was safely installed in the Potala without any major hiccup. Conscious that it had not been able to achieve its objective of having any say in his selection, Guomindang China went through the motions attendant upon the choice of the new incarnation and its traditional enthronement. A high level delegation was readied to repair to Lhasa, via Calcutta and Sikkim, to be around during the celebrations. And despite firm and categorical denials by eyewitnesses as well as the government in Lhasa that it had any special role to play, either in the choice or enthronement of the Dalai Lama, insisted that, in fact, it did. For the Guomindang government in Chongqing claimed that its representative had, to start with, put his stamp of approval on the new incarnation- after an examination, and scrutiny, of his credentials. And later invested him with the authority it alone could, as the sovereign state, bestow. Whatever the merits of its claims, China's aura over the new Tibetan ruler was at best shadowy and notional, if not almost non-existent.

The reverse was the case when it came to the new Panchen Lama. His discovery, shrouded in some mystery, is said to have been made by the leftover entourage that had remained steadfastly loyal to their master, the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen's, memory. And been handsomely rewarded by the Guomindang authorities through their long years of exile, and homelessness. Thanks to their high stakes and legitimately possessive instincts, they had shied away from sending him to Lhasa when Tibet's government desired that he take his place, alongside other prospective candidates, for the new incarnation. In sum, they now stoutly resisted Lhasa's likely use of the Golden Urn to settle conflicting claims, fearing that should their candidate lose, they would face certain disaster. Meanwhile events in China itself moved thick and fast with a raging civil strife between Mao's men and the incumbent Guomindang regime, with the latter fast losing ground. And soon driven into a corner, not only figuratively, but also literally.

One of Chiang's last desperate acts before he fled the mainland in the face of relentless pressure from the advancing Red Chinese armies, was to accord recognition to the boy lama (June 1949) that the late Panchen's entourage had discovered. And this he did in the face of Lhasa's known dissent. For its part, the Guomindang regime had hoped to groom him for fighting afresh its battles with the Tibetan authorities in which the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen had not exactly succeeded. Sadly, it had not quite calculated that its own days were so severely numbered. For within a few weeks of the installation of the new Panchen at Kumbum (August 1949), Xining fell into the hands of the advance guards of the PLA who presently drove Chiang across the Taiwan Strait.

Happily for the new Panchen, his entourage lost no time in switching loyalties and pledging support to China's new rulers. The boy Lama affirmed his faith in Mao and his men beseeching them inter alia to "liberate" his land from the stranglehold of an unfriendly Lhasa regime and its alleged imperialist lackeys. Not that the great helmsman needed such persuasion, for Tibet's "liberation" had from the very outset been high on the PLA's

agenda. And unlike their predecessors, China's new rulers were men of determination. And possessed the requisite wherewithal to realise their plans.

When after a flurry of loud protests and exchange of messages, the youthful Dalai Lama's representatives reached Beijing to negotiate a deal, the principal sticking point was the issue of the Panchen Lama. At one stage the Chinese threatened to call off the parleys unless the matter was sorted out to their satisfaction. And after some preliminary shadowboxing, the Lhasa delegation was convinced that there was no alternative but to yield ground. The first major concession was to recognise the credentials of the Kumbum-based Panchen Lama as the genuine reincarnation of his predecessor. Again, the two principal clauses of the 21 May (1951) Agreement related to Lhasa's affirmation of the new Panchen Lama, his return and due installation at Tashilhunpo. And restoration of all the powers and privileges the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen enjoyed before he left home in the early 1920s.

Not long thereafter, the Panchen Lama accompanied by an impressive escort of 2,000 PLA soldiers arrived in the Tibetan capital (March 1952). And a few months later was duly installed, with all pomp and pageantry, at his traditional seat of authority in Tashilhunpo.

Relations between the two Lamas though superficially cordial were not exactly free from strain. And this to no small extent was inherent in the situation. For to no one's surprise, the Panchen and his entourage leaned heavily on the Chinese, a fact that made them natural suspects in the eyes of the average Tibetan who significantly enough referred to him as the "Chinese Lama." As a matter of fact, both the Lama as well as his entourage appeared to be integral parts of the new Beijing rulers with whom they shared a common one-point agenda: namely, that Tashilhunpo must be raised to the status, which the Potala enjoyed. And its head, the Panchen Lama, must rank as the equal of the Dalai Lama. By no means to be rated his second in command, much less his under-study. It followed that such pre-eminence, as the master of the Potala had hitherto enjoyed in the polity must be a thing of the past. In sum, to raise Tashilhunpo and build up its status, and importance, it was incumbent upon Tibet's new rulers to cut the Dalai Lama and his government to size.

With the Chinese now solidly arrayed behind Tashilhunpo, Lhasa's once powerful clout seemed to diminish with every passing day. So that in the final count, it was a battle between two unequals, the Panchen Lama backed to the hilt as it were by Tibet's new Chinese masters, steadily if surely gaining ground and the Dalai Lama, almost forlorn, equally clearly losing his former status and position. As if to make things doubly sure, the administrative structure which the Chinese presently introduced in the shape of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibetan Autonomous Region (1956) institutionalised the new power equation.

Clear if equally unambiguous pointers to the new relationship between the Lamas could be discerned on the two occasions they travelled together. At first during their year-long sojourn in China (1954-5) and later in the course of their visit to India to participate in the celebrations of the Mahaparinirvan of the Buddha (1956-7). Beijing had been keen to demonstrate its new-gained position, both nationally and internationally. And reasoned that the Lamas see the mainland for themselves, its vast resources, and even greater potential, both in men and material wealth. Its immensely active, and disciplined, manpower working on the land and manning its new factories, busy ports. Above all, Chairman Mao haranguing them, individually and collectively, to forget their past rivalries and jealousies and start afresh in rediscovering themselves- and embracing the motherland.

However well the Chinese may have managed their own part- and there is little on public record to show any major discords- the Lamas' Indian sojourn embarrassed the

Beijing regime no end. To start with, the media rightly or wrongly viewed the Panchen Lama as a Chinese protégé and therefore saw him through the prism of an inherent, in-built prejudice. In sharp contrast to the robustly independent Dalai Lama, the Panchen was the “Chinese Lama”. Again, true to tradition, New Delhi treated the Dalai Lama, to the great chagrin of the Panchen, and his masters in Beijing, as the ruler of Tibet entitled to the protocol, and courtesies, of a virtual head of state.

As the weeks sped by, the reported decision of the Dalai Lama and his entourage not to return home invested him with a little more than ordinary importance. The Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai sought him out more than once in the course of two brief visits to India in less than a month. And pledged his word of honour to attend to the Dalai Lama’s principal concern: loosening the rigours of Chinese rule and slowing down the pace of reform. Above all, pledging not to play the Lamas against each other, to the grave disadvantage of the master of the Potala. The Indian Prime Minister for his part tried to allay the worst fears of the Dalai Lama concerning China and impressed upon him the urgency to return home. For his rightful place, Nehru stressed, was among his own people. All in all, the Dalai Lama received far more attention than the Panchen did. No wonder, the latter returned to Tashilhunpo ahead of the Dalai Lama- in a big sulk and in high dudgeon. This was more than evident in the denial of courtesies to which the master of the Potala was entitled when he passed through Shigatse on his return journey to Lhasa.

By the time, early in 1957, the Lamas were home, a major new development had raised its ugly head. This was the Khampa rebellion complicating, and precipitating, matters no end. While the rebellion as such does not have a direct bearing on the evolving relationship between the two Lamas, its importance to the events as they unfolded themselves is crucial. A slight digression may not therefore be out of place.

To start with, the Khampas’ principal preoccupation was the firm conviction that the Beijing government constituted a threat to the life and safety of the Dalai Lama. And, by implication, to Tibet- and the Tibetan way of life. Hence there could be no question of a compromise with it, much less its policies and programmes. Since their land had been in the vanguard of the Chinese assault, the Khampas had ever since the “liberation” been exposed to all that the Chinese revolution meant; they had experienced it at first hand.

It bears mention that the bulk of the Khampa influx was in central Tibet, in the province of U; in, and around, Lhasa. The numbers that had poured into Tsang and the Panchen Lama’s estate, around Tashilhunpo, were small. They made no major impact. It should follow that the principal thrust of the revolt was confined to the domain of the Tibetan government and that the Panchen Lama and his estate were, by and large, free from the “contagion”.

With the Khampa rebels pouring in in sizeable numbers, the resultant situation was confused at best; at worst, well nigh chaotic. To start with, the Dalai Lama and his ministers, the Kashag, were in an unenviable position, in the thick of the battle with the unruly- and almost uncontrollable- mass of Khampas. Their near-helplessness, evident even to the purblind, came as a godsend to the Chinese authorities stationed in the Tibetan capital. And knowing only too well how very impossible the situation was, they increasingly impressed upon the Dalai Lama and his ministers that it was part of their duty to maintain peace in the capital by containing the Khampa insurrection.

This was easier said than done. Unruly at the best of times and notorious for their reputation as uncouth “bandits” who looted food from villagers and were prone to violence, the Khampas were in no mood to listen to exhortations for peace and harmony. The more

so as they were honestly convinced that the Kashag was hand in glove with the Chinese and would barter the Dalai Lama away for a petty mess of potage. As noticed, they believed that Beijing for its part was determined to kidnap the Dalai Lama and whisk him away, to the far away motherland. And with the Dalai Lama gone, Tibet's cause- and its identity- would be completely lost

The third leg of the tripod in the Tibetan capital was the Chinese. Not only the inveterate hostility of the Khampas but the near-rebellion of the mass of Tibetans in Lhasa itself was an eye-opener to them. And while both the Dalai Lama and the Kashag were straining every nerve to bring about some semblance of law and order, the Chinese were half-suspicious that the Lama's ministers- if not indeed the Lama himself- were lending countenance to the rebels and buttressing the cause of the revolt. As if that were not confusing enough, the Khampas while professing to protect the Dalai Lama from the Chinese had, wittingly or otherwise, made him into a virtual prisoner. So that he was for all practical purposes, no longer a free agent.

With the Dalai Lama's escape from the Norbulingka, the situation in Tibet in general, and Lhasa in particular, underwent a complete metamorphosis. The Chinese who had hitherto held their hand to bring about some semblance of order to an almost chaotic state of affairs, swung into action. No longer did they have any constraints operating on them. And it is worth recalling that within forty-eight hours of the Dalai Lama's flight they had used their superior firepower and armed might to bombard the summer palace. And had, unmindful of the loss to life and property, managed to contain the revolt in Lhasa and its immediate neighbourhood.

It is to this period one has to turn to delineate the principal strands in the relationship between the two Lamas. With the Chinese stranglehold in Lhasa tightening its grip with every passing day, especially after the induction, in 1956, of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibetan Autonomous Region (PCTAR), the Dalai Lama and the Kashag were no longer able to escape the mounting pressures. Which were now tangible, almost palpable. It may be interesting to recall in this context that nearly three months before he took the final plunge, the Dalai Lama had played with the idea of effecting an escape from the well-nigh intolerable situation in which he now found himself. And seriously considered establishing a government of his own in the southern part of the country which reportedly was under the sway of the rebels. More, having done so, negotiate with the Chinese *de novo*. Just about the same time, the Panchen Lama is said to have written to the master of the Potala laying bare his own disillusionment with Beijing's rule: "with the situation deteriorating throughout the country", the abbot of Tashilhunpo confided, "we needed to formulate a strategy for the future." "This was the first indication", the Dalai Lama was to note later, that the Panchen had given of "being no longer in thrall of our Chinese masters."

On the very eve of leaving Tibet to cross over into India as a refugee, the Dalai Lama proclaimed his own and his country's independence from Beijing and denounced the May 1951 Agreement on Tibet's "liberation". He was prepared to negotiate with the Chinese afresh and even named a new Prime Minister, a monk official whom the Chinese had earlier insisted on sacking for his stubborn resistance to their rule. More importantly, he wrote to the Panchen Lama intimating him of his decision to flee. And inviting the Panchen to join him "if he could".

There is no knowing whether the Panchen Lama received the above communication from the master of the Potala, much less as to what his reaction was. What is known is that he did *not* join the Dalai Lama, perhaps because he was not able to.

There was no one-to-one meeting between the Lamas and hardly any exchange of messages during the decades that followed. The only known exceptions were some telephonic conversations when the Panchen Lama managed briefly to escape his protectors' vigilant gaze. There were three such exchanges, twice while the Lama was in Beijing and once when he was in Australia and the Dalai Lama in Germany.

In all this, two things stand out clearly. One, that even though he toed the Beijing line in denouncing the March (1959) rebellion and the Dalai Lama's flight, the Panchen did at no stage upbraid, much less censure, the conduct of the master of the Potala. To the contrary, even during the worst days of *thamzing*, when such a denunciation could have earned him rich political dividends, the Panchen refused to rise to the bait. More, in 1964, in the heart of Lhasa during the one-day Monlam festival he had the courage to assert that the Dalai Lama was the true leader of his people, reiterating his "firm belief" that he "will return to the golden throne." And prayed for the Dalai Lama's long life. The price the Panchen paid for this seeming bravado was pretty high but, to all appearances, he stood his ground and did not flinch, much less falter.

Beijing's unqualified denunciation of the Panchen Lama in the wake of his 70,000-character "petition" to the "respected" Prime Minister Zhou Enlai earned him no end of humiliation- and ultimately a 14-year term of solitary imprisonment. And, in the bargain, a long lease of forced exile from his beloved Tashilhunpo. By the time he was released (1978), and rehabilitated (1981 onwards), the Tibetan scenario had undergone a sea change. For one, the all-powerful Chairman no longer bestrode the political stage as a colossus; for another, the worst days of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution belonged to a forgettable past. The new supreme leader, Deng Xiaoping, was prepared for compromises. In the event, the Panchen Lama was permitted a measure of freedom to revisit his land- and his people. The enthusiasm of the crowds that greeted him on his return home came as an eye-opener, even perhaps a rude shock to the Chinese. So also were the warmth and affection, and fervour, with which the three delegations of the exiled Dalai Lama were received by his people. There could be no clearer, if also perhaps convincing evidence that despite decades of Chinese rule, the two Lamas were still very relevant to Tibetan polity.

How had the relationship between the two Lamas evolved between 1952 when the youthful Panchen Lama returned home and his sad if tragic- and mysterious- death 37 odd years later. To start with, the two Lamas and their entourages were clearly on the warpath. While the Panchen and his men were enjoying unqualified support from Tibet's new rulers, only too keen to rebuild Tashilhunpo as a rival power centre. And restore its lost power and prestige. In the process, nothing was left undone to cut the Dalai Lama to size. And reduce the importance, and relevance, of the government at Lhasa. Here was an open challenge to his traditional preeminence. And the Chinese rendered no small help with the new institutional framework of the PCTAR briefly referred to earlier and tailor-made as it were to the purpose. For the Dalai Lama's "Local Government of Tibet" was only one of the three regional authorities into which Tibet was split, the other two being the Panchen Lama's "Council of Khenpos" and the People's Liberation Committee of the Chamdo Area.

It did not take the Lamas long to see through the Chinese game plan. By end-1958 it should be obvious, both Lhasa as well as Shigatse had shown their complete disillusionment. The Dalai Lama was planning to flee and establish a government inside

Tibet that would re-negotiate the 17-Point Agreement which, as he saw it, the Chinese had torn to shreds. The Panchen too had expressed his disenchantment with the way things were going. It would thus appear that the Abbot of Tashilhunpo had drawn closer to the master of the Potala. This is further reinforced by the Dalai Lama's invitation to the Panchen to join him in his exile, so that they could perhaps face the future together.

Even though there is no concrete evidence, all pointers indicate that in the decades that followed the March 1959 rebellion, the personal rapport between the Lamas had grown. And slowly but surely, they were drawing closer. The Dalai Lama was convinced that "under the most difficult circumstances" the Panchen Lama "tried his best" for his people, for the preservation of "their culture and language." His last political testament that while there "certainly" had been "development" in Tibet, the price paid for it "has been greater than the gains", the Dalai Lama held, made up for all that the Panchen had ever said in praise of Mao and his rule. The fact is that the Lamas' petty jealousies and rivalries were now shadowy memories of a forgotten past. These had, in fact, lost all meaning, being no more than empty, lifeless shells. Both were now exiles, strangers to their country- and been kept far, far away from their hearths and homes; their land and its people.



## Introduction

In the heart of Asia's steepest mountains lies Tibet, a wild, desolate, arid waste. It is a high upland at once bleak and barren and with an elevation ranging between 4,000 and 17,000 feet above sea level. An inhospitable waste of frozen desert, both waterless as well as windswept. Of necessity, it is bereft of trees or of vegetation, an empty land offering few possibilities for large-scale human habitation.

Tibet's northern boundary is formed by the Kunlun and the Tangla ranges while to its west stretch the Karakoram and the south is bounded by the Himalayas. Not ineptly, French geographers have described it as a high altitude desert surrounded by rugged mountains<sup>1</sup>. To the east, however, the mountain ranges are pierced through by Asia's mightiest rivers- the Yangzi, the Mekong and the Salween- which make the Tibetan plateau as inaccessible from the east as from the other three sides.

Interspersed with its formidable mountain ranges are Tibet's broad river valleys such as those of the Indus, the Sutlej and the Tsangpo, literally, the 'purifier', and better known in India, as the Brahmaputra. Mention may also be made of the Kham area to the east, the most fertile and populous part of Tibet, where deep river valleys and forests materially alter the lie of the land. Except for these, most of the rest of Tibet is sparsely peopled, largely by reason of its unusual elevation and the sharp temperature contrasts between day and night. Travelling to Tibet, whether from India across the Himalayas or from China through the Kham area, is hazardous at best. And yet comparatively far easier on the plateau itself, given time for acclimatization.

To define Tibet's physical boundaries and thus its area as well as population is, at best, a difficult, even tricky business. Knowledgeable experts distinguish at least three Tibets- the geographical, the cultural and the historical- with a hard core common to them all. This last, the Tibet of our maps, is best called political Tibet. As may be apparent, the geographical and the ethnographical are further extensions of political Tibet and point to an area where mounting Chinese infiltration has gradually submerged the indigenous (i.e. Tibetan) inhabitants. Following Bell's earlier usage, Richardson has graphically presented the three-fold concept: 'Political Tibet', 'Limits of Ethnographic Tibet' and 'Extent of Tibetan influence in 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries'.<sup>2</sup>

Estimates of Tibet's area and population vary; the area, between a million-and-a-half and half a million square miles; the population, between 5-6 millions and a million-and-a-half. Understandably, variations arise from the contours of the country and the people computed. Yet whatever the statistics, it should be obvious that population density is singularly low. For even if the area were calculated at half a million square miles and the population at 5 million, the average density works out to a measly ten per square mile of area!<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Brunhes & Camille Vallau, *La Geographie de l'Historie*, Paris, 1921, cited in Robert Strausz-Hupe, *Geopolitics*, New York, 1942, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> H E Richardson, *Tibet & Its History*, London, 1962, pp. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> L Richard, *Comprehensive Geography of the Chinese Empire* (translated by M. Kennelly), Shanghai, 1908, gives the area as 463,320 sq miles; Bell, *The People of Tibet*, London, 1928, as 800,000 sq miles; Cressey, *Asia's Lands & Peoples*, Second Edition, New York, 1950 puts it at 1 million sq miles; Theodore Shahbad, *China's Changing Map*, London, 1956, at 900,000 sq miles.

According to Beijing's official figures, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) has an area of 1.2 mn sq. kms (470,000 sq. miles) and a population of 1.5 millions. It is necessary to bear in mind the fact that the Chang Tang or the northern desert is virtually empty while with very few towns, Tibet's urban population too is woefully small<sup>4</sup>. Professor Lattimore has suggested that nearly five-sixths of the settled area of Tibet is distributed over an arc running from west of Lhasa in the Tsangpo valley around by the east and the northeast to the Gansu frontier<sup>5</sup>. The clutch of valleys comprising the Brahmaputra and its tributaries are easy of access from other parts of Tibet and smack of a dividing line between the settled agricultural area surrounding it and the outlying pasturelands. The Brahmaputra valley includes Tibet's principal towns, Lhasa, Shigatse and Gyantse. And provides a sizeable proportion of the country's requirements in agriculture and animal husbandry albeit the role the Kham area plays in this context need not be underestimated.

It may be relevant to mention that along her southern border, over a distance of almost 2,500 kms, stretching all the way from Ladakh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east, Tibet's neighbour is India. The actual physical contact however occurs at two places: in the east, for over 500 kms, Tibet touches Arunachal Pradesh while in the west Uttaranchal (hill districts of Pithoragarh, Chamoli and Uttar Kashi), parts of Himachal Pradesh (Spiti) and Kashmir (Ladakh) border on the vast deserts of western Tibet. For the rest, the inner ring of states, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, intervene between the two.

With her populous and powerful neighbour in the east, China, Tibet's frontier has been a subject of age-old dispute. For their part, Tibetans have always viewed both Amdo (Qinghai) and Xikang (now part of Sichuan) as their rightful domain. The arguments of the two sides in an effort to delineate the frontier proved to be a major preoccupation of the tripartite Simla Conference (1913-4) which, insofar as agreement between the two was concerned, proved abortive.

India, closer to the hub and centre of Tibetan life, was restricted by the formidable mountain barrier of the Himalayas to miniscule, albeit virtually uninterrupted, traffic in holymen and pilgrims- and a trickle of overland trade. With China, great distances, a forbidding climate and a difficult rugged terrain made large-scale human intercourse and commerce in goods difficult, if not indeed impossible.

Whatever their racial stock- and it is hard to pin them down with any degree of certainty- Tibetans cannot, with any "scientific accuracy", be described as a "Chinese" people. More, the Han have always looked upon them as a separate race<sup>6</sup>.

Tibet's language insofar as it does not employ ideograms is distinct from the Chinese. The script was borrowed from India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A D. and bears a striking resemblance to Devnagri; it has remained virtually un-changed since.

The greater part of the country's population consists of farmers and herdsmen but there is in every Tibetan, lay and spiritual alike, an innate streak of a tradesman. Fostered, if

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<sup>4</sup> In a 1959 publication. Beijing put Tibet's area at "about 1.22 mn sq kms"; its population at 1.2 million. The density would thus work out to a neat 1 person per sq km. *Concerning the Question of Tibet*. Beijing, 1959, p. 213. See also "The population of Tibet", Appendix A, pp. 249-53 in A. Tom Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, rev ed, New York, 1996. Grunfeld gives 1982 Chinese census figure of 1.89 mn residents in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), of which 1.78 mn were ethnic Tibetans.

<sup>5</sup> Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New York, 1951, p. 207.

<sup>6</sup> Richardson, *History*, p. 5.

partly, by leisurely pilgrimages to distant holy places, especially of India. A number of professional trading firms in towns provided the nucleus of a small if prosperous middle class which also embraced lower paid managers of large landed estates of the nobility, subordinate rank government employees and such as found employment in the army. In the Chang Tang, or the wilds of western and northern Tibet, an age-old profession has been brigandage, which took the form of bands of robbers descending on caravan routes across its lonely, if godforsaken desert uplands. In the event, most traders who ventured out tended to join large, well-protected caravans.

Tibet's economy was largely self-contained, producing just enough staple food and woollen cloth for its modest needs. Trade with China consisted of imports of brick tea, porcelain and silks; from India came, copper, iron, and cotton textiles, rice, sugar and household knick-knacks. Tibet's own exports of wool, skins and borax earned enough to pay for its imports.

On the periphery of what may be called political Tibet, the Amdowas of the area between Jyekundo and Kokonor and the Khampas between the Yangzi and the Chinese border are pronouncedly distinct, and different, from the blue-blooded Tibetans of the provinces of U and Tsang. They are generally more demonstrative and quick-tempered and less inclined to peace and harmony than their counterparts in central Tibet. The Khampa revolt against Chinese rule in the mid-1950s, it may be recalled, lasted for almost a decade and more.

Tibetan Buddhism or Lamaism as it is often loosely, if erroneously called, came principally from India and China. Its beginnings go back to the seventh century when, after incorporating some elements of the indigenous Bon, Buddhism displaced it more or less completely. Over the next thousand odd years Lamaism was to acquire a near-complete hegemony both in religious as well as temporal affairs. Here the emergence of a powerful Dalai Lama, combining in his person the roles at once of pope as well as king was a significant development. One result of the church's inordinate domination was the power and influence which the monasteries wielded over affairs of state and the resources, in land and treasure, which were theirs. The clout which the monks commanded was reflected in the sizeable proportion of the population that took holy orders; it was inordinately large, nearly 10-15 per cent of the total.<sup>7</sup> In a manner of speaking though, this disproportionately large number of monks and gompas helped, offering an escape route from the drudgery of serfdom and investing its practitioners with a modicum of prestige and a measure of economic security.

The importance of the gompas and their inmates was also reflected in all spheres of governance: two prime ministers, one monk and one layman; the kashag or cabinet of four, having one monk and three lay officials. The Tsongdu or the national assembly too had a sizeable number of representatives from the monasteries. It should follow that the infiltration of monk officials in almost every department, the voice of the abbots in the

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<sup>7</sup> "At present" (1959) of a population of 1.2 million the number of feudal lords and their government functionaries was less than 5 per cent while the peasants accounted for 60 per cent, herdsmen for 20 per cent and lamas for 15 per cent. There were in addition a small number of handicraftsmen and merchants. *Concerning the Question of Tibet*, Supra n. 4, pp. 213, 216. Beijing has maintained that the serfs "whether on the farms or in the grazing area" led "miserable" lives and had "no enthusiasm" for increased production.

National Assembly and the absolute authority of the Dalai Lama invested the church with a dominant role in the polity.

The preceding lines should not however lead us to the conclusion that the nobles were mere ciphers; they were not. More, in actual fact, they were the traditional support of the church. All the same, the dualistic arrangement by which a monk was to be found in almost every government office as a colleague of one or more laymen was "a reflection" of the religious ascendancy established by the Dalai Lamas after the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>8</sup>.

A light-hearted people, Tibetans love show or ceremony whether religious or secular, though mostly with an all-pervasive sense of religion. The latter often signalled by the presence of an altar, with a butter lamp before it even in the weirdest of places in the frozen deserts of the Chang Tang. The Dalai Lama would have us believe that with all the social inequities of the feudal order and the harshness of its climate, Tibet was among the happiest of lands. "We are for most part", the Lama has declared, "quite simple people" who liked nothing better than a good show and a good party<sup>9</sup>. This is reinforced by the near-unanimous verdict of most visitors, of a kindly, cheerful and contented people- by no means, an oppressed, downtrodden or exploited lot. The above is also amply borne out by the historical fact that that there has been no known popular uprising against the Tibetan government. It should follow that the people accepted their social inequities "not merely with passivity but with active contentment".

The above view though has been stoutly repudiated. "Happiness" in this case, it has been suggested, was no different from being resigned to one's fate while a smiling, friendly face that greeted the stranger from without was born less out of a genuine feeling than an indication of Tibetan stoicism<sup>10</sup>.

The pivotal role of religion in day-to-day life was the hallmark of Tibetan culture. Inter alia though, it led to a streak of diehard conservatism and a dislike for change of any sort. Tibetans consciously feel themselves to be 'inside' a special organisation and have consistently resented foreign interference in their affairs. Hence the tendency towards isolation or aloofness. This aspect though has been overly emphasized. For even earlier, recent writers suggest, the old image of "a superbly isolated fortress, untouched by time" which lay securely behind the Himalayan chain was actually a false one. In reality, Tibet has been a setting for change, invasion and domination. More, lately "it has been shaken by political upheavals"<sup>11</sup>. The March (1959) rebellion against Chinese rule and the flight of the Dalai Lama in its wake are cited as irrefutable evidence. All the same, even though not immune from superstition, the people at large kept themselves free from intolerance or fanaticism. And have always judged other people- those 'outside'- by their actual conduct or behaviour.

A word on Tibet's refusal to deal with the world outside; of its age-old image of a hermit kingdom. It was partly, it has been argued, a result of the country's unhappy experience of dealings with China. Proforma, foreigners were not allowed - even though quite a few did manage to smuggle themselves in- on the premise that that was perhaps the best way to avoid trouble. And ensure peace.

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<sup>8</sup> Richardson, *History*, pp 18, 26.

<sup>9</sup> Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile, The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama*, New York, 1990, p. 51.

<sup>10</sup> Richardson, *History*, p. 13. Also see Grunfeld, op cit, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> Maria Antonio Sironi, *Tibet: the Roof of the World*, London, 2002, p. 224.

Broadly, the above holds valid for the country's geography and, in large measure, its history. But the norms of religion and everyday life would appear to have changed materially in the post-1959 decades. The societal restructuring, especially the mode of governance and the instruments that wield authority have undergone a near-complete metamorphosis. So also the contours of Lhasa's day-to-day life and of such towns as Gyantse and Shigatse. The Potala and the Norbulingka are now virtually museum pieces for the incumbent Dalai Lama has long been an absentee. And even though the Chinese-anointed boy Panchen Lama visits Tashilhunpo once in a while, he no longer resides at his seat of power and authority. In more ways than one, Tibet does not in the years since the March (1959) Rebellion bear much resemblance to its old image of a Shangri-la for its original social order has, as one scholar puts it, been "irreversibly" altered by Beijing's new masters<sup>12</sup>.

Expectedly, both India and China have contributed significantly to the fabric of Tibetan life. The Chinese, more demonstrative, in food and dress and to a degree in the organisation of government; the Indians, deeper and more inward-looking, in matters of religion and moral ideas and literary models. In fact, the distinguishing feature of Indo-Tibetan relations, prior to the British conquest, was its non-military and non-political character. Its major emphasis was on cultural ties, which did not exclude considerable cross-border trade.

Sino-Tibetan relations were a case apart. The Chinese claim that Tibet had been in an unbroken political subordination to the mainland since the days of the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) has been challenged. And, on closer scrutiny, would appear to lack validity. To start with, the Mongol links were forged through a common conquest and before long Tibet in its own way, as did China, broke away from their stranglehold. Nor did the Ming rulers (1368-1644) succeed in subordinating Tibet despite the alleged frequency of the "tribute missions". It may be recalled that the Ming chroniclers computed an impressive tally of more than 120 tributaries, some of them hard to identify, and possibly fictitious. The missions, an integral part of Chinese diplomatic and commercial strategy, provided a degree of flexibility which could, if occasion arose, be developed into something more rigid. The commercial aspect apparently was of less consequence and generally a concession by which the Chinese paid for the useful, and flattering, political connections they needed. In addition to the privilege of trade, the emperor bestowed on the tributary envoy and various members of his mission, handsome presents whose value was invariably more, but certainly not less, than the gifts he received. Besides, in return for the "tribute" of products of their own country, the foreign envoys received such desirable goods as silk, tea, and porcelain whose value far exceeded that of the tribute<sup>13</sup>.

Shorn of its outer frills, the missions from Tibet consisted mainly of lamas, monks from its principal monasteries and tribal chieftains from the borderlands. Who, for most part, were engaged in corporate or personal business ventures having few if any linkages with their country's lay or spiritual rulers.

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<sup>12</sup> Grunfeld, *op cit.* p.8.

<sup>13</sup> For details see John King Fairbank (ed) *The Chinese World Order : Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1968, especially its two chapters, John King Fairbank, "The Early Tributary System in the Chinese World Order" and Joseph C Fletcher, "China and Central Asia, 1368-1884".

A word here on more recent developments. Not to go farther back, by the eighteenth century some of the major strands in the interaction between China and Tibet clearly emerge and are not difficult to identify. Briefly, as long as the Qing (1644-1912) viewed their role as purely symbolic and Tibetan spiritual influence useful in their dealings with the Mongols- broadly until the opening decades of the 18th century- Tibet played an important, and largely autonomous, role in managing its affairs. The fact that the death of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama could be successfully concealed for eighteen long years demonstrates at once the measure of Tibetan autonomy as well as lack of any clout the ruling Chinese dynasty wielded in Lhasa and its affairs. The Qing intervened-1720, 1792- when a third party, such as the Dzungars, invaded from without. Or, there was internal disorder within, as in 1750. Each time they put in an appearance, they increased their control. In the event, by 1792 Tibetan autonomy had been severely restricted.

The painstaking Italian scholar, Luciano Petech whose work has been rated a *locus classicus* for this period traces in detail the sequence of events leading to what he calls the establishment of a Chinese 'protectorate' over Tibet. His study retails at length the exact form and content of the mainland's institutional control and the varied political experimentation through which the relationship evolved<sup>14</sup>. Here it is important to bear in mind the fact that both the Yuan as well as Ming rulers of China exercised virtually no more than "a shadowy form of suzerainty" over Tibet; it should follow that the Kangxi emperor (1654-1722) started almost from scratch. Being himself a Central Asian, he possessed "a sympathetic understanding" of the minds of his Tibetan neighbours. And with a deft combination of "exceptional good luck" and "skilful opportunism", was able to establish "a footing" in Lhasa and, through the Dalai Lama, "the key to religious control" over Mongolia<sup>15</sup>.

So long as its political patron was disinterested in Tibet's domestic affairs, roughly from the times of the Khoshot (Qosot) Mongol Gushri Khan (c.1582-1656) of Koko Nur and his dependants to those of his grandson Lhazan Khan (c.1635-1717), Tibet enjoyed autonomy. However in the case of a politically involved patron such as Lhazan Khan, the Dzungar Mongols, or the Qing, Tibet's sovereignty vested effectively in foreign hands. More, the Qing protectorate was supported by some of Tibet's secular aristocracy- Polhanas (d. 1747) being the most conspicuous example.<sup>16</sup>

Here it is important to underline the fact, as Professor Fletcher has, that in Inner Asia, as in China proper, Qing authority was "an overlay". It did not, by and large, interfere in the affairs of ordinary men yet by its presence held indigenous hierarchies in their positions of power and "preserved, and rigidified local institutions"<sup>17</sup>.

Smith cites an Inner Mongolian scholar to suggest that Mongol patronage for the Panchen Lama was "part of a conscious design" to divide Tibet and Tibetans. Despite the nature of the relationship between the first Panchen Lama and the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, the

<sup>14</sup> For a brief summary see Parshotam Mehra, *Negotiating with the Chinese, 1846-1947, Problems and Perspectives*, New Delhi, 1989, especially chapter 1, "China and its World Order".

<sup>15</sup> Luciano Petech, *China and Tibet in the early XVIII century*, Leiden, 1950

<sup>16</sup> Richardson, *History*, pp 47, 49-50

<sup>17</sup> Warren W. Smith, *Tibetan Nation : A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations*. Boulder, 1996, p. 147.

Panchen's feudal authority in Tsang came to be associated with a temporal realm that was semi-independent of Lhasa<sup>18</sup>.

The incorporation of Tibet into the Jesuit Atlas (1721) indicates that the Qing definitely considered it to be part of their empire. The Qing maps of Tibet, though often neglected in studies of Sino-Tibetan relationship, were an important practical and symbolic substantiation of their claim to authority and control over the land. Additionally, the Manchus were keen on "discovering and claiming" as their territory the sources of China's two major rivers, the Yellow and the Yangzi, both of which lay in Tibet.

With the young 7<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's exile from Lhasa (1728), the Ambans "cultivated" the Panchen who happily for them had remained neutral in the preceding civil war. Summoned to Lhasa the Lama was presented with an imperial edict conferring upon him the temporal authority of the Dalai Lama, an exercise that came to repeated on more than one occasion in later years. The territorial and political division between the Dalai and Panchen Lamas thus created was to become a feature of Chinese policy in Tibet. The award of temporal authority to the Panchen Lama may thus be viewed as "a reward" to Polhanas and the Tsang Tibetans for their "loyalty" to the Qing.<sup>19</sup>

Thanks to large-scale Western intervention, the next hundred odd years were witness to the Qing emperor's mounting inability to intervene effectively in Tibet's affairs. Here, the voluntary abandonment of his financial and military power to the Tibetan government by their Amban (1847) marks the virtual end of direct Qing administration in Tibet. While the creation of the Tsongdu and the Kashag was to constitute the political and administrative basis for an independent Tibetan polity.

In sum, the Qing relationship with Tibet began as nominal submission but evolved into suzerainty and later into Chinese sovereignty. At the same time, even though Tibet was a dependent state of the Qing empire, which had transformed itself into a ruling Chinese dynasty, it did not thereby become a part of China. With Tibet retaining its distinct identity, Qing power did little to arouse the country's nationalism. Only later when the Chinese interpreted their protectorate over Tibet as sovereignty, was Tibetan nationalism aroused in response.<sup>20</sup>

Recent tragic happenings in Tibet in the wake of the armed revolt in Lhasa in 1959, followed by a crowded four decades and more of traumatic experiences for the land and its hapless people, have thrown into bold relief the long and chequered history of relations between Beijing and Lhasa. Briefly, the March (1959) rebellion in the Tibetan capital was both preceded, as well as followed, by a widespread national uprising throughout the country leading to the flight of the Dalai Lama. And a few years later, the virtual disappearance of the Panchen Lama from public gaze. Not to mention the near-extinction of the now-defunct "Local Government of Tibet". The public denunciation of the Panchen followed by fourteen long years of his solitary confinement (1964-78), partial rehabilitation, and sudden if largely unexplained death (1989) was by no means the end of

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph C Fletcher, "Ch'ing Inner Asia, c.1800" in John King Fairbank (ed), *Cambridge History of China, Late Ch'ing 1800-1911*, vol 10, part 2, Cambridge, 1978.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *op cit*, n. 80, p. 108

<sup>20</sup> Petch, *op. cit.*, p. 154. See also Smith, *op. cit.* pp. 129-30  
 "Tibet under the Ch'ing", pp. 115-49 in Smith, *op. cit.* also makes for useful reading.

the story. For not many years later the emergence of two rival candidates chosen respectively by the Dalai Lama and Tibet's political masters in Beijing (1995) have highlighted once over again the sad, unhappy story of relations between their two sponsors.

An important aspect of this grim human tragedy has been the unfortunate rivalry bared, albeit not for the first time, between the two supreme incarnate Lamas of Tibet. There is little doubt that a free and frank discussion of the unhappily wide differences between the aims and purposes for which the Dalai strove and those which animated the Panchen may have pointed the way to a resolution of some of Tibet's present difficulties. Unfortunately the gap was always wide and extraneous influences helped to make it well nigh unbridgeable.

As a backdrop to this monograph which is concerned principally with developments through the fateful if crowded decades of the twentieth century, an interesting and indeed instructive exercise would be to work out an approximate definition of the powers and functions of the two lamas, of the historical evolution of their offices, of the divergent outlook and policies they have pursued in the past. The following pages make an attempt to sketch this relationship in a bare outline with a view to obtaining a clearer perspective; a fuller account may be indistinguishable from a detailed history of the land.

Broadly speaking, the Dalai Lama is the sovereign ruler of his land - at once its lay as well as spiritual head; the Panchen, rated by his ardent partisans as spiritually superior to the Dalai, occupies himself largely with other-worldly affairs and wields little temporal authority. Traditionally, the Dalai Lamas of Lhasa - their story goes back to the middle of the 14th century- have been engaged in a never-ending tug-of-war with the Panchens of Shigatse<sup>21</sup>, their own creation and hence slightly younger and less sanctified by age. As a matter of fact over the past half a century or more, the Tibetan pontiffs have inclined for support either towards the Russians in the north or the British in India to the south, while the Panchens have invariably been dependent on the Chinese.<sup>22</sup> To a very large extent Tibet's own story has revolved around the personalities and politics of the master of the Potala on the one hand, and the head of the Tashilhunpo monastery on the other.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The Panchen Lama told the British journalist, Alan Winington that "disunity between the Dalai Lama and myself was a historical fact..." Alan Winington, *Tibet, Record of a Journey*, London, 1957, p. 161.

<sup>22</sup> Popular literature seeks to represent the Dalai Lama as pro-this, the Panchen as anti-that. This is a basic misunderstanding of Tibetan thought on the subject. Actually, according to Tibetan thinking, the Dalai Lamas or the Panchens may have looked for support in different quarters, but that does not mean that they were pro-British, pro-Russian or pro-Chinese.

<sup>23</sup> The title Dalai Lama is Mongolian in origin and is used mainly by the Chinese and the Manchus. The Tibetans know him as Kyam Rim-po-che (the Precious Protector). Gye-wa-Rimpoche (the Precious Sovereign), Kyam gon Buk (the Inner Protector), Lama Pon-po (the Priest Officer) and sometimes just simply as Kundun (the presence). For details see Charles Alfred Bell, *Tibet, Past and Present*, Oxford, 1924 and *The Religion of Tibet*, Oxford, 1931. A comprehensive study of the life and times of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai is to be found in the same author's *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, London, 1946. Another biographical study is Tokan Tada, *The Thirteenth Dalai Lama*, Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, The Toyo Bunko, Tokyo, 1965.

For the Panchen, besides the works cited, reference may be made to Clements R. Markham, *The Diary of George Bogle*, London, 1876, and Samuel Turner, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet*, London, 1806. Gordon Bandy Enders (with Edward Anthony) *Nowhere*



As a starting-point it is necessary to remember that the Buddhism which came to Tibet from India was of the Mahayana school, prolific in its Bodhisattvas, deities, superhuman beings, ritual and the credo of personal devotion. Part of the Mahayana belief is in the heavenly Buddhas known as "Jinas", the most important of the line being Amitabha. Amitabha, or to use his Tibetan name "O-pa-me", literally "Buddha of Measureless Light", is believed to be incarnate in the person of the Panchen Lama. O-pa-me is also rated as the spiritual father of Chen-re-si or Lord of Mercy, Tibet's own patron-saint. Chen-re-si, in turn, is in the Mahayana pantheon no other than Avalokiteshvara, incarnate in the person of the Dalai Lama. To be sure Chen-re-si, Jam-pe-yang (Lord of Speech), and Do-je-chhang (Holder of the Thunderbolt) constitute the trinity of Tibet's all-powerful deities. The Dalai, as Chen-re-si, is the incarnation of Buddha's body; Jam-pe-yang, incarnate in the Qing Emperors of China, of Buddha's speech; and Do-je-chhang, incarnate in the Panchen, of Buddha's mind. Since the mind is admittedly superior both to the body as well as speech, the Panchen Lama ranks highest in the Tibetan hierarchy of gods.

Important as these distinctions and semantics are in themselves, they are of greater interest to the outside theoreticians than to the people of Tibet, the vast majority of whom have no doubt at all of the supremacy, in all things, of the Dalai Lama. Only the keenest partisans of the Panchen are at pains to spin out a theory about his spiritual superiority. A significant point in this essentially theological hair-splitting is that the Panchen being an aspect of the Buddha ought to operate only in the realm of pure thought. The Dalai Lama is an aspect of the Bodhisattva - the active reflex - and naturally operates in the active world. The Panchen Lama is therefore, theoretically at any rate, untrue to himself if he has anything to do with temporal affairs.

Historically the institutions of the Dalai and the Panchen are to be traced back to the birth of the Ge-lug-pa or the reformed Yellow Hat sect. Its founder was Tsong-kha-pa (1358-1419), literally the "man from the onion land"<sup>24</sup>. It was Tsong-kha-pa's chief disciple, Ge-dun Trub-pa (died 1475) however, who placed on a firm basis the growing importance of the Yellow Hats.<sup>25</sup> The doctrine that each grand lama is re-born in order to take up his life's work over again had been an accepted norm long before Ge-dun Trub-pa's death, in fact for several centuries earlier. Nonetheless it was not until the middle of the 16th century,

*Else in the World*, New York, 1935 purports to be a biography of the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen, but should be accepted with considerable caution. For details see the same author's *Foreign Devil*, New York, 1942.

For some intimate, though extremely coloured, glimpses of the present incarnations see Alan Winnington, op. cit. and Roma and Stuart Gelder, *The Timely Rain*, London, 1964. For the Tibetan gloss see Thubten Jigme Norbu, *Tibet is my country*, London 1961, and Dalai Lama, 14<sup>th</sup>, *My Land and My People*, London 1962. The latter work is abbreviated, et seq, as *Dalai Lama*.

According to L.S. Dagyab, a friend of the Dalai Lama and a very high incarnation himself, Tibetans usually known the Dalai Lama as Gye-wa Rim-po-che (the precious Conqueror i.e. Jina, Buddha); Tham-che Khyen-pa (the All-Knowing), Kun-dun (the Presence); Kyam-gon bug (the Inner Protector, now obsolete).

<sup>24</sup> Tsong-kha-pa derived his name from a district in what is now the Chinese province of Qinghai. Looked upon by most Tibetans as a second Buddha, it was he who introduced "Monlam", the Festival of the Great Prayer, with which the Tibetan New Year commences. According to Petech, "The Dalai Lamas and the Regents of Tibet: a Chronological study". *T'oung Pao*, Series II, XLVII, Leiden, 1959, pp. 368-94, the life time of Tsong-kha-pa is 1357-1419 and *not* 1358-1419.

<sup>25</sup> Ge-dun Trub-pa was the founder of Drepung, Tibet's -and probably the world's- largest monastery, situated 4 miles to the west of Lhasa.

when the conversion of Mongolia to the Lama faith had been completed by So-nam Gya-tsho, that the institution became firmly established<sup>26</sup>. Actually, in the hierarchy of the Dalai Lamas, Ge-dun Trub-pa takes his place as the founder-father and So-nam Gya-tsho as the third in the line. From now on the light of incarnation was to be focused increasingly on the succession to this spiritual sovereignty.

The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa did not come fully into their own till the time of Nga-wang Lo-sang Gya-tsho (1616-1680)<sup>27</sup>, the fifth in the line. By then, while it is true that the Yellow Hats had gained some spiritual recognition in the country, politically Tibet was still under the sway of its Karma-pa chiefs who patronized the older, Red Hat, sect.<sup>28</sup> The Lama who did not lack in ambition, nor had forgotten his old and intimate associations with the Mongol chief, Gushri (also spelt Guzi or Kusi) Khan - both the fifth Dalai and Gushri had studied under the same spiritual teacher - appealed to him for help. The Mongol ruler responded to the Lama's entreaties and in alliance with other (Mongol) chiefs, proved too strong for the ruler of Tsang whom he eventually worsted in battle in 1642. The conquest which was to impart a strong and continuing influence to Lama Buddhism in Tibet, appears to have been an almost complete one, embracing at once the central, eastern and north-eastern parts of the country. For his part the Mongol chief having accomplished his assigned task made Tibet over to the supreme pontiff of the Yellow Hats, who from that day to the present has not only been the spiritual head of his country, but its ruler in things temporal as well. A priest by spiritual descent and later recognised as an incarnation of Chen-re-si, the Fifth was now invested with supreme worldly authority. Thus he was priest, god and king in one, a formidable combination that has been the sheet-anchor of successive Dalai Lamas.

It may be added, if only in parenthesis, that Gushri was not moved solely by religious devotion, much less altruism. As a matter of fact, it was not until Gushri's death that the Dalai Lama could fully establish his own temporal supremacy. Gushri remained King of Tibet, as did his successors after him, but their authority gradually declined until the reign of Lhazan (Lhatsang) Khan, although the separate kingship of Tibet continued until 1750.

Fully entrenched in his new power, the Fifth gained added prestige by accepting an invitation to visit the Chinese Emperor at Beijing. Just about this time the Ming dynasty was tottering to its fall and the Qing, or the more familiar Manchus, were gradually gaining political ascendancy. Indifferent to Buddhism for its own sake, the new rulers were nevertheless resolved, on political grounds, to gain power with the Tibetan lamas in order to control the Mongols through them. The Dalai who for his part had been anxious to cultivate

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<sup>26</sup> So-nam Gya-tsho went to Mongolia in 1578, and again in 1579. On his first visit he met the Tumet chief, Altan Khan, at Koko Nor and converted him to the Yellow Hat faith. The Mongol chief, in turn, proclaimed him Vajradhara Dalai Lama (Holder of the Thunderbolt, Ocean Lama). The term Dalai, which is a Mongolian translation of the Tibetan Gya-tsho, was thus, for the first time, employed by the Ge-lug-pa spiritual succession. Eventually, it was to acquire immense popularity both in China and the world outside.

<sup>27</sup> According to Petech, "China and Tibet in the early Eighteenth Century, History of the Establishment of Chinese Protectorate in Tibet", *T'oung Pao*, Monograph Series I, Second Edition, Leiden, 1972, p. 9, the life time of Nga-wang Lo-sang Gya-tsho is 1617-1682 and *not* 1616-1680.

<sup>28</sup> The Karma-pa were the most powerful sect after the decline of the Sa-kyapa. They were patronized by and gave their support to the Pha-mo-tru-pa, then Rin-pung and finally the Tsang lay rulers.

closer ties with the Middle Kingdom visited the Manchu ruler in 1652-1653, and was received with great honour, as if he were an independent sovereign. Apart from the Emperor's studied courtesies to a spiritual head, the Lama's own stature, buttressed no doubt by the friendly Mongol armies and the single-minded devotion of his own people, ensured a warm welcome.

The Great Fifth also instituted the office of the second incarnate lama of Tibet by bestowing that title on his old teacher Chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan (Chhokyi Gye-tshen), literally the "Victorious Banner of Religion". He gave him Tashilhunpo<sup>29</sup>, founded by the first Dalai Lama, as his monastery, declared him to be an incarnation of O-pa-me, and named him Panchen Rimpoche, the "Precious Great Sage"<sup>30</sup>.

In nearly all directions, not least in the evolution of Tibet's present system of administration, the Fifth mapped out the broad outlines which have persisted till today. In fact, Tibet regards him as a national hero, and always refers to him reverently as the Great Fifth. A compelling figure, his mausoleum in the golden-roofed Potala still stands out as the most striking among his numerous forbears and successors. It has already been noticed that his span of life marked a turning point in Tibetan history, for during these years the priesthood was fully enthroned and a living Buddha wielded at once the spiritual as well as temporal authority.

By the first half of the eighteenth century, the influence of the Mongols on Tibet, and on China's other peripheral regions, had given way to that of the Manchus. The previous hundred years had, in fact, been witness to the establishment of Manchu ascendancy; they had succeeded in worsting their chief rivals, the Western and Northern Mongols, and been hailed as the paramount power over the entire length and breadth of the land. This new accretion to their authority brought in the overlordship of Tibet as well. It is beyond the scope of these pages to detail the evolution of the Sino-Tibetan relationship during the Manchu rule in China, except insofar as it has a bearing on the emerging importance of the office of the Dalai Lama. Only a bare outline may, therefore, be attempted. Here apart from William Woodville Rockhill, a knowledgeable American authority on Tibet (and China), a painstaking Italian scholar, Dr. Luciano Petech, has traced at considerable length the events leading to what he calls the establishment of a Chinese "protectorate" over Tibet in the 18th century<sup>31</sup>. His researches have revealed the different forms and the varied political experimentation through which the Manchu-Tibetan relations passed in the early stages. Starting with a total absence of any direct political control of Tibet, it worked its way through a protectorate, without an armed occupation, to the posting of a Manchu Resident at Lhasa. The third stage was the appointment of two (Resident) Ambans, supported by a garrison. The fourth, and as it proved the last, stage saw the Imperial Residents - always

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<sup>29</sup> In Tibetan language, Tashilhunpo means the "Mount of Blessing". The monastery which was founded by Ge-dun Trub-pa took six years (1447-53) to build.

<sup>30</sup> The present Dalai Lama has maintained that the first incarnation of the Panchen "took place" in the fourteenth century. *Dalai Lama*, p. 95.

<sup>31</sup> Rockhill served as United States Minister in China for over a decade at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century period. His stay in the country and explorations in Tibet and Mongolia stretched over an even longer span of years. Reference above is to W.W. Rockhill: "The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa and Their Relations with the Manchu Emperors of China, 1644-1908", *T'oung Pao*, Series II, Vol. XI, Leiden, 1910.

As for Dr. Luciano Petech, see his "China and Tibet", *supra*, n.27.

chosen from among the Manchus - invested with rights of control and supervision, and somewhat later, even with those of direct participation in the Tibetan government. Thus the Chinese rulers "wound their way", through several experiments, to the only possible form of control over Tibet.<sup>32</sup>

Two facts may be borne in mind here. One, that the original Chinese administration of Tibet was supported by and indeed dependent upon a garrison. The latter was withdrawn for a short time after 1722 but the Chinese soon discovered that their authority needed the support of troops. Two, that the Resident, in one form or another, continued from the very start of the connection in 1720. The final change in 1792 - although conveying the appearance of a much closer supervision of Tibetan affairs - was, in practice, little more than a paper claim. The reason why the system was not seriously challenged after 1792 was largely due to the fact that it was so loose and vague that the Tibetans did not find it very irksome.

Not that Beijing's masters found it easy to rule Tibet through their local Resident Ambans for, by the close of the 18th century - when Chinese control was at its height - the office of the Dalai Lama, both as the spiritual and temporal ruler of his land, had taken firm roots in Tibetan soil. Short of abolishing that institution it became imperative, therefore, that the Chinese control it effectively. In other words, foreign imperial domination was now to take the form of manipulating the apparently impersonal status of the church in a manner that would subserve to its ends. An interesting, and what proved in the long run to be an extremely important, innovation in this context was the institution of a golden urn<sup>33</sup> for the choice of the Tibetan pontiff. Actually the Emperor in 1793 sent such an urn all the way from Peking to Lhasa. At the ceremony for the final choice of the Tibetan ruler, the names of children who had been reported as likely re-embodiments of Chen-re-si were written on slips of paper and placed in the urn. Meantime a religious service was held and at its close, in the presence of the Amban, one of the slips was drawn from the urn and held up for all those present to see. When the Chinese were in power in Lhasa this ceremony was presided over by the Amban himself. The boy so chosen was always able to identify various articles, chiefly the bell, dor-je etc., belonging to his predecessor, or more accurately to himself in his previous birth<sup>34</sup>. It is necessary to emphasise here that even after the urn had been used, the full and final investiture of authority for the pontiff's office vested in the issue of an Imperial mandate by the Son of Heaven.

The institution of the golden urn may be viewed in its proper perspective by recalling two important facts. One, that the very first Dalai Lama to be selected after the Edict, was chosen without the use of the urn; two, that in practice the importance of the system could easily be rendered ineffectual by a collusion between the Amban and the Regent. In fact, the Regents were the driving force in the years from about 1800 to say 1860. Additionally, the urn was a valuable item in Chinese propaganda. Similarly the Imperial Mandate was often times no more than a grandiose yet empty gesture making the most of a fait accompli. It is important to underline here the extent of play-acting and make-believe in Sino-Tibetan relations right down to the present day.

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<sup>32</sup> Luciano Petech, *supra*, n. 27, p. 240.

<sup>33</sup> It may be stated here that the golden urn was used not only for the selection by lot of the Dalai Lama but of other high lamas as well. For details see Richardson, *History*, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> For a description of the ceremony, see Regis-Evariste Huc and Joseph Gabet, *Travels in Tartary, Tibet and China, 1844-46*, transl. by William Hazlitt, London, 1928, 2 vols. II, pp. 248-49.

Apart from the golden urn a few other practices were resorted to as well. Thus, for most part, the new Dalai was chosen from among the children of relatively unknown, or undistinguished families - a peasant household, for instance. The aim here appears to have been to combat native (i.e. Tibetan) control of the internal affairs of Tibet which nearly approximated to a monopoly of the church's control in the hands of powerful local families. It stands to reason that in ennobling a poor peasant family the Chinese risk was far less than in making immensely powerful a family that already belonged to the nobility. Another "system" that seemed reasonably well-established by the last quarter of the 19th century was that the Tibetan pontiff would oblige by "retiring to the heavenly field" before he came of age. It may thus be noted that the ninth incarnation died at the age of 10 (1805-1815), the tenth at 20 (1817-1837), the eleventh at 17(1837-1854) and the twelfth at 18(1857-1874),<sup>35</sup> the average for the four working out at 16 years. It may thus be evident that during the long intervals of the minority of the Dalai Lamas, the Ambans could, through their influence with the Regents, exercise a far wider control over the affairs of the country than if the Lama were in actual authority. For most part in the nineteenth century, however, the reverse held true, for it were the Regents who usually influenced the Ambans. It has even been suggested that a plot, in which the Chinese were directly involved, to be rid of the 13th Dalai Lama before he came of age, miscarried because the "affair" had been managed very badly.<sup>36</sup>

Besides the measures adopted in Tibet, the degree of authority wielded by the Ambans at Lhasa was determined by another major consideration. This was the firmness or otherwise of the Emperor's own hold on the mainland and thus his ability to intervene by force, if necessary, in the internal affairs of Tibet. It is important to mention here, if briefly, the impact of the Opium Wars of the early eighteen forties and fifties, of the Taiping Rebellion which occupied the interregnum between the two, and to emphasise that by the latter half of the 19th century the power wielded by the Manchu Ambans in Lhasa had been rudely shaken. The growth to adulthood of the 13th Dalai and his assumption of full powers as the lay and spiritual ruler of his country, were eloquent at once of the Amban's inability to influence events and of the Lama's growing confidence in himself to manage his country's affairs. It may be noted that the Lhasa government had refused to use the golden urn for the 13th Dalai's selection and that although the Emperor had tarried long over the final acceptance of his name, he had been left but little choice in the matter. Later the pontiff showed scant courtesy to the wishes of the Emperor's representative in the choice of

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<sup>35</sup> According to Petech, "The Dalai Lamas and the Regents of Tibet", *supra*, n. 24, the respective dates are: ninth 1806-1837, eleventh 1838-1856, twelfth 1856-1875.

<sup>36</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama was born in June 1876 in a family of ordinary peasants in the province of Dak-po, a few days' journey to the south east of Lhasa. His discovery was a particularly clear one, nor were there any rival candidates. Having been chosen, the young Dalai, then hardly two years of age, was brought to Lhasa. His enthronement, however, had to await the confirmation of the Emperor and was not celebrated until 1879. The Regent, head of the Ten-gye-ling monastery whose brother was Chief Minister, concocted a plot aimed at the young ruler's life. The plot was, however, discovered and the conspirators meted out exemplary punishments. The Chinese too did their bit, unsuccessfully though, to be rid of him. Thanks to these manoeuvres the Dalai, though entitled to succeed to the sovereignty of Tibet at 18 (17 by our reckoning, for the Tibetans, like the Mongols, take into account both the year of birth as also the current year), he actually did not take over until 2 years later. For details see Bell, *Portrait*, pp. 38, 40, 49, 53-4, 57-8.

Tibet's ministers<sup>37</sup>. In fact, as events leading to the Younghusband expedition were to make clear, Lhasa's ingenuity in evading, and indeed openly defying, Chinese dictates was a subject of considerable disquietude, not to say frequent embarrassments, to Beijing. This was the more noticeable as, in their dealings with foreign powers, the Chinese had kept up an outer facade of a complete control over the Dalai Lama's government.

Another aspect of the relationship between the Tibetan pontiff and the Manchu Emperor should not be lost sight of. As the spiritual head of the Buddhists in Tibet, as well as in Mongolia, the Dalai enjoyed unbounded prestige. The Emperor was obviously anxious that this be used to his advantage- to help him consolidate his own political hold over that vast expanse on the periphery of his Empire where people swore by the Lamaist faith. Hence he assumed towards the priest the attitude of his lay protector. The relationship was always regarded by both as one of expediency, of convenience and, by the Dalai at any rate, as of a purely personal nature. Later when the Manchu dynasty was toppled in the October (1911) Revolution, the Dalai repudiated China's new regime on the plea that with the Emperor's deposition his ties with the Son of Heaven had snapped and that the Republic had no *locus standi* in the land of the lamas<sup>38</sup>. The fact that the Ambans were always drawn, as pointed out earlier, from among the Manchus and not from among the more numerous Han, lent added support to this purely personal, if almost familial relationship. As one follows the story of the first decade of Guomindang rule in China, it is evident that it had to negotiate *de novo* with the Lhasa authorities in an effort to define both the nature and extent of its control over Tibet. For obvious reasons, and quite frequently too, these negotiations were stalled by the Tibetans who, always hyper-sensitive on questions of religion, were not

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<sup>37</sup> A story of the early eighteen nineties merits a mention here of the Tibetan ingenuity to evade, and of the Chinese helplessness to force issues. The then Amban had nominated a certain Ram-ba as a member of the Tibetan Cabinet. The Dalai resented this and so the Amban was informed that Ram-ba had "died". Actually, the Tibetan government had sent him to his country home, a few days' journey outside Lhasa. The Amban, who was not unaware of the inside story, informed the Emperor that Ram-ba had, in fact, died. Meanwhile the Dalai appointed his own nominee in the vacancy caused by Ram-ba's "death". For details see Bell, *Portrait*, p.59.

<sup>38</sup> In a bid to assert his authority over Mongolia, Yuan Shikai, the first President of the then newly proclaimed Chinese Republic wrote a message to the Jebtsundamba, the Mongolian Living Buddha : the preceding Qing (viz. Manchu) dynasty has ceded all rights of administration of the Chinese people, and the people have entrusted them to me, the President...

The Living Buddha's rejoinder was prompt and to the point :

As to the claim that the Manchu dynasty surrendered its suzerain rights over them to you, it is known to all that the widow and orphan (Emperor's widow Longyou and the minor Emperor Xuantong) have lost the throne through Yuan Shikai's fraud. History will set this question straight. You would have acted more honourably had you refrained from provocative action towards others and worried more about the internal situation, in order to preserve the Chinese people from new misfortunes.

Take care you are not carved up like a melon...

Ivan Korostovetz, "Von Chinggis Khan zur Sowjetrepublik" (Berlin and Leipzig, 1926), pp. 226-9. cited in Robert A. Rupen, "Mongolian Nationalism", *Royal Central Asian Society Journal*, XLV. 2. April 1958, pp. 157-78.

The Japanese exploited this argument when they set up Puyi- "last of the Manchus"- as the puppet ruler of Manchukuo. They told the Mongols that the Manchus, to whom they owed allegiance, were now represented by Pu yi. For Pu yi's version of events see Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi, *From Emperor to Citizen*, Beijing, 1964, 2 vols., II, pp. 251-320.

prepared to trust a regime which swore by the godless concept of a secular state! Besides, the writ of Guomindang rule did not run over all parts of the mainland nor did its ability to force issues in Tibet carry conviction.

From the Dalai we may pass to the Panchen. It has already been noticed that, in contrast to the master of the Potala, the ruler of Tashilhunpo monastery has to do much less with worldly affairs, although the monastery is well endowed and the Lama traditionally the ruler of the rich Tsang province in Central Tibet.<sup>39</sup> A brief reference has also been made to a persistent theme in most Western literature on Tibet that the Dalai is "politically more powerful", though "spiritually inferior", to the Panchen. A recent variation on the theme has tried heroically to taper off the edges and as such bears citation:

In general.... it was agreed that the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama stood together at the apex of the monastic pyramid, with the latter assigned ... a minute degree of spiritual precedence in dogma - a technicality with little or no practical effect. In the sphere of lay authority, on the other hand, the power of the Dalai Lama was, in principle paramount, even if its actual exercise was...very markedly circumscribed by the realities of Tibet's feudal mode of life.

As to the Panchen's territorial domain,

numerous districts in the Shigatse area held in fief by the Panchen Lama personally, that is, by virtue of his high office, and those allotted to the corporate body of the monastery of which he acted as the religious and administrative head to furnish its inmates with the basic means of sustenance.... In this the arrangement did not differ from that which obtained on all important estates ...<sup>40</sup>

Purists, pundits and partisans alike maintain, however, that insofar as the Panchen is the incarnation of Amitabha he takes precedence over the Dalai who represents the human form of Avalokiteshvara.<sup>41</sup> Plausible even though it may appear in theory, two factors militate against the above hypothesis. Firstly, as already noticed, the office of the Dalai Lama was established before that of the Panchen. Secondly, it was the Great Fifth who first created the institution of the Panchen. And why should he have set up, it is pertinent to ask,

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<sup>39</sup> The Panchen's authority, however, is only in theory for the actual administration of the province is under the direct control of Lhasa.

In June, 1952, the Tibet Military Area was established by the Chinese and the region was divided into three administrative zones; a) Central and Western Tibet under the Dalai Lama at Lhasa ; b) Central Tibet, under the Panchen Lama at Shigatse, and c) Eastern Tibet under the Chamdo Liberation Committee headed by a Chinese General.

<sup>40</sup> George Ginsburgs and Michael Mathos, *Communist China & Tibet*, The Hague, 1964, p. 44.

<sup>41</sup> Bell's comment on this question merits reproduction :

Yet even though Chen-re-zi is but the spiritual son he is, nevertheless, the patron deity of Tibet. The early kings whose memories are universally revered, ruled over the entire country from Lhasa and were regarded as incarnations of Chen-re-zi. There is nothing in Tashi-ihun-po quite as holy as the temple in Lhasa. "The place of the gods" is above all other places in name, in fame, in sanctity, and its Grand Lama sits above all others.

Bell, *Religion of Tibet*, p. 190.

A French scholar, Fernand Gerard in "Haute Asie", *Geographie Universelle*, Paris, 1929, Vd. VIII, p. 376, makes a less sophisticated observation namely that the Panchen is important because he controls a separate territorial enclave, and is temporarily inferior to the Dalai "only because his principality is smaller".

someone spiritually higher than himself? The prevalent misconception appears to have arisen if partly from the fact that the Dalai Lama elevated to high status the incarnation of his old guru and owing to the respect which a teacher is accorded, especially in the East, the notion of higher status took shape and form. It may be mentioned here, if only in parenthesis, that whenever the Panchen Lama is older than the Dalai he is, of course, his teacher- and vice versa.<sup>42</sup> This imparts its own particular tint to their relationship without affecting its basic connotation.

In sum, it may be relevant to cite the 14th Dalai Lama's considered views on the subject which, without eschewing controversy, appear in retrospect to be tantamount to a pronouncement *ex cathedra* :

the Panchen Lamas had been among the Lamas second only to the Dalai Lamas in religious authority in Tibet, but they had never held any secular authority. Throughout our history, relations between the two had been perfectly cordial.... In most generations, the younger had become the pupil of the older.<sup>43</sup>

A span of almost a quarter century since the earlier monograph appeared allows some introspection on the events already surveyed. And enables one to take stock of such works as have appeared in the interregnum and have relevance to the subject matter.

While it may not be possible or even desirable to review the crowded three decades and more, which span the original monograph in their entirety, a few benchmarks where new research has made a dent are touched upon, if only briefly, in the pages that follow. Here it would be a great help if the reader has a clear grasp of the main narrative. It would be useful in putting things in their proper context and perspective. And pay rich dividends.

The Dalai Lama had been 'offended' with the news of the Panchen's visit to Calcutta (1906) at the behest of the British Trade Agent at Gyantse<sup>44</sup>. His Chinese biographer, Ya Hanzhang, maintains that O'Connor had "insisted" on the Panchen's visit and even "threatened" to subjugate both Shigatse and Tashilhunpo if he declined<sup>45</sup>. Bell, it may be recalled, informed his superiors about the Panchen telling a Grand Secretary deputed by the Dalai Lama that O'Connor had "threatened" him that "ill-will will befall if he did not go (to India)."<sup>46</sup> Goldstein however has put forth the view that this is "unlikely" to have been an important factor underlying the Panchen's visit and appears to have been simply "a post hoc

<sup>42</sup> Bell, *Portrait*, p. 64, maintains that the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai "being the older of the two was the spiritual guide of the Panchen", that when the latter visited Lhasa in 1902, the Dalai administered to him the highest religious vows and again that when the Dalai Lama returned from China to Lhasa in 1909, the Panchen came to meet him "on the way ten days' journey north of Lhasa". The word Panchen is an abbreviation of Pandita Ch'en Po (Great Scholar/Professor). Tibetans call him Panchen Rim-po-che, and not Tashi Lama, a term used interchangeably by Western scholars. Actually the term "Tashi Lama" is used for priests of inferior position, who attend weddings etc.

<sup>43</sup> *Dalai Lama*, p. 95.

<sup>44</sup> For a fuller account see *Infra*, pp. 39-42

<sup>45</sup> Ya Hanzhang, *Biographies of Tibetan Spiritual Leaders: Panchen Erdhenis*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1994, pp. 228-9.

<sup>46</sup> "Note communicated by Mr. Bell respecting Lhasa and Shigatse", encl 4 in No. 34, *FO 35/12*. Inter alia Bell reported that "last December" (1908), a Grand Secretary had questioned the Panchen "twice" about his visit to India" and this time "under direct orders of the Dalai Lama".



rationalization"<sup>47</sup>. In Calcutta, the Panchen was allegedly asked to kowtow to the visiting Prince of Wales (future King George V) which he is said to have declined.

At his meeting with the Chinese Special Imperial Commissioner, Zhang Yintang (1907)<sup>48</sup>, the Panchen is said to have "requested permission" to report in person to the Dowager Empress Cixi and Emperor Dezong on the compulsions that had made him leave Tashilhunpo for Calcutta<sup>49</sup>.

Goldstein cites an account of the dispute between the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama to substantiate the point that the latter had refused a written request from the Dalai to join him when he fled Lhasa and sought refuge in India (1910). This refusal, understandably, angered the Dalai Lama no end<sup>50</sup>. His Chinese biographer Ya Hanzhang has suggested that the Dalai's "first inclination"<sup>51</sup>, after his flight from Lhasa, was to seek asylum with the Panchen Lama in Shigatse. On second thoughts, however, and fearing the Amban might send troops to Shigatse he changed his mind and fled to India. But here too, he came to Darjeeling because he had "intended" to go to Beijing. Again, the Panchen is said to have dispatched "several gifts" to the Dalai while the latter was in Darjeeling.

The American author draws upon Shakabapa to the effect that during his sojourn in Lhasa (1911), the Panchen stayed in the Dalai's quarters in the Norbulingka and frequently participated in ceremonies and get-togethers with the Amban and the Chinese military commander. And was taken around the Tibetan capital in a palanquin with the Amban "in a way the Dalai Lama normally was".<sup>52</sup>

According to the French scholar Fabienne Jagou, the Panchen's visit to Lhasa, referred to in the preceding paragraph, was the result of an invitation by the Amban. And, on arrival, the Lama allegedly took upon himself to play the Dalai Lama's role at a number of official functions. He stayed at the Norbulingka and accompanied by the Amban led the procession during the Cho-nga chopa ("offering of the Fifteenth Festival")<sup>53</sup>.

Another version tells us that "provoked" by the Amban, the Panchen Lama first stayed at the Jokhang temple and later moved to the Norbulingka. This is said to have enraged the people of Lhasa and heralded the "first sparks" of their secret resistance (to the Chinese presence)<sup>54</sup>.

The Panchen Lama was later to confide in the British Trade Agent, David Macdonald, that the Chinese had asked him to take the Dalai's place, which he "flatly refused"<sup>55</sup>. And this it was that occasioned his visit to Lhasa in 1911. Later he sat in the throne room of the Norbulingka during an audience with the Amban because "no other seat had been provided". This incident, the Panchen felt, had been "deliberately" planned by the Chinese

<sup>47</sup> Melvyn C Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet 1913-1951: the demise of the Lamaist State*, New Delhi, 1993, n. 50, p. 62.

<sup>48</sup> Ya Hanzhang, *op cit*, p. 229.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>50</sup> Goldstein, *op cit*, p. 62. For a fuller account see *Infra*

<sup>51</sup> Ya Hanzhang, *op cit*, pp. 236, 238.

<sup>52</sup> Goldstein, *op cit*, p. 63.

<sup>53</sup> Fabienne Jagou, "A Pilgrim's Progress: the peregrinations of the 6<sup>th</sup> (i.e. 9<sup>th</sup>) Panchen Lama" *Lungta*, winter 1996, pp 12-23.

<sup>54</sup> K Dhondup, *The Water-bird and other years: A history of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama*, New Delhi, 1986, p. 40.

<sup>55</sup> David Macdonald, *Twenty Years in Tibet: Intimate and Personal Experiences of the Closed Land among all classes of the people from the Highest to the Lowest*, London, 1932, p. 103.

to implicate him in their schemes. The Lama "insisted" that he went to Lhasa "only under compulsion" and would "sooner die" than act contrary to the Dalai Lama's interests. Intriguingly, a satirical Lhasa composition referred to him as a magpie, half black and half white, symbolizing the double-faced role the Panchen was then playing. Nor was that all. Goldstein has cited the biography of a lay official to suggest that the Lama's loyalty was suspect *ab initio* for, other things apart, his followers did not render any help in expelling the rebellious Chinese army units from the Shigatse area (1912)<sup>56</sup>.

The American author has drawn upon the account of a former Tashilhunpo official, a lay aristocrat, to suggest that in 1917 some fresh imposts had been levied on the serfs of his estate in the Gyantse district. And, five years later, an additional annual tax was imposed on Tashilhunpo. Before he finally fled (November 1923), the Panchen allegedly had made "one aborted attempt" to escape.<sup>57</sup> Popular street songs in Lhasa, it would appear, clearly applauded his successful effort to take a flight into exile<sup>58</sup>.

Hanzhang has suggested that with the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet (1912), his relations with the Panchen took a turn for the worse. Three years later, in 1915, the Chinese author avers, the Dalai Lama set up a "Kyidzong", equivalent to the Prefecture Administrative Office in China, at Shigatse with a monk and a lay official in charge. The Panchen viewed this as an "encroachment" on his authority, which he found hard to stomach. Later, the Kyidzong was to impose fines of grain, free transportation and taxes on the Panchen's domain. This was to lead to "a serious deterioration" in relations between the two Lamas<sup>59</sup>.

In 1916, the Panchen it would appear wrote to the Dalai Lama bringing to his notice his peoples' grievances. Sadly, the matter kept hanging fire for presently (1917) the Dalai Lama retired for some solitary meditations, which were to last for about three years. In the event, a meeting between the Lamas could take place only in 1919 when the Panchen visited Lhasa and is said to have been received "coldly". He returned home after a short stay. Meantime his relatives and ministers summoned urgently to Lhasa were thrown into prison on arrival. The Panchen is said to have viewed this as "an omen of disaster" and decided to flee.

A knowledgeable Tibetan scholar tells us that before stepping into Lhasa (end-1912), the Dalai Lama stayed for several months in the Dor-je Pa-mo (the Thunderbolt Sow) monastery, some 70 miles this side of the Tibetan capital. And by the time he returned to the Potala, at the close of his second exile, the Lama was strongly persuaded that to survive, Tibet had to be both powerful and modern. This, in fact, was the only way to maintain its independence. An army was to be recruited and arms and ammunition imported. Which understandably called for harnessing of additional resources- and higher taxation. For obvious reasons, the Panchen and his vast estates could not have escaped the dragnet.

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<sup>56</sup> Goldstein, *op cit.*, p. 63. In a forceful diatribe against the Panchen and his associates, the Dalai Lama charged him with conspiring with the British (1904) and later the Chinese Amban Lian You (1911) "while making an attempt to seize the reins of government."

Later still, the Panchen failed to make due contributions to the Army and "committed acts in violation of law." For details, see Tieh-tseng Li, *The Historical Status of Tibet*, New York, 1956, p. 154.

<sup>57</sup> For details. Goldstein, *op cit.* pp. 112-3.

The American author has drawn upon a Tibetan account of the dispute between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama (listed at p. 847 of his references).

<sup>58</sup> For the text of the street songs, see *Ibid.* p 120.

<sup>59</sup> Ya Hanzhang, *op cit.*, p. 258.

Opposition to the Dalai Lama's policies came not so much from the aristocracy as the monastic establishment, especially the three great monasteries. And Tashilhunpo. In Lhasa, it may be recalled, both Bell, and Tsarong Shape had been threatened by the monks (1921) whose sheer numbers played a dominating, albeit often negative, role in Tibetan politics<sup>60</sup>.

After their preliminary exchanges (1924-6) which were far from friendly, relations between the Lamas visibly cooled. In the event, thanks to the 13th Dalai Lama's strong and uncompromising stance on the Panchen's alleged refusal to respond to his overtures, no major effort at a rapprochement was made while the master of the Potala was still around. Actually by the summer of 1928, it should be obvious, the Dalai Lama under the advice of Lungshar appeared to be more determined than ever not to make any concessions to the Panchen. This was reinforced by the recapture after an almost successful escape, of the Panchen's nephew, Yabshi Kung as well as his mother and stepfather. And a dozen retainers. They were treated harshly, placed in irons and thrown into a dungeon deep down in the Potala.

It was at this stage that the then Political Officer in Sikkim, F.M. Bailey proposed that the Panchen be offered asylum in India. Or else he would become, to obvious British embarrassment, an active ally of the Chinese in their endeavour to recover much of their lost ground in Tibet. The Panchen's presence in India, Bailey argued, would act as a deterrent of sorts on an increasingly anti-British stance of the Tibetan ruler. Who, it may be recalled, was a little later to refuse to issue a much-sought invitation for Bailey's successor to visit Lhasa.

Understandably, while the British Legation in China may have been receptive to Bailey's suggestion, New Delhi was not. The former would be only too glad to be rid of Tibetan involvement for it was by no means easy for them to ignore the Panchen, much less his somewhat embarrassing activities. The Raj on the other hand refused to be entangled directly in what it viewed as Tibet's essentially domestic wrangles<sup>61</sup>.

A recent study reveals that in the first half of 1928, the Eastern Department of the OGPU, the much-dreaded Soviet secret police created on the basis of Cheka in 1923, drew up a 23-page memorandum entitled "The Buddhist Regions". Which suggested inter alia

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<sup>60</sup> K. Dhondup, *supra*, n. 54, p. 47.

Bell has an entire chapter, "People Urged to Kill Us", revealing how an undercurrent of mounting tension among the monks against the Dalai Lama's new fangled Tibetan soldiery brought mysterious placards on Lhasa streets "telling the people to kill Kennedy and myself." Among thick rumours in India that the whole mission had been massacred, the Dalai Lama calmed down his people with the assurance that the British were not going to make war on Tibet and that their objective was only to make a treaty.

Lt. Col R S Kennedy was a member of the Indian Medical Service who had accompanied Bell to Lhasa during his yearlong sojourn (November 1920 – October 1921).

Tsarong who was a member of the Cabinet, commander-in-chief as well as master of the Mint, Bell noted, was very pro-British. He was "so strongly hated" by the monks, was "so unpopular" and his life "so often threatened" that he always carried a revolver. By 1925 however, he had been downgraded, his place being taken by Lungshar, markedly anti-British, as the new C-in-C. For details see Bell, *Portrait*, pp 283-4, 289, 301, 366.

A new biography by his son, Dundul Namgayal Tsarong, *In the Service of his Country: the biography of Dasang Damdul Tsarong, Commander General of Tibet*, Ithaca, 2000 is revealing of the senior Tsarong and sets the record of his life straight.

<sup>61</sup> Bailey to India, 10 July 1928, *IOR*, L/P&S/12/4174.

that the major source of anxiety at the time was Inner Mongolia and Barga where all anti-Soviet elements tended to rally around the Panchen Bogdo or, the more familiar Panchen Lama. Their apparent targets were the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR), or Outer Mongolia- and the Soviet Union. The OGPU document centred largely on the Panchen Lama, the exiled incarnation- his entourage, public utterances and activities. There was also a general discussion on the Tibetan situation, the Dalai Lama-Panchen Lama conflict, British and other "imperialist" intrigues and Soviet efforts to frustrate these. Among the major points highlighted were the setback Whitehall had received as a result of the 1925 coup in Lhasa which had among other things resulted in dismantling the largely British recruited, and trained, police force. And the sack of their protege, Tsarong Shape, the "war minister".

The creation and strengthening of the MPR, the document stressed, had demonstrated to the Dalai Lama that the Soviet Union was the only state that "does not encroach" on Tibet's independence. A fact amply demonstrated by the Lama's letters to Aguan Dorjief authorizing him to conclude a treaty for the supply of "arms and gunpowder" and, for better communications, the setting up of mail stations between the MPR and Tibet. The Lama had also expressed his satisfaction on the fact that Buddhists faced no persecution in the MPR.

There was a mention too of Britain's "intense work" on the Panchen Lama to set him in opposition to the Dalai Lama who, understandably, wanted to bring the former back so as to prevent Whitehall from "using" him. This too was underscored by the Dalai Lama's exchanges with Dorjief wherein he made it clear that he had "no political differences" with the Panchen. And that such "harmful" activities in which the latter indulged were not his handiwork but that of his entourage.

The document revealed that the Panchen was the rallying point for all the "reactionary elements" in Inner and Outer Mongolia, Manchuria and even Buryatia. Both Japan as well as the Chinese warlord Chang Tsolin, were "trying their best" to win him over. Chiang's government too was overly deferential providing him with guards of honour, special trains, monetary help. And prompt renovation of monasteries!

One way to curry favour with the Tibetan ruler, the OGPU reasoned, was to reveal to him the "political leanings" of the Panchen while an "influential" lama needed to be attached to his entourage to gather "full intelligence" on him. Again, "provided" he proved to be a Soviet sympathizer, the possibility of granting the Panchen Lama political asylum in the USSR was to be considered.

Later, it has been suggested, an experienced Mongolian agent was insinuated into the Panchen's entourage so as to "undermine and liquidate" his Japanese-nurtured organization.

It may also bear mention that the famous Russian mystic and savant Nicholas Roerich, who in the final count sought asylum in India, had in the early 1920s formulated his "Great Plan" which visualized inter alia "the great unification" of the Buddhists of Asia. To realize it, Roerich had proposed (1926) a "Buddhist Mission" to Lhasa led by the Panchen Lama and "the Great Dalai Lama" (reference to himself). Should the Tibetan ruler, the incumbent 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, oppose the mission, he was to face an immediate overthrow. To start with, Roerich sought out the Panchen Lama and planned his joining the Russian at Ulan Bator in his proposed march. He was keen to have the backing of the Panchen who, he (Roerich) suspected, had come under the influence of the Japanese with their ulterior designs both on Inner and Outer Mongolia- and Manchuria. Designs which, understandably, were anathema to the Soviets.

Stalinist Russia was not exactly taken in by Roerich's seemingly hare-brained schemes. Yet, happily for him, it lent their compatriot covert support in the hope of garnering some political gains. Unfortunately, though, an early setback was the inability to track the Panchen Lama, determined efforts to get in touch with him notwithstanding. Presently as the party, *sans* the abbot of Tashilhunpo, neared the Tibetan frontier from the north, Roerich was joined in by a small "Dalai Lama's caravan" headed by a Tibetan official in Ulan Bator carrying arms and ammunition supplied by the Soviets. In October 1927, Roerich and his motley crew was halted at a Tibetan check-post north of Nagchuka. The Russian mystic's frantic efforts to communicate with the Dalai Lama or his ministers and even Bailey, the British political officer in Sikkim (who, incidentally, had prevailed upon the Tibetan government to bar his entry) to remove this roadblock proved to be singularly unavailing. Frustrated, and in high dudgeon, Roerich wrote to the Lama that in view of the latter's refusal, the Western Buddhists will elect their own leader, a separate Dalai Lama, and would have nothing to do with him. In January 1928, Roerich's party moved away from the Tibetan frontier and later, in May, arrived at Darjeeling.

The Dalai Lama's refusal to play ball frustrated Roerich no end and turned him into a bitter, even an unforgiving critic. He placed the Panchen Lama high above his "unpious" colleague, and called him the "spiritual leader" of Tibet: because "of him only good things are known". Roerich ruled that he fully shared the widely held view that the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama was to be the last of his line. And prophesied the Panchen's "eventual" return home when the "Precious Doctrine" will flourish again. After an initial honeymoon with the Soviets which was indeed short-lived, Roerich fell foul of them too; they had refused to lend countenance to his vaguely defined "City of Knowledge" and a seemingly millenarian new world order<sup>62</sup>.

In the early 1930s the Dalai Lama appears to have relented somewhat for in 1932, just a year prior to his death, a ten-member delegation of the Panchen headed by one of his close confidants, Ngachen Rimpoche, repaired to Lhasa. And the abbot of Tashilhunpo was "very happy" that the Dalai Lama had received them. Nothing however came of the protracted parleys; the sad fact was that as between the two Lamas there was hardly any meeting ground<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> Alexandre Andreyev, *Soviet Russia And Tibet: The Debacle of Secret Diplomacy, 1918-1930s*. Leiden, 2003. The author has devoted an entire chapter, "Nicholas Roerich and his 'Western Buddhist Embassy'", pp. 293-317, to the theme.

<sup>63</sup> In February 1933, two of the Panchen's envoys armed with an autographed letter by the Lama, left for Tibet, via India. Ngachen Rimpoche, the mission's head, stated that the Panchen was desirous of returning home and keen that all the rights he formerly enjoyed in Tsang be restored to him. The Dalai accorded the mission "impressive hospitality", expressed a desire for the Panchen's early return and looked forward to working with him. These reports are said to have brought "immense joy" to the Panchen. For details, "Thubten Gyatso, the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama" in Ya Hanzhang, *Biographies of the Dalai Lamas*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1991, pp. 375-6. The Chinese author has drawn upon an account in "A Brief Political and Religious History of Tibet".

After protracted negotiations with the Tibetan national assembly, the Tsongdu, the two envoys drew a blank (November 1933) and on their way back home met the British political officer in Sikkim at Gangtok (March 1934). Williamson gathered that the Panchen's terms were not negotiable while the Tsongdu had been equally adamant in refusing to yield any ground on the fundamentals. For

Shakabapa tells us that the Kashag's message on the morrow of the Dalai's death inviting the Panchen Lama back (February 1934) had been telegraphed to Tibetan representatives in Nanjing who delivered it personally to the Panchen Lama. The latter however is said to have "treated them with disdain"<sup>64</sup>.

Goldstein cites from the "History of the Dalai Lamas" a long letter the Panchen wrote to Chiang Kai-shek (11 March 1935) outlining his plans for Tibet. These included inter alia the building of "a much-needed road" and, after he returned, establishment of schools "for complete education". For these projects to bear fruit, he demanded an allocation of one million Chinese dollars. And hoped the Guomindang government will "make preparations" for arranging these funds. He also wanted "an honour guard of protective troops" who will, in their new uniforms, "look magnificent"<sup>65</sup>.

The American author cites the same source to the effect that monastic representatives met the Panchen in Amdo (June 1936) and gave him a letter from the Kashag which while reiterating its acceptance of the Panchen's conditions "in the main" hoped he would not bring any Chinese/Mongolian troops or officials. But, should the Lama fail to comply, "we have definitely decided to block your return". If the Panchen did need an escort, he could choose Tibetan soldiers of "your native Tsang" who would meet him at the border. In December 1936, a second group of welcoming officials led by a senior monk brought the Panchen another warning to much the same effect, namely that he must not bring a Chinese military escort with him<sup>66</sup>.

In an interview, Shakabapa detailed the strong reactions among members of the Tsongdu to the Panchen's "arrow letter" of March 1937 asking his officials to make "all the necessary arrangements" to receive him and his entourage. In doing so, it was clear that the Panchen had completely ignored the authority of the Tibetan government if not indeed treated it with utter contempt. In the event, the National Assembly made "an extraordinary recommendation" to the Kashag called the "great oath" which stipulated inter alia that "under no circumstances" could Chinese troops enter Tibet. The "oath", Shakabapa explained, was the "strongest document" the Assembly could send, "for it cannot be altered"<sup>67</sup>.

Presently however a compromise of sorts was knocked into shape laying down that if Chinese bodyguards were allowed to enter Tibet there would have to be a written guarantee with a third country acting as witness that they would return to China "in a month or two". Subsequently, Ya Hanzhang informs us, the deadline was extended, the troops now being asked to leave Tibet "unconditionally by sea or by the northern route after a three months'

details, Williamson to India, 8 January and 28 March 1934 in IOR, L/P & S/12/4/181. Also, Goldstein, pp. 259-60.

<sup>64</sup> Tsepon W D Shakabapa, *Tibet: A Political History*, New Haven, 1967, p. 280. Also see Goldstein, n. 15, p. 261.

<sup>65</sup> Goldstein, pp. 271-2. Here the author cites from a History of the Dalai Lamas, published in Amdo (1986). The Panchen's communication, Goldstein insists, showed not only his "strongly pro-Chinese stance" but also his "somewhat inflated view" of his own future role in Tibet.

<sup>66</sup> Reference to these overtures is outlined in Norbu Dhondup's report from Lhasa (July 1936). For details see Norbu Dhondup to PO in Sikkim, 15 July and Gould to India, 30 September 1936, in IOR, L/P&S/12, 4186 B.

<sup>67</sup> For details, see Goldstein, pp 291-3. Here the author has drawn upon his interview with Shakabapa.

rest". The condition for the international guarantee was also dropped but the Panchen was asked "to obey the orders of the Lhasa government".<sup>68</sup>

Goldstein cites the biography of Phabongka Rinpoche who had repaired to the Panchen's seat in Amdo to persuade him to return, receiving a communication from the Regent (i.e. Reting Rinpoche) to the effect that in the light of deliberations in the Tsongdu the issue concerning Chinese bodyguards for the Panchen was "not at all negotiable". The communication is said to have deeply shocked the visiting Rinpoche<sup>69</sup>.

All this while the Guomindang regime was determined to derive the maximum advantage it could from the Panchen's forced exile from his land. While its control over the mainland's provinces was tenuous enough, the Nationalist regime's sway over China's borderlands, in Tibet, Sinkiang, Inner Mongolia, was virtually non-existent. And it was in its endeavour to integrate these regions with the mainland that Chiang's government decided to exploit the Lama's presence to the utmost. Understandably, while the civil war raged unchecked through all major Chinese provinces during the first decade of his exile (1923-32), the Panchen spent most of his time in the relative peace of Inner Mongolia. Here he was a guest of an array of Leagues and Banners who catered to his safety- and material comforts. As between 1928-30, he is said to have performed four "kalachakras", each attended by an estimated 80,000 people<sup>70</sup>.

The Lama's mission was to concentrate for most part on countering insidious Japanese propaganda among the Mongols who had literally been promised the moon: autonomy under Nippon's auspices! For their part, fearing the loss of their ethnic identity and cultural distinctness in the larger, if inchoate, ocean of the preponderant Han, the Mongols were only too eager to accept Tokyo's promises at their face value. In the final count, however, if the Mongols were not taken in by Japanese propaganda, and blandishments, the credit must, for most part, rest with the tireless efforts of the Panchen. He gave them the strength and fortitude to reject Tokyo's oft-repeated offers of autonomy. And taught them the strategies to respond both to Japanese incursions from without as well as the unremitting attacks of Chinese warlords nearer home<sup>71</sup>.

As has been noticed, Chiang conferred any number of honours and titles on the Panchen, in 1924, 1926 and 1932- and gave him and his entourage generous financial grants<sup>72</sup>. Both to keep the Lama in good humour as well as build around him a powerful

<sup>68</sup> For details see Ya Hanzhang, *Biographies of Tibetan Spiritual Leaders: Panchen Erdhenis*, *op cit.*, pp. 297-9.

<sup>69</sup> Goldstein gives a comprehensive account of the mission headed by Phabongka Rinpoche who then on a visit to Kham for religious teachings (1937) was persuaded to visit the Panchen Lama at Jyekundo. For details see *Goldstein*, pp. 289-99.

<sup>70</sup> Fabienne Jagou, *op cit.*

<sup>71</sup> A Chinese author noted that while the Japanese tried all kinds of strategies to win over the Mongols, the latter remained unnerved while the Panchen's teachings gave them the "fortitude to resist".

Jagou suggests that as desired by the Guomindang, the Panchen Lama was both "an instrument to pacify the princes anxious to establish their authority", and "a reliable observer" for sending important information to the Nanjing government on the political situation in Mongolia. The Panchen's teachings, we are told, centred on the strategies to respond to Japanese incursions and the unremitting attacks of the Chinese warlords. For details, see *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> The French author retails the following data :

July 1924: Faithful Orator Devoted to the progress of moral values

counterpoise to the master of the Potala. This was all the more necessary in that despite seeming compliance, the Dalai Lama had proved singularly recalcitrant. And unwilling to do business with China's Guomindang ruler.

By 1934, with the situation stabilizing and the Nationalist regime able to get an upper hand in the civil war, the Panchen Lama moved away from Inner Mongolia and inched closer to central Tibet- to Amdo (Qinghai) and Kham (Xikang). A major setback though was that his plea to Chiang about the urgency of road building and schools, referred to earlier, did not receive much attention. And not only because of the huge expense involved but also the knowledge that any such activity was bound to antagonize the Tibetan authorities. And the Tibetan people at large<sup>73</sup>.

Meanwhile the discovery of a large cache of arms in the Panchen's advance baggage in transit through Tibet (1935) was embarrassing to the Lama as well as his patrons. The detection of these clandestine arms notwithstanding, the Guomindang regime had created a "Special Embassy" to protect the Panchen and his property<sup>74</sup>.

In the four years separating the Dalai's death (December 1933) and the Panchen's passing away (December 1937), there were any number of initiatives by the Panchen Lama, the KMT, the Kashag - and the British- to bring the Panchen closer to the regime in Lhasa so as to facilitate his return. The bedrock on which they floundered, one and all, was the Panchen's insistence on an armed escort of Han/Mongol soldiers that should accompany him. And an equally firm, if uncompromising, stand by the authorities in Lhasa- both lay and monastic- that this would just not be acceptable. The Lama was offered any number of compromises - soldiers from his native Tsang province who would stand guard on him as he wended his way homewards; assurances by Lhasa's three principal monasteries, of safe conduct and protection to life and limb; willingness to negotiate all his demands to his satisfaction once he returned to Tashilhunpo. Towards early 1937, Lhasa was even prepared to let him bring an escort provided it returned in five and later, as a compromise, in two months. And by way of the sea. While the Panchen underwrote a guarantee that an outside

August 1926: A golden seal and title by Chiang Kai-shek; "Propagator of the Truth for the sake of Beings"

May 1931: A seal engraved with the title, "Great and Benevolent Master Panchen who protects the country and propagates its values," and presented by Chiang.

October 1932: Emissary Entrusted with propagation of moral values in the Western Regions.

In 1931 Chiang sanctioned an annual subsidy of 120,000 Yuan to the Panchen.

For details, see *Ibid*.

Lamb suggests that the appointment "seems to have dated" from December 1932 and that the title was "Cultural Commissioner for Western Border Regions". Li, *op cit*, p. 35 dates it from 1935.

Lamb further maintains that the Panchen arrived in Nanjing sometime in January, 1934 via Beijing to discuss the implications of the death of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in the previous December. And that in February 1934 he was sworn in as a member of the National Government of China. More, he was off and on in Nanjing until the early summer of 1934 and on at least one occasion had a long discussion with Chiang Kaishek. For details, *Lamb*, p. 238.

<sup>73</sup> In a report to the Chinese government (March 1935), the Panchen had suggested their building roads in Amdo, Kham, Lhasa and other parts of Tibet and open post offices in the major districts to facilitate the "propagation of moral values". The Chinese government demurred invoking "budgetary constraints" and fear of "awakening Tibetan suspicions". Fabienne Jagou, *op cit*.

<sup>74</sup> The escort to be stationed on the Qinghai-Tibet border and asked to liaise with the provincial governors of Qinghai and Xikang; was to comprise two squads of "500 or a thousand men and forty officers." For details, see *ibid*.



power (read Great Britain) would witness the deal. By June 1937, a compromise of sorts was being knocked into shape. Sadly, in all these bouts of seemingly endless parleys, there was a fatal flaw; an inherent gnawing distrust between the opposing sides. Each suspecting the other of bad faith, of possible foul play.

More than his singular lack of trust in Lhasa's rulers and the absence of a viable compromise that may be mutually satisfactory, what finally unhinged the last-ditch efforts of the Panchen to return home was the launching of a major Japanese onslaught on the mainland. To be exact, Japanese troops engaged in manoeuvres near Peking clashed with Chinese soldiers (7 July 1937) leading to the fall of the town (28 July) and of Tientsin, the day following. The Guomindang, despite the political support it may have garnered at home with Mao's men willing to back a united front of sorts, was up against a difficult situation abroad. Hence the urgency of damage control; in concrete terms, the need to make up with John Bull. And removing such irritants as marching the Panchen into Tibet with a Chinese escort to which Whitehall had taken such strong exception. For it would, its envoy had reasoned, upset the balance of power in Tibet and lead to an unacceptable measure of instability on the Indian frontier. In the event, Chiang ignored the Panchen's well-reasoned plea that his return- with or without an escort- fell within the parameters of China's domestic concerns. And the British clearly had no *locus standi* in the matter. Should they be allowed to interfere, he had pointed out, it would set a bad precedent<sup>75</sup>.

Hanzhang offers a perceptive analysis of the issues at stake. And points out that the "key point" in the debate among the parties- the Panchen, the Kashag, the Guomindang government and the British- was that the Lama was not to be escorted by Han/ Mongol troops. Superficially, he concludes, "it seemed a matter of guards only"; "in fact", it was concerned with the relationship between Tibet and the central government and the question of China's 'sovereignty' over Tibet<sup>76</sup>.

The Panchen made no concession as to the principle at stake- his own right and that of the Chinese government- to provide him protection in its territory, Tibet being an inalienable part of China. The Guomindang government, it was pointed out, did not accept the validity of the Simla Convention (1914), which had specifically barred Chinese troops from Outer Tibet's territorial domain (Art III). On the other hand, the Kashahg had warned that should the Lama bring in Chinese / Mongol troops, they will face armed resistance and no transport facilities will be provided to him, much less his entourage.

Interestingly, despite all the solemn assurances Chiang's government had held out, the Lama somehow did not feel reassured. Cheng Yun, the first commander of his bodyguard left soon after his induction. Nor did his successor, Zhao Shouyu, inspire much confidence. In the event, the Lama's plaintive cry and forlorn hope that the central government "will persist in its decisions and follow them through" took him nowhere.

One can imagine that the Panchen was not a little disappointed at Chiang finally pulling the rug from under the Lama's feet. And while he suspended his return for the duration of the anti-Japanese war, he let it be known that his deadline was April 1938. When he would go back- by peaceful means, if possible; by force, if necessary. And this, "even if" the war with Japan did not draw to a close.

A word on the Lama's own seeming dilatoriness and lack of decision. According to the French author Jagou, he had left Kumbum in May 1936 but on the way, at Labrang

<sup>75</sup> Ya Hanzhang, *Biographies of Panchen Erdhenis*, *op cit*, pp 396-7.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p. 295.

Tashikhyil, he spent "almost a whole year" giving religious teachings, finalising details of his return journey and solving local conflicts in Inner Mongolia and Kham. In August, he is reported to have left the Labrang in the direction of Jyekundo where he arrived in December 1936. The new "Embassy in charge of the Panchen Lama", headed by Zhao Shouyu arrived in Jyekundo in July (1937). On 15 August, the Panchen left Jyekundo, crossing the Sino-Tibetan border soon thereafter. Ten days later the Chinese authorities asked him to halt, intimating that his return home would "jeopardize" relations with Britain and pleading with him to postpone his journey "for a few months"<sup>77</sup>.

A footnote to the Panchen's movements in 1936-7 which have been the subject of not a little confusion. According to Richardson, the Lama had sometime in September (1937) removed himself to a fairly remote monastery, Rashi Gumpa, "just on the Tibetan frontier"<sup>78</sup> where Lhasa's representatives had gone to see him. The end-result of the parleys: he could move into Lhasa-controlled territory with his escort provided that while he and his entourage headed straight for Shigatse, the escort did not remain in Tibet for more than five months before going back to China.

At this stage, it would appear, the Panchen resolved to move from Jyekundo to Kanze, "perhaps as the first stage" for a return to Inner Mongolia or a transfer of his headquarters "to somewhere like" Tachienlu. When precisely was the Panchen informed about the Chinese decision not to allow him to cross is not clear, what is is that it was on 18 October (1937) that the Chinese foreign office informed the British embassy in Nanjing that the Panchen's escort "would not be entering Tibet for the present."<sup>79</sup>

Richardson who was in Lhasa manning the Indian mission after the departure of Gould (February 1937), tells us that the Chinese had "pressed on" with their plan- to send the Panchen Lama to Tibet with an armed escort- "even after" the outbreak of the war with Japan. And that it was only when Nanjing discovered that the Tibetans- who had ordered mobilization and thereby demonstrated their intention to resist- "meant business" and realized that it "could not afford another war" besides the one now forced on its head by the Japanese, was the Nationalist regime "compelled to call off the expedition"<sup>80</sup>.

Hanzhang's conclusion lets Chiang and his vacillating government off the hook. The Panchen's failure to return, he avers, was caused "not only by the open opposition of the pro-imperialist forces (in the Tibetan government) but also by behind-the-scenes manipulation of British imperialists."

Early in life, the Panchen had waged war against British imperialists (1903-4, 1911-2); in "later years", he fought against the Japanese onslaught. In sum, his Chinese biographer concludes, the Lama was "a brave anti-imperialist soldier".<sup>81</sup>

Viewing the low intensity warfare between the Lamas that raged, well nigh undimmed, almost their entire life spans in perspective, is a daunting task. A few facts however emerge pretty clearly. At the outset, the forceful if decisive character of the 13th Dalai Lama. Once he had convinced himself, rightly or wrongly, that the Panchen Lama was less than loyal to

<sup>77</sup> Fabienne Jagou, *op cit.*

<sup>78</sup> Richardson, *History*, p. 146.

Lamb equates Rashi Gumpa with Lungshagon, about 40 miles to the west of Jyekundo and "very close to the border between Chinghai and Gyade". *Lamb*, n. 561, p. 268.

<sup>79</sup> *Lamb*, pp 259-60 and n. 565, p. 259.

<sup>80</sup> Richardson, *History*, p. 146.

<sup>81</sup> Ya Hanzhang, *Biographies of the Panchen Erdhenis*, *op cit.* pp 302, 308.

his land and his people which, as the Dalai Lama viewed it, was synonymous with fealty to the occupant of the Potala and his policies, he knew of no compromise solution. The abbot of Tashilhunpo must toe the line Lhasa had laid down viz. pay his share of the taxes imposed and go along unreservedly with the new reforms of modernizing Tibet's polity. The Panchen's flight was a declaration of war and there could therefore be no question of appeasing a rebel. In other words, the Lama must end his self-imposed exile and return home on terms and conditions Lhasa would lay down. No more, no less.

It is important to bear in mind the fact that after the stalemate of the late 1920s, the Dalai Lama's goodwill gesture, in the wake of Weir's intervention, was a polite letter to the Panchen (October 1932) to resume the dialogue with a view to retracing his steps. All the same, there was no yielding any ground on fundamentals, a fact that came out clearly in the subsequent negotiations with the Panchen's special envoys (1933).

In sharp, if striking contrast, the Panchen and his policy were an enigma. Try as he might, there was for him no going back home- except, of course, on the Dalai Lama's terms- as long as the master of the Potala was around. And yet in the wake of the latter's passing away (December 1933) and enhanced Chinese prestige in the aftermath of the Huang Musung mission (1934-5), the Panchen showed no great inclination to return either. Was there perhaps a lurking fear in his mind that in doing so he might end up as no more than a mere puppet in the hands of the Guomindang regime?

The Chinese were overly supportive of his cause- for, in essence, it was no different from their own- and used him to sort out their difficulties in the outer dependencies, in Tibet apart, Inner Mongolia in particular and Sinkiang in general. The British on the other hand lent the Panchen little if any countenance. For both Weir (1932) and later Gould (1936) in Lhasa, as Teichman in Beijing/Nanjing (1934), had made it abundantly clear to the abbot of Tashilhunpo, and his representatives, that there could be no direct British involvement on his behalf in what they deemed to be Tibet's "internal affairs". Nor yet would Whitehall "assume any responsibilities" in connection with the Lama's return.<sup>82</sup>

Should he have come back at the head of a ragtag "army" of a couple of thousands or more, what was it that the Panchen would have liked? For it has been computed that his own 1,000 odd armed Tibetan followers, added to another thousand Chinese troops "would probably have sufficed" to overthrow the then Regent's ramshackle, rickety regime in Lhasa- should the Panchen have so desired<sup>83</sup>. The all-important question though is whether the Panchen wanted to replace it? Or earlier, the Dalai Lama himself? Or, merely have Lhasa restore to him what he deemed to be Tashilhunpo's due. Perhaps the Lama himself did not quite know the answer. A fact that might help to explain his "extraordinary lack of decisiveness" until the very end. A British officer who often interacted with him over many years referred to the Lama's "meek, retiring nature" and the fact that he was "very timid" and would "fly from the slightest danger"<sup>84</sup>. Richardson refers to him as that "gentle, hapless, troubled figure" whose death in December 1937 was the occasion for the "mingled sorrow and relief" of his people.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Lamb, p. 239. Also see *infra*, pp. 76-8.

<sup>83</sup> It has been estimated that, by 1937, the Panchen Lama had collected about him at least 1,000 armed Tibetan followers and an equal number of Chinese troops. Stark Toller to Peking, 11 September 1938, L/P&S/12/4182 cited in Lamb, *op cit*, n. 563, p 269.

<sup>84</sup> David Macdonald, *Twenty Yars in Tibet*, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

<sup>85</sup> Richardson, *History*, p. 146.

While the Chinese game plan was obvious enough- to ride back to a measure of decisive authority in Tibet on the coat-tails of the Panchen and his escort- the British attitude was somewhat ambivalent. Quite clearly they did not want the Panchen to return as the vanguard of a Chinese/Mongol presence. All the same, they would offer the regime in Lhasa no *material* help to resist a possible armed onslaught. Nor yet were they quite categorical in advising the Regent to employ force in meeting the threat posed by the Panchen Lama.

To say all this is not to unsay that once it was clear that the Regent's government was not taking it for a ride, Whitehall exerted all possible diplomatic pressure on the KMT regime to desist from what it deemed a dangerous course of action. That an armed escort accompanying a recalcitrant Panchen Lama would unsettle a weak if somewhat shaky regime in Lhasa was obvious enough. What was not was that nearer home the Chinese presence would pose a threat to the security of India's northern frontier. In the event, the Raj had a vested interest in a peaceful resolution of the internecine conflict between the Lamas.

Was it any wonder then that in the years before the Dalai Lama's death, and after, New Delhi impressed upon Lhasa to make overtures to the Panchen and climb down a notch or two from its high horse. And at the same time advised the abbot of Tashilhunpo to see reason and moderate his demands. Both Bailey (1928) and later Richardson (1937) even debated the possibility of the Lama being offered asylum in India<sup>86</sup>. The objective, partly to wean the Panchen away from mounting Chinese influence to which he had been exposed. And at the same time act as a damper, and deterrent, on the Dalai Lama and his government in Lhasa. Sadly for its protagonists, Whitehall was not easily persuaded nor, closer to home, was New Delhi. This would, they argued, be too blatant an entanglement in Tibet's domestic squabbles.

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<sup>86</sup> *Lamb*, pp. 165 & 260, and notes 326 (p. 176) & 565 (p. 269).

# The Aftermath of Younghusband's Expedition; the Lamas at cross-purposes

## The Dalai Lama Visits Beijing (1908)

As a backdrop to the opening decade of the twentieth century in the annals of Tibet, a word about the historical setting in which the narrative unfolds itself may not be out of place. At the outset it may be recalled that John Company's first contacts, after establishing a secure base in Bengal, were with Shigatse- not Lhasa. Thither it was, towards the last quarter of the 18th century, that Warren Hastings despatched his two envoys, George Bogle and Samuel Turner, for a commercial reconnaissance of the land. The Panchen who was personally very well-disposed towards Hastings' representatives, did not however succeed, albeit for no want of trying, in getting them admittance to Lhasa. The result was that even though the immediate goal of the British remained unfulfilled, the foundation was laid of an intimate understanding between Calcutta and Shigatse<sup>87</sup>

Towards the closing decades of the 19th century when the Dalai Lama, thanks to the activities of the Russian Buryat Agvan Dorjieff, openly defied the Chinese and befriended the great White Tsar, the Panchen still seemed to be well-disposed towards the British. Subsequently, in 1904, with Younghusband and his men marching relentlessly on to Lhasa, while the Dalai became a fugitive from his land, the Panchen still swore fealty to his old allies<sup>88</sup>. Actually, a little earlier he had sent his delegates, including the head abbot of the Tashilhunpo monastery, to meet the British Commissioner at Gam-pa-dzong. Later, he was to receive, and "most warmly", at Shigatse one of the Commissioner's representatives, Captain (later Sir) Fredrick O'Connor, thereby laying the foundations of "as sincere a friendship as Bogle had with his (Panchen Lama's) predecessor."

If not entirely, certainly in a goodly measure, the 13th Dalai Lama's own inept handling of a complicated, and indeed complex sequence of events had led to this first, and as it turned out the last, British armed expedition to Lhasa in the opening years of the present century. Unfortunately for him, he had been pitted in an unequal battle of wits against the cleverer, and indeed remarkably unscrupulous Lord Curzon, the then all-powerful Viceroy and Governor General of British India. Face to face with an ugly situations precipitated by a variety of circumstances which, for most part, were outside the Lama's immediate ken, and

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<sup>87</sup> For some recent studies of Tibetan polity see Richardson, *History*, George Ginsburgs and Michael Mathos, *Communist China and Tibet*, Shakabapa, *Political History of Tibet (already cited)*, Nirmal Chandra Sinha, *Tibet: Considerations on Inner Asian History*, Calcutta, 1967, and Ram Rahul, *The Government and Politics of Tibet*, New Delhi, 1969.

<sup>88</sup> Two detailed studies of the Younghusband Expedition are Peter Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa*, London, 1962, and Parshotam Mehra, *The Younghusband Expedition, an Interpretation*, London, 1968. Julia Brown Trott's "'One Turn of Pitch & Toss': Curzon, Younghusband & the Gamble for Lhasa, 1903 to 1904", doctoral dissertation presented to the University of Hawaii, December 2000, is a well-researched work, sadly not yet in print. Additionally, both Alastair Lamb, *British India and Tibet, 1766-1910*, Hertingfordsbury, 1966, and Daniel Dilks, *Curzon*, London, 1970, 2 vols., II, provide interesting sidelights. So does Patrick French, *Younghusband: Last of the Great Imperial Adventurers* London, 2000 and Peter Hopkirk, *Trespassers on the Roof of the World: The Race for Lhasa*, London, 1982.

control, his much-vaunted boast of leaning on the Russian potentate proved singularly unavailing. And this despite all the to-ings and fro-ings of the Buryat Mongol Dorjief.

Not to speak of the Russians, Tibet's Chinese overlords too- whom in any case the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama had defied with impunity- did not demonstrate any willingness, much less capacity, to hasten to the aid of their oft-proclaimed, yet recalcitrant protégé. The result, to no one's surprise, was the British expedition's successful assault and smothering of such resistance as an "army" of lamas was supposed to muster. Before long, in the first week of August, 1904, as Younghusband's men arrayed themselves, in battle formation, before the gates of the golden Potala, the Dalai Lama betook himself from the city of gods. He headed north towards the barren wastes of Chang Thang and the vast uplands that stretch themselves beyond the horizon.

Convinced that the Lama had been responsible for most of their troubles, the British understandably did not want him to return on the morrow of their own unhappy, and indeed calamitous experience at his hands. Thus in March 1905, even before Whitehall was informed that the Chinese had acceded to the Lama's desire to re-trace his steps, Satow, the British Minister in Beijing, "warned" the Waiwubu, and in no uncertain terms, that Great Britain would be compelled again to take action against him if he (Dalai Lama) were allowed to return to Lhasa<sup>89</sup>.

For their part, the Russians showed a great deal of concern in the fortunes of the Tibetan ruler. From St. Petersburg - and the peripatetic Dorjief had carried from his master valuable presents to the Great White Tsar - the Lama had sought assurances of protection "in the event of his life being endangered".<sup>90</sup> The Tsarist regime which appears to have made up its mind that the Dalai's "continued presence" in Mongolia was "undesirable"<sup>91</sup> and feared lest his absence from Lhasa should necessitate that his vacant place there be filled by somebody else,<sup>92</sup> was playing with the idea of an armed Buryat escort accompanying him on his way back home. Their number, the Russians explained, would be limited to forty;<sup>93</sup> they would be disarmed as soon as they crossed the (Russian) frontier; they would not, in any case, remain in Lhasa for long.<sup>94</sup> As if this were not enough, St.

<sup>89</sup> Satow to Lansdowne, March 28, 1905, No. 23 in *Foreign Office Confidential Prints*, 535/6, cited. et seq. as FO.

<sup>90</sup> Spring-Rice to Grey, March 14, 1906, No. 47 in *FO 535/7*.

Dorjief had brought some presents, as well as a message, from the Dalai Lama and the Russian Foreign Office showed itself anxious that "what has passed" should "at once" be brought to the notice of the British government.

<sup>91</sup> Spring-Rice to Grey, April 9, 1906, No. 66 in *ibid*.

<sup>92</sup> Arthur Nicolson to Grey, June 8, 1906, No. 124 in *ibid*. Nicolson who had been especially deputed to St. Petersburg to help sort out differences and prepare the way for the Anglo-Russian entente of 1907 anticipated that the Russians might raise the question should his (Dalai Lama's) return to Lhasa be prevented. Specifically he had asked:

would you wish me to say that you would consent to the matter being mentioned to the Chinese government by the British and Russian representatives?

<sup>93</sup> Grey to Satow, May 1, 1906, No. 86 in *ibid*.

Grey had pointed out to the Russians that the presence of their escort beyond the Tibetan frontier would be "objectionable" and amount to "an interference" in Tibet's "internal affairs".

<sup>94</sup> Spring-Rice to Grey, May 2, 1906, No. 90 in *ibid*.

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THIBET.



[November 26.]

10R/PEF/2750/1910/1

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 1.

(39559)

No. 1.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received November 26.)

(No. 770. Confidential.)

St. Petersburg, November 19, 1906.

Sir,

M. ISVOLSKY informed me to-day that he desired to mention to me, privately and confidentially, that M. Dorjief, the former Agent or Representative of the Dalai Lama, was at present in St. Petersburg, and had been in communication with certain officials in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. M. Isvolsky said that he had not himself seen M. Dorjief, and did not propose to do so, as he did not wish to give that gentleman an undue sense of his own importance. He wished, however, to acquaint me with the fact of his presence here, and also to mention that he was in consultation with officials, but chiefly on matters pertaining to Mongolia. He desired to inform me further that the Dalai Lama was at present at Gumbun, and that the Russian Government had let him understand that, in their view, it was undesirable that he should return to Thibet, in any case for the present. The Russian Government could not, of course, control the movements of the Dalai Lama, but they had taken all possible steps, in the event of that personage moving towards Thibet, to prevent any Russian official or any one over whom the Government had any control from accompanying him. At the same time his Excellency said that he had received information, for the accuracy of which he could not vouch, that the Chinese Government were urging the Dalai Lama to return to Lhasa as they found him an inconvenient guest.

M. Isvolsky said that the Dalai Lama exercised great influence over all the Buddhists, both Russian and Mongolian, and it was, therefore, of interest to the Russian Government to keep in touch with him, presumably through M. Dorjief, not as the Grand Lama of Thibet, but as the spiritual Chief of so many Russian subjects. He wished to be quite frank and open with me; and therefore gave me the above information in a private and confidential form.

M. Isvolsky proceeded to say that the measures which the Chinese Government were taking, and those which they were apparently contemplating, in Mongolia, were causing some uneasiness to the Russian Government. The project which the Chinese Government had in view was evidently to replace the ancient feudal system of more or less independent Principalities by a centralized Chinese Administration, and one result of this proposed ~~change~~ had been already to induce many Mongols, who disapproved of these changes, to seek a refuge in Russian territory. The Japanese also had numerous Agents in Mongolia who were actively furthering the aims of the Chinese Government, and he thought that this action on the part of Japan was unnecessary and irregular. M. Isvolsky wished to impress on me the great importance which any change in the former political status in Mongolia had to Russia and he feared that the action of China would necessitate the strengthening of the Russian frontier posts and garrisons.

From the observations of M. Isvolsky in regard to the influence of the Dalai Lama over the Mongols, it is possible that the Russian Government would be willing that he should remain at his present domicile, and that they would endeavour to utilize him, with the assistance of M. Dorjief, who, I understood, had left a secretary with his Eminence, either as a source of information or as an Agent in hampering the policy of the Chinese Government.

I reported in my telegram No. 296 of this day's date the information as to M. Dorjief's presence here and the present domicile of the Dalai Lama.

(276/161)

I have, &c.  
(Signed) A. NICOLSON.

[2233 cc-1]

Petersburg further assured the British Minister, that the Dalai Lama had been given clearly to understand that he was expected "to remain quiet" and "was not to reckon on any support or assistance on the part of the Russian government".<sup>95</sup>

All this notwithstanding, Whitehall was not easily persuaded. It protested, and strongly, against any escort whatsoever being provided and, for the matter of that, against the Lama himself:

it is because they have no desire to interfere with the internal administration of Tibet, that HMG deem it inexpedient for the Dalai Lama to return to Lhasa for present. On a previous occasion his action was so hostile as to provoke our interference, and our intervention might be necessitated again.<sup>96</sup>

Meanwhile conflicting news about the Lama continued to pour in. There were reports that the Lhasa authorities, "much perturbed", and "afraid", and "unwilling to do anything without him", were "very desirous" of getting their ruler back home before the new Imperial Commissioner (Chang) arrived;<sup>97</sup> that "orders" had been conveyed to him (Dalai Lama) from the Qing Emperor that he should return to Lhasa;<sup>98</sup> that, on his own, the Lama had sought out the views of the Panchen and his alignments in the context of his (Dalai Lama's) dispute with the British and the Chinese. Inter alia, he had told the Abbot of Tashilhunpo that

he (Dalai Lama) would have returned before but was not sure of the Tashi Lama's intentions and of his relations with us (the British) and therefore sent the Kundelling (his agent) to enquire.<sup>99</sup>

It was not to Lhasa however that the Dalai Lama was to return as yet, for as the months rolled by, his wanderings seemed to continue, almost endlessly. In November, 1907, news arrived that Beijing had permitted him to leave Ningxia for Wutaishan in Shanxi.<sup>100</sup> By then a sea change had transformed the political landscape in Lhasa where, in place of a derelict regime the Chinese were asserting control in a big way. No wonder, the British now argued that if he returned home, via Beijing, Court, and Government, influence on him would be

The Russians had explained at length that the escort, not of their seeking, was voluntary (viz. composed of volunteers) and that it was due entirely to the insistence of the Russian Buddhists for the "local authorities feared an outbreak among the Buriats if anything befell the Lama".

<sup>95</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>96</sup> Grey to Nicolson, June 12, 1906, No. 127 in *ibid.*

This was in response to Nicolson's earlier query and Grey had prefaced his remarks by the words, "if you are questioned. . ." Also see *supra*, n. 93.

Earlier, Spring-Rice had told Lamsdorff that a condition precedent to Lansdowne's assurance of June 2, 1904 was strict "non-intervention" by Russia in Tibet. Spring-Rice to Grey, April 29, 1906, No. 78 in *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Claude White (then in Gyantse) to India, August 29, 1906, Encl. in No. 77, FO 535/8. White confirmed that "beyond arrangements for journey" nothing was known about the Dalai Lama's return.

<sup>98</sup> India to Maodonald, December 22, 1906, encl. in No. 107 in *ibid.*

The above information was based on a report "received by Chang while at Gyantse" that the T'i Rimpoche and the Shapas at Lhasa had heard from the Lama to this effect.

<sup>99</sup> Political Officer, Sikkim, to India, July 7, 1906, encl. in No. 56 in *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Jordan to Grey, November 13, 1907, No. 109 in FO 535/10. Jordan was informed that if the Lama asked for leave to come to Beijing, the Emperor would accord him an audience. In return, Jordan told his political superiors that so long as he (Dalai Lama) does not return to Tibet, "I presume that we can hardly raise objections to his being received" in Beijing.



exercised in a manner hostile to their own interests in Lhasa;<sup>101</sup> in reverse, if he repaired home without going to Beijing he may be able to act as a "useful counter-poise" to Chinese authority (in Lhasa).<sup>102</sup>

Jordan's reasoning notwithstanding, it would have been obvious that the Lama could not leave for Tibet without direct permission<sup>103</sup> from his Chinese masters. And soon enough, Beijing ordered him to proceed to the (Chinese) capital where he was to be received in audience by the Emperor.<sup>104</sup> Although a change in their stance had been noticeable for sometime, the British took the opportunity of the Lama's impending arrival to stage a complete *volte face* from their earlier position. For Grey now directed Jordan to

inform the Chinese, unless you have already done so, that we have no wish to put difficulties in the way of the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet and that we do not desire to exercise any influence upon them.<sup>105</sup>

In Beijing, the Chinese treated the Lama with studied disdain, bordering on outright discourtesy. For his part, the Tibetan ruler was playing an astute game; keeping through his agents, more particularly Dorjjeff, secret communications with the Russians, and making ill-disguised overtures to the British. In Rockhill, the American Minister, the Lama discovered a kindred soul, a warm-hearted man who took great pains to tender him correct advice, draft and re-draft his memorials to the Throne and otherwise keep the Tibetans *au fait* with all that was happening in the Chinese capital.<sup>106</sup>

To cut him to size, the Chinese had directed that foreign envoys in Peking could meet the Lama only in the presence of their (Chinese) representatives. The procedure took away from these visits whatever political connotation they may have had, made them appear as little better than courtesy calls and, strictly from the Lama's point of view, purely perfunctory.<sup>107</sup> Conscious that he must make up for lost time, the Dalai Lama, at his interview with Jordan, pleaded that he be exonerated "from all participation in events preceding the troubles of 1904".<sup>108</sup> While the British Minister for his part was well-posted

<sup>101</sup> Jordan to Grey, December 23, 1907, No. 123 in *ibid*.

Inter alia, Jordan told Grey that, according to his Russian colleague, the Lama had not left Xining "up to November 1" and that the Waiwubu for its part was far from certain "if" he would come to Beijing.

<sup>102</sup> Jordan to Grey, February 4, 1908, No. 78 in FO 535/11.

According to the Lama's envoy, who had arrived in Beijing, his (Lama's) intention was "to return to Tibet" for the "Emperor had no objection and the Lama had no wish to visit Peking".

<sup>103</sup> India Office to Foreign Office, February 3, 1908, No. 35 in *ibid*.

<sup>104</sup> Jordan to Grey, July 21, 1908, No. 94 in *ibid*.

<sup>105</sup> Grey to Jordan, October 22, 1908, No. 108 in *ibid*.

<sup>106</sup> Rookhill had met the Dalai Lama at Wutaishan and established a friendly and cordial relationship with Dorjjeff and other agents of the Lama, listening to their grievances and advising as to the action they should take. Jordan to Grey, October 25, 1908, No. 117 in *ibid*.

<sup>107</sup> Jordan noted that the Tibetans' principal complaint to Korostovets, the Russian envoy, was that the behaviour of Chinese officials was both "insolent and insulting" and affirmed that, at his own interview with the Dalai Lama he found their (Chinese officials') attitude "supercilious throughout".

*Loc cit*.

<sup>108</sup> Jordan's own interview with the Lama was "very formal", except for a request which the Tibetan ruler wanted to be conveyed to the King. The "Memorandum" on the interview by Mr Mayers reveals that "after a pause the Lama said God-speed, if there were nothing to talk about". Encl in No. 117. *loc. cit*

The Dalai Lama Visits Beijing (1908)

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4 1/2 P.F. 275.4



[August 24.]

THIBET.

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 2.

[29341]

No. 1.

*Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received August 24.)*

(No. 813. Confidential.)

Sir,

*Peking, July 9, 1908.*

WITH reference to my telegram No. 129 of the 30th ultimo, I have the honour to report some further details which have been courteously communicated to me by Mr. Rockhill, the American Minister, respecting his visit to the Dalai Lama at Wutaishan.

The Dalai Lama, who accorded Mr. Rockhill two interviews, is described by his visitor as a man of keen intelligence and of great natural dignity. Mr. Rockhill states that in all his varied experience he has rarely been present at any reception which was marked with such innate courtesy and good feeling.

The Lama seemed to be deeply conscious of the isolation and ignorance of his people and their need of enlightenment, but he evidently did not believe in the Chinese reform of Tibet. He inquired as to the terms of the recent Treaty with India, and on being informed that it related chiefly to trade, he said that he had every desire to encourage trade, but that Trade Conventions, if accompanied with other conditions, were apt to lead to undesirable complications. The Chinese, he said, had kept him in complete ignorance of the negotiations, and he was afraid that any concessions made to India would be claimed by Nepal and other countries. Speaking of the misunderstanding which had led up to the British expedition of 1904, the Lama attributed them largely to the officials on the spot, and thought that the inner history of the proceedings could not have been known to His Majesty the King-Emperor.

Mr. Rockhill said that, as an Anglo-Saxon by origin, he could assure the Lama that the aims of the Indian Government in seeking closer relations with Tibet were purely of a commercial nature, and he advised him in his own interests and in those of his people to make friendly intercourse with that Government the pivot of his policy. China and Russia were a long way off, while India was a near neighbour of Tibet.

Adverting to his visit to Peking, the Lama said that he had made no application to be received by the Chinese Court, but had received several pressing invitations to come here. He hoped to do so in the autumn, but he thought it undesirable that he and the Tashi Lama, who was also, he understood, coming to China, should both be absent from Tibet at the same time. He was desirous of returning to Tibet, but gave Mr. Rockhill to understand that he would select his own time, and would not submit to Chinese dictation in the matter.

The relations between the Lama and the Chinese authorities were evidently far from cordial. The Governor of Shansi had sent a deputy to introduce Mr. Rockhill and be present at his interview, but this official was not admitted to the Lama's presence at the first interview. At the second he somewhat unceremoniously entered the room, whereupon the Lama significantly inquired who the intruder was, and turned his face in the other direction. The attendants lost no time in enveloping the stranger's shoulders with the customary "hats," or scarf, and bundling him out of the apartment.

This is not the first interview the Dalai Lama has had with Western people. The late Russian Minister, M. Pokotilow, and the Russian Consul at Urga both saw him at that place, and since his arrival at Wutaishan, he has received an officer of the German Legation guard here. Among the presents which the latter offered him were a photograph of the German Emperor and an illustrated book of German arsenals.

I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

(Signed) J. N. JORDAN.

[1922 ss-2]

Document 2: Jordan to Grey, July 9, 1908.

(By courtesy of the India Office Library and Records)

with all that he (Lama) was doing, through Rockhill and more so his principals, Whitehall had access to a far more detailed analysis of what had transpired in Beijing. Nor was it a very flattering picture:

I (Rockhill) gathered from this very long conversation, that the Dalai Lama cared very little, if at all, for anything which did not affect his personal privileges and prerogatives; that he separated entirely his case from that of the people of Tibet, which he was willing to abandon entirely to the mercy of China. He did not care particularly regarding administrative reforms so long as he could feel assured . . .

Not Bockhill alone, but Beijing too may perhaps have come to much the same conclusion for while

it has treated him simply as the Head of the Yellow Church, and has shown him Honours accordingly, it has made him clearly recognise that he was a subject of the Emperor, no information whatsoever concerning the administrative reforms to be introduced into Tibet has been given him, no opportunity afforded him of speaking or discussing any questions with the Chinese Government . . .

The American Minister was of the view that the Imperial edict of November 3 (1908), conferring on the Lama his new title, which underlined his subordinate status and against which he had protested but in vain,<sup>109</sup> must be regarded as "memorable". For, as he saw it, it "possibly" marked the end of the political power which Tibet's Dalai Lamas had wielded for so long. For receiving this unsolicited "honour", the Lama was to submit a memorial to the throne, the terms of which, Bockhill was informed, "had been dictated to him (the Lama)" and to which "not a word could be added". When the harried Lama sought the Minister's advice, Rockhill was quite plain-spoken and even categorical:

I said that I saw absolutely no way out of the difficulty; the Dalai Lama must submit to his Sovereign's commands. . . and the only suggestion I could make was that he should not delay too long complying with the wishes of the Chinese Government . . .

In the result, Bockhill confessed,

His (Dalai Lama's) pride has suffered terribly while here, and he leaves Peking with his dislike for the Chinese intensified.

What was worse - and here the American Minister seems to have touched the nub of the problem,

I fear that he will not cooperate with the Chinese in the difficult task they now propose to undertake of governing Tibet like a Chinese province . . .

Altogether, it was a memorable visit and Rockhill was deeply moved:

The special interest to me is that I have probably been a witness to the overthrow of the temporal power of the head of the Yellow Church which, curiously enough, I heard 20 years ago predicted in Tibet . . .<sup>110</sup>

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Later the Lama's agents asked for and Jordan, with ill-grace, gave them the English texts of the Trade Regulations of 1908 and of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 relating to Tibet. Jordan to Grey, November 25, 1908, No. 6 in FO 535/12.

<sup>109</sup> The Dalai Lama who had hitherto enjoyed the rank of "The Most Excellent, Self-existent Buddha of the West" was now elevated to "The Sincerely Obedient, Reincarnation-helping, Most Excellent Buddha of the West" and in addition given an allowance of 10,000 taels.

<sup>110</sup> These excerpts are from a long despatch addressed by Rockhill to President Theodore Roosevelt and dated November 8, 1908 which forms Encl. I in Bryce (British Minister in Washington) to Grey.

Unknown to the Minister, factors other than the treatment meted out to him by the Chinese, had weighed on the mind of the Lama too. It has already been noticed that as early as July 1906, he had despatched his agent Kun-de-ling to sound the Panchen Lama and ascertain the true extent of the latter's political ambitions. Subsequently, in Peking, at a private interview with the youthful Maharajkumar of Sikkim, later Tashi Namgyal (father of the kingdom's last ruler, Palden Thontrup Namgyal), the Lama enquired about the Panchen's visit to India, referred to later in the narrative, and was curious if

he had obtained any influence over Buddhists or Buddhist sympathisers (in India).

Additionally, he confided in the Maharajkumar that on his return home, he (Dalai Lama) expected to see the Panchen at Nag-chhu-kha.<sup>111</sup> It is clear that this meeting between the two Lamas did take place, sometime in November 1909, a fact later attested to by a Tibetan informant of the British Trade Agent at Yatung.<sup>112</sup>

The Dalai Lama's return to the Potala, sometime in December 1909, after his long wanderings, proved to be no better than a breathing spell; in actual fact, he spent less than fifty days in Lhasa! His Chinese masters, if also tormentors, followed him close on his heels as he fled from the Potala, early in February 1910, almost with a price on his head. Instead of ploughing over again through the barren wastes of Nag-chhu-kha and the Chang Thang, the Lama now took a southerly direction and, crossing over into India, sought refuge from his former foes. Despite his ill-disguised overtures and clear anxiety - he offered the Indian Governor General a virtual protectorate over his land and people - any possibility of the

December 17, 1908, No. 3 in *FO 535/12*. In forwarding the enclosure, the British Minister made some very pertinent observations :

There is a sort of tragic interest in observing how the Chinese government, like a huge anaconda, has enwrapped the unfortunate Dalai Lama in its coils, tightening them upon him till complete submission (had been) extracted.

He recalled how Emperor Henry V had arrested Pope Pascahl II "making him (the Pope) accept the terms which he repudiated as soon as he was free. ...".

Inter alia Bryce expressed the view that the moral of the entire British exercise in Tibet had been to give

British India upon the northern frontier, instead of the feeble and half-barbarous Tibetans, a strong, watchful and tenacious neighbour which may one day become a formidable military power.

For an authoritative account of the Dalai Lama's visit to Lhasa, based on Rockhill's private papers, see Paul A Varg, "Open Door Diplomat: the Life of W. W. Rockhill", *Illinois Studies in Social Sciences*, vol. XXXIII, No. 4, Urbana, 1952, pp. 94-97. Also see Rockhill's "The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa" *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>111</sup> "Memorandum regarding interview between the Dalai Lama and the Maharajkumar of Sikkim held at the Yellow Temple, Peking, November 25, 1908", encl. 1 in Jordan to Grey, No. 7 in *FO 535/12*.

Inter alia, according to the Maharajkumar (and no one else was present), the Lama had shown himself "nervous" regarding his relations with the Chinese even though he recognised the "necessity" of working in harmony with them; for the British, he had "friendly sentiments" and realised the need for being on "good terms" with the Government of India.

<sup>112</sup> Macdonald to Political Officer in Sikkim, October 25, 1909, encl., No. 49 in *FO 535/12*. Macdonald's informant had told him that the Dalai Lama had arrived at Nag-chhu-kha with "2000 camels, 100 horses and a large number of followers", that the Tashi Lama was there too "either to Shigatse via Lhasa or by the northern route".

British coming to his aid in his unequal struggle with the Chinese, was categorically ruled out in Whitehall.<sup>113</sup>

No that Britain's lack of interest in his fortunes prevented the Lama from circulating all foreign powers for help against Chinese "aggression", or secretly soliciting the Tsar's "protection and assistance". Actually, he communicated with the Russian ambassador in Paris, "begging" him to "consult with" his British counterpart there.<sup>114</sup> Nor, for that matter, did it deter his agents from making Darjeeling a base for their "anti-Chinese" intrigues in Tibet<sup>115</sup>. Mercifully, the years of the Lama's exile (1910-12) were witness to a mighty cataclysm in the fortunes of the Ch'ing dynasty which, in its wake, brought about a complete collapse of Chinese authority in Tibet and thereby helped to restore the Dalai to his former throne.

Paradoxically even during these difficult days there was no end to the internecine rivalry between the two Lamas. Thus it had been widely believed that the Chinese having denounced, and dethroned the Dalai a second time,<sup>116</sup> found themselves in a mess from

<sup>113</sup> Secretary of State to Viceroy, No. 532 in *Foreign and Political Department* (National Archives of India) Proceedings 276-550, June, 1910.

Whitehall had made it clear that

Definite information should now be made to the Dalai Lama that there can be no interference between Tibet and China on the part of HMG.

For details, see *Tibet Papers*, Cd. 5240, HMSO, London, 1910, No. 354.

Years later, Bell recorded:

when I delivered the message to the Dalai Lama he was so surprised and distressed. . .

He could not. . . realise the extent to which we were tied and the attitude of the Home Government.

Bell, *Tibet*, p. 113.

<sup>114</sup> The Lama had written to the Russian Emperor complaining against Chinese actions in Tibet and of the persecution to which he personally was subjected; a similar message had been conveyed to Izvolsky in Paris asking him to confer with the British ambassador there. Buchanan to Grey, May 24, 1911, No. 39 in *FO 535/14*.

Earlier, in February 1910, the Dalai Lama had sent his messengers to Beijing with letters addressed to the British, Japanese, French and Russian Ministers intimating that the Chinese had been very active in Tibet and soliciting their help against "aggression". Max Muller to Grey, February 22, 1910 and Jordan to Grey, March 4, 1910, Nos. 13 and 48 in *FO 535/13*.

<sup>115</sup> An instance having come to their notice wherein the Dalai Lama had come in the way of Chinese authorities in Tibet - for while they (Chinese) had ordered the province of Kongbu to send a militia to fight the Popas, the Lama forbade this course of action - India informed its Political Officer that

there were strong objections to the Dalai Lama intriguing from Darjiling against the Chinese government in Tibet. . . and that should any instance of similar proceedings on his part come to your notice, you will at once repeat the warning given in August, 1910 to the Lama and his Ministers, that their presence near the frontier will not be tolerated unless they exert themselves in the cause of peace.

India to Weir, August 5, 1911, encl. in India Office letter of September 5, 1911, No. 71 in *FO 535/14*.

<sup>116</sup> Peking denounced the Dalai Lama for his "pride, extravagance, lewdness, sloth, vice and perversity" and deposed him by an Imperial Decree of February 25, 1910. For the full text, which makes extremely interesting reading, see Eric Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 16-17. The Decree was "officially communicated" to the British Legation in Beijing.

which, they hoped, the Panchen would extricate them by occupying the Potala and taking the Dalai's place.<sup>117</sup> There is evidence to suggest that the Panchen almost, but not quite, played into Chinese hands: in 1910, he repaired to Lhasa but, in the end, shrank from falling over the precipice<sup>118</sup>. Again, at the behest of the Chinese, he wrote to the Lama to return to Tibet but carefully balanced the written missive by an oral message:

Advising him (Dalai Lama) not to return to Tibet unless his safety was guaranteed by British Government and explaining that his letter had been written under pressure from the Chinese . . .<sup>119</sup>

Despite his ostensible concern for the safety and welfare of the Dalai Lama, at heart, the Panchen had been uneasy both during the former's long wanderings in Mongolia and later China, and his second exile in India. On both occasions, he had confided in the British his growing sense of anxiety and concern as to what fortunes awaited him, should the Dalai return in high dudgeon.<sup>120</sup> While there is no knowing as to what transpired at Nag-chhu-kha in October-November, 1909, when, as has been noticed earlier, the two Lamas had conferred, it is clear that the quiet, unobtrusive, diplomacy of the British played a significant role in arranging a meeting between the Dalai and the Panchen at Ralung, not far from Gyantse, in July, 1912. For earlier, the Dalai Lama

gave directions to Tashi Lama in course of communication with him by telephone to meet him at Ralung on the 16th instant, and added an assurance that no apprehension as to future need be felt by Tashi Lama or his officials.<sup>121</sup>

Earlier too, in the aftermath of Younghusband and his men's arrival in Lhasa (August 1904), the Chinese had denounced the Dalai lamas for much the same acts of his omission and commission.

<sup>117</sup> Max Muller to Grey, September 8, 1910, in *India Office Records* (abbreviated, et seq, as *IOR*) L/P & S/10/150.

Inter alia, Max Muller revealed that at the Wai-wu-pu, a Chinese official had confessed to him that Peking now realised that the difficulties in appointing a new Dalai Lama, during the life of the present one, "were insuperable"; at the same time they were "very nervous" about allowing the present incumbent to return to Tibet. To the Chinese, the best solution seemed to be to induce the Dalai to come to Peking where he could reside as "head of the Lamaist church in some temple in the neighbourhood". Here there would be veneration for him but "political agitation" would be eschewed.

Also see Max Muller to Grey, September 6, 1910, No. 151 in *FO 535/13*.

<sup>118</sup> Three specific charges were levelled. One, that in establishing a political relationship with Amban Lien Yu, thereby "breaking traditional rules", the Panchen had shown an intent to assume power. Two, that in 1911 when the Dalai Lama had "ordered" strong action against the Chinese garrisons occupying Lhasa, "the Panchen Lama's followers", and other disgruntled monks of the Tengyeling monastery in Lhasa, paid little attention. Three, that the Panchen's "association" with the Chinese Amban and his "inaction" in face of virtual Chinese occupation in 1910-11 showed collusion if not collaboration. For details see "Panchen Lama (Ninth)" in Howard L Boorman, (Editor) *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, Columbia, New York, vols. I-IV, III (1970), pp. 57-61.

<sup>119</sup> India to Morley, September 16, 1910, end. in No. 158 *FO 535/13*.

<sup>120</sup> India to Morley, December 12, 1907, encl. in No. 120 *FO 535/10*.

The Panchen Lama had sent a secret envoy to Beijing who, in an interview with O'Connor, told the latter that "he (Panchen Lama) anticipated trouble" if the Dalai Lama returned.

<sup>121</sup> India to Crewe, July 16, 1912, No. 159 in *FO 535/15*.

## The Panchen Lama comes to India (1906)

Between, the Dalai Lama's flight from Lhasa, on the eve of Younghusband's arrival, in August 1904, and his return there, towards the end of 1909, an episode of some significance in the rivalry between the two Lamas was the visit to India, briefly alluded to earlier, of the Panchen Lama in the winter of 1905-1906. It is not germane to this study to delve deep into all the details of this fascinating, if also perhaps sordid affair, except in two important respects: one, to underscore the policy which lay at the root of the British invitation to the Lama; two, and more significantly, assess the aftermath of the visit in terms of its impact on relations between the two Lamas.

It may be recalled that the linchpin of Lord Curzon's approach to Younghusband's Tibetan expedition was the stationing of a British Agent at Lhasa. Since this had been sternly ruled out in Whitehall, the Governor-General, half-heartedly and with ill-grace, had been willing to accept its less satisfactory compromise of permitting the Trade Agent at Gyantse to visit the Tibetan capital as and when the need arose. In the face of an unambiguous official directive to the contrary, Younghusband while refraining from incorporating the latter provision into the terms of the Convention which he, in September 1904, concluded with the Regent, and the rump of the Dalai Lama's government, put it into a "separate agreement" to which the Thri Rimpoche's apart, all available seals in Lhasa were solemnly affixed. Whitehall, understandably rattled by Younghusband's clear defiance of authority, had categorically directed Amthill to modify the Convention's terms in regard to the amount and the mode of payment of the indemnity. At the same time he was to ignore the Commissioner's "separate agreement" authorising the Trade Agent's visits to Lhasa-which is why it remains consigned to the limbo of oblivion as an historical curiosity.

After his return, in October 1904, Younghusband soon disappeared from the Lhasa scene - in a miasma of suspicion, bitter controversy and a lasting feud. Curzon, now in the second year of his renewed, lame-duck term as Viceroy was left to retrieve what he could from the shambles of a policy with which he had been so closely identified. The overtures to the Panchen Lama resulting in his visit to India may be viewed as an integral part of this process of retrieval. The instruments to hand were Fredrick O'Connor, Secretary to the Lhasa Expedition and newly-appointed British Trade Agent at Gyantse, and John Claude White, the much-ignored number two to Younghusband who was now Political Officer in Sikkim, in which capacity he served as O'Connor's immediate superior. The ostensible occasion for the invitation to the Panchen was the Prince of Wales' (later King George V) visit to India in the winter of 1905-1906.

With the Dalai Lama's departure from Lhasa, the Tibetan administration had been left shaky, rudderless; when the Chinese decided to stage a come-back in a big way, it revealed itself as ineffective, inert, powerless. Curzon's first exposure to what Beijing was about was his encounter with Tang Shaoyi, the Special Chinese Commissioner who, originally detailed to go to Lhasa, now repaired to Calcutta to negotiate Beijing's "adhesion" to the September 1904 convention. No sooner did the parleys commence, in March 1905, it became apparent that the two sides were working at cross purposes: Curzon, refusing to yield ground and conceding, at best, a vague Chinese suzerainty; Tang (a Harvard graduate but pronouncedly anti-British owing to his tragic, unhappy experiences in the aftermath of the Boxer rising) calling into question, *ab initio*, the entire Younghusband performance at Lhasa and scrutinising the Convention's terms with a powerful magnifying glass. Curzon

revealed himself, not for the first time, as overbearing; Tang, unyielding, and refusing to be browbeaten, eased his way out. He made his government recall him, leaving his place at the negotiating table to his deputy, Zhang Yintang who, with the Calcutta talks hopelessly stalemated, was soon on his way to Lhasa as a Special Imperial Commissioner.

The first faint rumblings of the policy of building up the Panchen Lama, as a counterpoise to the Dalai, are audible in Younghusband's distinctly friendly overtures to the (Panchen) Lama's representative who had met him at Gam-pa-dzong in the fall of 1903. Later, during the progress of the Mission to the Tibetan capital, more especially its long sojourn (April-July 1904) at Gyantse, contact had been maintained with Tashilhunpo. Yet the first ostensible evidence of this new "political" alignment comes out distinctly in the opening paragraph of the Amban's pronouncement, deposing the Dalai Lama. Its timing is revealing and indeed significant for it was issued on the eve of, and with a view to legitimising the conclusion, then impending, of the Lhasa Convention. Inter alia, the Chinese functionary proclaimed:

This notice is posted by Lu Amban on receipt of a telegram on the 5th September. The rank of the Dalai Lama is temporarily confiscated and in his place is appointed Tashi Lama . . . <sup>122</sup>

As if this were not clear enough, there is the unimpeachable evidence of Perceval Landon, the (London) *Times* correspondent who had accompanied Younghusband all the way to Lhasa and was close to the fount of authority in Simla, no less than in Whitehall. In summing up the "Political Results of the Mission", Landon made two interesting observations:

The temporary, almost nominal government which we helped the Chinese to set up at Lhasa may almost be dismissed from consideration . . . The Tashi Lama for whom we secured the temporary ascendancy in things spiritual, and provisionally, in things temporal also - has had no intention of leaving his secure retreat at Tashilhunpo to risk the unpopularity, impotence and personal danger which he would surely meet with in Lhasa . . .

Elsewhere, Landon termed the building up of the authority of the Panchen, at the cost of the Dalai, as "this deliberate challenge" to accepted norms. Interestingly enough, he stoutly denied that the British intent was any Immediate re-devolution to "Tashilhunpo" of the power which had long vested in the Dalai Lama at Lhasa. <sup>123</sup>

The man who conceived the idea of persuading the Panchen Lama to leave his "secure retreat" at Tashilhunpo was Fredrick O'Connor who, appointed Trade Agent at Gyantse on Younghusband's return from Lhasa, had visited the Lama at his monastery as part of the expedition to western Tibet led by Captain Rawling. Briefly, and in the short run, O'Connor argued, the British should help the Lama assert his independence of the Dalai's control and thereby, to an extent, fill in the political vacuum which, for want of an alternative, would be filled by Beijing.

In the long run, O'Connor was much more ambitious. For while seizing the present "favourable opportunity" of cementing Britain's friendship with the Panchen - "even going so far, if necessary, as to subsidise and protect him" - he would

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<sup>122</sup> For the text see L. A. Waddell, *Lhasa and Its Mysteries*, Fourth Edition, London, 1929. Appendix XIV, pp. 500-1.

<sup>123</sup> Perceval Landon, *Lhasa*, New and revised edition, London, 1906. 2 vols. I. Appendix I... p. 507.



open, under the terms of the Lhasa Convention a new trade mart at Shigatse and to let it be clearly understood that any intrigues of other Powers at Lhasa would be met by a corresponding extension of our influence in the province of Tsang and southern Tibet; and all this might be done without openly impugning or infringing Chinese suzerainty.<sup>124</sup>

To begin with the beginning, O'Connor proposed inviting the Panchen to pay a ceremonial visit to India to meet the Prince of Wales and attend the Durbar to be held on the occasion at Calcutta. But a condition precedent to the Lama's visit, the British Agent argued, was that Calcutta should guarantee to protect him against the possible combined wrath both of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese<sup>125</sup>. "Without such a guarantee" forthcoming, O'Connor reasoned, it may not be easy to persuade the Lama to leave his monastery; more, in its absence, it would be "less than fair" to ask him to "compromise himself with us" in such a "marked manner."<sup>126</sup> White forwarded O'Connor's proposal to Calcutta recommending that an invitation be extended without stating explicitly the attendant undertaking to which the Trade Agent had drawn his pointed attention.

The Viceroy's formal invitation was received in September and two months later O'Connor finally persuaded a seemingly reluctant, half-hearted, if timid, Panchen to accept it on the "clear(ly) understanding" that "it involves a promise of help from us against any attempted retaliation on the part of the Lhasa government"<sup>127</sup>.

When White, after lending a full-throated support, endorsed O'Connor's despatch to Calcutta, the latter, not fully in the picture hitherto,<sup>128</sup> was visibly shaken. This appeared to be far in excess of what it had initially bargained for. As it was, even if it had so desired, it was unable at this stage to countermand the visit, for the Panchen, with a large escort and in full regalia, had already left Shigatse on his way to Calcutta. Here meanwhile a complete transformation had come over the administration with the departure of Lord Curzon on November 17 (1905) and the assumption of office by Lord Minto - a change further accentuated when, a few weeks later, the rickety Tory government of Arthur Balfour gave place to the Liberals under Asquith. The latter brought in the overbearing, if imperious Morley to the India Office. Was it any wonder then that the full impact of these changes on O'Connor's ill-starred initiative did not take long to manifest itself ?

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<sup>124</sup> O'Connor to White, November 23, 1905, No. 10 in *FO 535/7*.

<sup>125</sup> On November 30, 1905, when the Panchen had barely left Shigatse, on his way to India, the Waiwubu addressed a semi-official note to the British Legation in Peking intimating that the Chinese government "will refuse to recognise any agreement which the Tashi Lama may make", should he, on his visit to India, discuss any such matters. Satow to Lansdowne, November 30, 1905, No. 138 in *FO 535/6*.

<sup>126</sup> O'Connor to White, June 25, 1905 *IOR*, Political & External Files, 1903/22: cited, et. seq., P & EF.

<sup>127</sup> *Supra*, n. 125.

<sup>128</sup> On December 2, 1905, Brodrick had asked the Government of India if the visit of the Tashi Lama was "anything more than a complimentary one?" Brodrick to India December 2, 1905, encl. 1 in No. 149, *FO 535/6*.

With tongue in cheek, India's reply, four days later, was beautifully vague: "In the event of his (Panchen Lama) touching upon possible consequences of his acceptance of our invitation, or any political questions, we will refer matters for orders of HMG"; for the rest, the invitation was "complimentary". Encl. 2 in *ibid*.

In Calcutta, when the Panchen sought his promised assurances from the mouth of the Viceroy himself, the latter found it hard to return any honest, much less categorical replies. Determined to disassociate himself completely from all that Curzon had stood for - and with the new political orientation in Whitehall this appeared best - Minto understandably pooch-pooched the idea of any attack on the Lama, either by the Chinese or the Lhasa authorities. This clearly implied that the Panchen's much sought for military help from the British was uncalled for. To the Lama's further plea that the Trade Agent at Gyantse should keep in the closest possible contact with him so that, in an emergency, he could communicate direct with the Governor General, through a special messenger, Minto returned an equally vague, if non-committal, answer.<sup>129</sup> Not long after the fanfare of the Durbar and the usual junket to the Buddha's holy places, the Lama returned to his monastery wiser, if sadder for his experience.

## Repercussions of the Panchen's visit

The empty-handed return of the Panchen marked the end of O'Connor's brilliant, albeit short-lived, foray to save what he could of the shambles of Curzon's Tibetan policy. Nor was the fault entirely Minto's. To be fair, O'Connor's whole approach had, in the final analysis, evoked a sympathetic interest even in Minto for the unenviable plight in which the Panchen now found himself, and for no fault of his own.<sup>130</sup> Actually, it was Morley, not Minto, who completely, and unreservedly, repudiated every bit of all that O'Connor had planned and intended. The new Secretary of State argued that, pursued to its logical conclusion, the Trade Agent's policy may compel the British government to sanction another expedition into Tibet, that he (Morley) viewed the entire plan with a goodly measure of "dismay" and thought that the proposition of 'helping the Lama, against the Chinese or the Tibetan authorities, was "thoroughly dubious", and even "obnoxious".<sup>131</sup>

Presently Morley's thinking on O'Connor's so-called "new" policy was conveyed to White,<sup>132</sup> and his local subordinates, in language that left little doubt as to what it was. Inter alia, the Political Officer was told that relations with the Panchen Lama were to be confined "within the narrowest possible limits", that no interference was to be tolerated in the "internal affairs" of Tibet or with the "relations of the Tashi Lama to the Lhasa government and the Emperor of China".<sup>133</sup> In a word, O'Connor's sedulously nurtured dream of building up where Younghusband had left must have collapsed around his ears! Meanwhile, it would appear, the Dalai Lama who, through his agents, was well posted with all the goings-on in Tibet, may have been none too happy to hear of the Panchen's new tantrums. Understandably, exaggerated reports of what was afoot had already reached his ears and he sought out the Panchen's intent by querying if the latter had indeed

<sup>129</sup> Minto to Morley, January 16, 1906 in *IOR, P & E F 1908/22*.

<sup>130</sup> Minto to Morley, January 10, 1906, *Minto Papers*.

<sup>131</sup> Morley to Minto, December 28, 1905, *Morley Papers*.

<sup>132</sup> According to Lamb, in his correspondence on the Panchen Lama's visit White was "only doing what he thought Lord Curzon wanted him to do"; more, "the whole episode has a distinctly Curzonian aura". Alastair Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, London, 1966, 2 vols., I, p. 238.

<sup>133</sup> India to White, February 12, 1906, in *IOR, P & EF, 1908/22*. Also see White to India, February 16, 1906. encl., in No. 103 in *FO 535/7*.

received permission from the Prince of Wales and the Government of India to make himself supreme.<sup>134</sup>

Later, in the fall of 1908, when the Maharajkumar of Sikkim met him in Beijing, the Dalai again expressed his strong suspicions and, as has been noticed earlier, was curious to know the extent to which the Panchen's visit had helped in furthering his influence among the Buddhists in India.<sup>135</sup>

That, for their part, the Chinese did not approve of the Panchen's visit to India is borne out by the fact that somewhat belatedly - "three days after the Lama had left the Valley" - their officials had arrived "bringing him (Panchen Lama) orders" from the Amban not to leave.<sup>136</sup> It is significant too that their earlier protest at Shigatse had ruled out the use of physical force to prevent the Panchen Lama's actual departure, nor was any opposition offered en route<sup>137</sup>. That Beijing could not have been deceived of Calcutta's real intent may be evident from a report in the *Chung Wai Jih Pao* which stated inter alia that the

British Government had induced the Panchen Lama to be presented to the Prince of Wales and were trying to gain him over to their side, their intention being to oust the Dalai Lama and to install the Panchen Lama as the ruler of Tibet . . . Such being the secret aim of Great Britain, there was no hope of the questions outstanding between the two governments being settled in the near future.<sup>138</sup>

Again, a measure of the initial Chinese distrust of the Panchen was the pressure which they were reportedly exerting on the Dalai Lama

urging him to return to Lhasa as they do not want to recognise Panchen Rimpoche, the Lama who was taken to India, as King of Tibet.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Political Officer, Sikkim to India, July 7, 1906 in *supra*, n. 100

<sup>135</sup> "Memorandum regarding the interview between the Dalai Lama and the Maharajkumar of Sikkim", in *supra*, n. 25.

<sup>136</sup> India to Brodrick, December 4, 1905, encl. in No. 147, *FO* 535/6.

The Indian telegram underlined the fact that the delay in the despatch of the Amban's "orders" was "possibly intentional".

According to a Chinese scholar, the Panchen Lama's letters to the Chinese Resident underline the fact that "he was forced by the British Trade Agent at Gyantse, Captain O'Connor, to take the journey in spite of his plea that he dared not leave his country without the sanction of the Chinese Emperor". His conclusion, however, was that the "whole incident laid bare the helplessness of the Chinese government". Tieh-tseng Li, *The Historical Status of Tibet*, New York, 1956, p. 113. For details see *ibid.*, n. 240, p. 262.

<sup>137</sup> The Panchen's journey, through Tibet, the Calcutta despatch emphasised, "has partaken of the nature of a triumphal procession". India to Brodrick, December 4, 1905, encl. in No. 147, *FO* 535/6.

<sup>138</sup> "Extract from *Chung Wai Jih Pao*" was dated February 14 (1906) and appeared under the caption "Government Measures for the safeguarding of Chinese Interests in Tibet": For the text, encl. 2, No. 119 in *FO* 535/7.

Inter alia, the paper had concluded that the Imperial and Assistant Residents in Tibet "are not equal to their posts" and therefore it was proposed "to replace" them at "an early date". Besides, the paper reported, a Tartar general and a Commander in Chief were also to be posted at Lhasa and "important strategic points" occupied by regular troops.

<sup>139</sup> Extract of Private Letter from Dajianlu (Sichuan) dated March 19, 1906, encl. 2, in No. 134, *FO* 535/7.

The letter made two additional points: one, that the Dalai Lama "refuses to go beyond the Qinghai, West of Gansu"; two, that the Chinese were afraid of using force "for the Mongols are prepared to fight for him, if necessary".

The Panchen's honeymoon with the British, as we have noticed, was notoriously short-lived. Completely disillusioned, the timid incarnation was scared to death and, through his Minister, hastened to assure Chang, the new (Chinese) Imperial Commissioner, that his visit to India notwithstanding, he would "continue to serve the Emperor as before". Nonetheless, the rebuke from Peking for his lapse was unmistakable in its tone:

In going to India (the Imperial commandment ran) without previously obtaining any leave, you acted very wrongly. I (Manchu Emperor) am however glad to hear that you are soon returning to Tibet and that you will continue to serve me loyally . . . In these circumstances no punishment will be imposed.<sup>140</sup>

The Lama's fears, however, were not entirely set at rest by the Emperor's epistle. Thus on his visit to Tashilhunpo, in November (1906), Bell reported that the Lama "still feared trouble"; earlier, he had repeatedly complained to the British official against Chinese "oppression".<sup>141</sup> Bell noted, however, that with the Emperor's letter having been received, the Lama felt "more re-assured regarding Chinese designs against him" through their new Commissioner from Lhasa<sup>142</sup>.

Writing years later of his "visit to the Tashi Lama", Bell recalled that the Lama's "interest" centred "chiefly" on the political situation. He had accepted the Indian government's invitation "depending on their support if his acceptance" should subsequently lead him into trouble. Since the Chinese were regaining power in Tibet, the Lama "feared their reprisals". Nor was that all. For the Lama "feared also" the Tibetan government at Lhasa who suspected that Tashilhunpo aimed at soliciting the help of Britain to obtain independence from their rule, and thus to divide and weaken Tibet as a whole.<sup>143</sup>

As the Dalai Lama continued to be recalcitrant, the Panchen, weak and timid, and far from sure of his ground, soon found himself playing into Chinese hands. Thus at his meeting with Chang, the new Chinese Commissioner then on his way to Lhasa, sometime in July 1907, the latter allegedly

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<sup>140</sup> Bell to India, October 23, 1906, end. in No. 85, *FO 535/8*.

Bell informed his superiors that when the Panchen Lama was in India, his Chief Minister (Kyab-ying chhen-mo) had asked Chang to send a letter to the Chinese Emperor intimating that he (Panchen Lama) hoped Emperor would not be "angry with him (for) going to India" and that he (Panchen) would soon return and "continue" to serve him "as before". The reply of the Emperor (cited in the text) to this communication was received "about a week ago". Furthermore, Bell continued, the Chief Minister had now come to Gyantse to await Chang's arrival partly "in order to show him exceptional politeness" and partly to sound him "if he (Chang) has any other instructions from the Chinese government about the Tashi Lama".

<sup>141</sup> Bell to India, October 6, 1906, end. I, No. 83 in *ibid*.

The Lama had sent his Chamberlain (Dron-yer chhen-mo) to ask Bell to visit him, for he did not want to speak on matters "through a third party". Bell indicated that the acceptance of the invitation was "very desirable" for "continual refusal" (of invitations to British officials) "will necessarily alienate sympathies of Lama from us".

<sup>142</sup> India to Morley, November 28, 1906, encl. in No. 87, *FO 535/8*.

At Tashilhunpo, the Lama read out to Bell "a garbled version of promises of arms and protection" which, he alleged, the Viceroy had made to him. Bell repudiated this by reading out the "correct account" of the Calcutta interview. Later, we are told, the Lama "professed himself satisfied" with what Bell had said.

<sup>143</sup> For details of the visit see Bell, *Tibet*, pp. 82-87, for the citation, p. 84.

offered to make the Lama Regent in place of Ti Rimpoche, but the Tashi Lama refused. Nevertheless the Ti Rimpoche has been ordered by Chang Tajen to carry out orders given by Tashi Lama. Lama was also advised by Ghang Tajen to make friends with Lhasa Government, as otherwise the British would make trouble.<sup>144</sup>

Meanwhile there was another string to the Panchen Lama's bow. While he had made amends so far as China was concerned - and assurances, as the preceding lines reveal, had been both sought and received - the Dalai continued to loom large, and portentously, on his mental horizon. Nor, as has been noticed, had the master of the Potala made any secret of his grave displeasure at the Panchen's conduct. With mutual suspicion mounting at both ends, the news that the Dalai was on his way to the Imperial capital, sometime in August 1908, made the Panchen, it appears, also express a desire to go there- "through India, and by sea". The Chinese, for obvious reasons, did not want to have the two incarnations at their hands at the same time<sup>145</sup> and possibly showed no enthusiasm for the Panchen's proposed visit. Undeterred by this rebuff, the Lama, who had made no secret of his fears at the hands of the Dalai when the latter returned home, confided in the Maharajkumar of Sikkim. It may be safely deduced that inspired by the Panchen or someone on his behalf, the Maharajkumar at his meeting with the Dalai Lama in Beijing told him that the ruler of Tashilhunpo had been "invited" to visit India and had "no option but to accept."<sup>146</sup>

Despite these assurances, the Dalai Lama's suspicions were not entirely allayed for it would seem that he had despatched a Grand Secretary, Trung-yig chhen-mo, to Tashilhunpo charged with making further enquiries. To these the Panchen replied by asserting that O'Connor had "threatened" him that "illwill will befall if he (Panchen Lama) did not go (to India)". Additionally, the Lama confessed, there was "nothing" between him and the British government. Specifically questioned, he expressed his willingness to go to meet the Dalai when the latter returned which, as we have noticed, he did.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> India to Morley, July 24, 1907, encl. in No. 25, FO 535/10. The despatch gives the gist of a conversation which the Lama had with Chang at Dongtse, on July 20. The Lama had sent one of his agents to O'Connor to keep him posted with what had transpired.

<sup>145</sup> Jordan to Grey, May 27, 1908, No. 90 in FO 535/11.

Jordan's informant was Yuan Shikai himself. Inter alia, Yuan had told Jordan, that the Dalai's stay at Wu-tai-shan, where he had been for two months, had entailed "considerable extraordinary expenditure" to the provincial government.

<sup>146</sup> Bell to India, April 1, 1909, encl. 2 in No. 34, FO 535/12.

Bell revealed that the Tashi Lama had sent "a secret and oral message" to the Maharajkumar that he (Tashi Lama) apprehended "ill-treatment" when the Dalai returned; on January 10, 1906, in Calcutta. the Viceroy was told much the same thing by the Lama himself. He confided in Bell much to the same effect during his visit to Shigatse in November 1906

<sup>147</sup> "Note Communicated by Mr. Bell respecting Lhasa and Shigatse", encl. 4 in No. 34, FO 535/12.

Bell reported that "last December" (December, 1908) a Grand Secretary had visited Shigatse where he had questioned the Panchen "twice about his visit (to India)" and this time "under direct orders of the Dalai Lama".

## **Tashilhunpo : Attempts at "independence" and "reconciliation" (1912)**

As on the occasion of his earlier "wanderings", so too during the Dalai Lama's second exile (1910-1912), this time in India, the Chinese made a big effort to persuade the Panchen to accept his vacant guddi. Thus, early in 1911, there were persistent reports that, "under compulsion" from Ma Jifu, the then Chinese Trade Agent at Gyantse, the Panchen, escorted by the Tibetan Trade Agent at Yatong, had left for Lhasa.<sup>148</sup> It was widely believed that, in Lhasa, not unlike an earlier reincarnation, he desired to hold the post of Regent,<sup>149</sup> that, additionally, in the course of his visit he (Panchen Lama) wanted to "discuss with the Amban the disputes between the Chinese and the Lhasa government."<sup>150</sup> Nor was that all. For, through the Amban, he had petitioned the Emperor to permit the Dalai Lama's return.<sup>151</sup> This request, however, was summarily turned down. For the Amban ruled that as the

absconding Dalai Lama has been loitering too long in outside territories, it is difficult for me the Great Minister, to memorialise. For if the Dalai Lama still stays in outside territories even after the memorial has been submitted, not only undeserved punishment will be meted out to me, but it will be difficult for you (Panchen Lama) also to act.<sup>152</sup>

It may be recalled in this context that the Chinese government had sternly rebuked the then Regent, Sang-gye Gya-tsho who, for fourteen long years, kept from the Qing Emperor the news of the death of the 5th Dalai Lama (1617-1682), Tibet's first temporal ruler who exercised authority from 1642 to 1682. This "foolish error" apart, the real gravamen of the Chinese charge against the Regent was his abandonment of the "restraining policy" of the

<sup>148</sup> India to Crewe, February 6, 1911, encl. in No. 9; British Trade Agent, Gyantse to India, January 26, 1911, encl. in No. 14; and Political Officer, Sikkim to India, February 16, 1911, encl. in No. 19, all in *FO 535/14*.

<sup>149</sup> Bell to India, August 4, 1911, end. I in No. 70, *FO 535/14*. Ten-pe Nyi-ma, a former Tashi Lama had, allegedly, held the post during the minority of the 10th Dalai Lama (1817-37).

According to Petech, the Panchen Lama took over the administration of Tibet from September 1844 to April 1845, for about 8 months. This could only be when the 11th Dalai Lama (1837—54) was a minor and the Emperor had ordered the deposition of the then Regent. Luciano Petech, "The Dalai Lamas and Regents of Tibet" *op. cit.*

Richardson, *History*, p. 55, maintains that the Panchen Lama acted as Regent (1861-62) for 8 1/2 months during the deposition of the then Regent. This was the period of the minority of the 12th Dalai Lama (1857-74).

<sup>150</sup> Bell to India, March 3, 1911 in *FO 371/1078/283*.

It would appear that the Amban had written to the Thri Rimpoche directing him to arrange for the reception of the Tashi Lama.

<sup>151</sup> Encl. in Bell to India, May 31, 1911 in *ibid.*

In making his request the Panchen underlined the fact that the Amban "must not forget the good names of the father, the son and the disciple (viz. the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama and the Chinese Emperor)".

<sup>152</sup> Encl. in Bell to India, May 31, 1911 in *ibid.*

For the full text see the "Reply of Len Amban, the Great Resident Minister in Tibet who holds the rank of Pu-tu-tung and Peacock feathers by command of the Emperor".

MINUTE.

As the situation is becoming somewhat confused, the following resume of recent correspondence may be convenient.

Mr. Max Muller's  
Tel. (Telegrams)  
No. 41, 12 Aug.  
3902 [Proc. 3002]  
/10 1910

Mr. Max Muller telegraphed on the 12th Aug. (August) that the Chinese Resident in Tibet had telegraphed to his Govt. (Government) - "I propose to send Taotal Lo Chang Shi to India to persuade Dalai Lama to return to Tibet". The Wai-wu Pu asked for facilities for him.

Tel. from V. (Viceroys), 21 Aug.  
- to - , 21 -

We agreed to give facilities. Mr. Bell was to tell the Dalai Lama, but not to give him advice.

Tel. from V.,  
30 Aug., +  
2 Sept.

We next heard of Lu Chang Shi's onward journey and of his communication with our Trade Agent at Gyantse, in which he spoke of the Dalai Lama's returning to Tibet.

Mr. M.M.'s (Max  
Muller's) Tel.  
No. 151, 6 Sept.  
3917  
/10

Mr. Max Muller then announced (16th Sept.) that the Chinese Govt. seemed "nervous as to the possible results of the return of the D.L. (Da'ai Lama) to Tibet, and were considering the advisability of endeavouring to induce him to take up his residence in or near Peking, with "rank and spiritual power as D.L." He asked how H.M.'s (His Majesty's) Govt. would view a proposal for the D.L. to return through Tibet to Peking.

3910  
/10

The telegram sent to the Viceroy on the 16th Sept. said : "If Mr. Max Muller is again approached by Wai-wu Pu, I consider reply should be that H.M.'s Govt. will facilitate D.L.'s return to Peking by sea route, should His Holiness so desire. Have you any observations?"

Two telegrams now come from the Viceroy dated 21st Sept. The first replies to the Sec. (Secretary) of State's telegram of the 16th and suggests in effect that the Wai-wu Pu should be informed that their question is a hypothetical one, which cannot be answered at present. The other tells us of a letter received from the Amban Lin describing Lo Chang, his secretary, as a "Special Commissioner" coming to discuss "certain matters" with the Viceroy himself, instead of what we had all along supposed him to be, viz. an emissary to the Dalai Lama.

{ J. E. Ferrard }  
22 - 9 - 10.

deceased Lama by cultivating the Dzungar chief, Galdan Khan who was openly hostile to the Qing Emperor.<sup>153</sup>

Meanwhile whatever the Panchen's true intent, all through August-September (1911) reports had persisted that he was behaving "as though he were Dalai Lama"; that he was desirous of holding the post of Regent and was endeavouring "to settle" the case between the master of the Potala and the Chinese.<sup>154</sup> According to a recent authority, after the flight of the Dalai Lama in February 1910, the Amban Lian You had asked the Panchen Lama "to come to Lhasa" and "administer" Tibet in the Dalai's absence. Whereupon

the Panchen went to the capital as requested, but he asked the Dalai, then in India for instructions. At the Dalai's behest, he left Lhasa and returned to Tashilhunpo.<sup>155</sup>

Bell who was very knowledgeable about Tibet and its two Lamas has summed up the situation aptly:

The spirit of the Tibetan constitution is against his (Panchen Lama) acting as Regent, though it would be unsafe to assert that such an appointment could never be made. In any case, a Regent has not the power of a Dalai Lama; he is largely under the control of the National Assembly in Lhasa. Thus were a Panchen Lama to act as Regent, there would almost certainly be friction between him and the Lhasan authorities, who would side with their National Assembly.<sup>156</sup>

Before long the October (1911) Revolution in China brought about a complete metamorphosis in the political landscape in Tibet where, by the end of the year, there was an almost total collapse of Chinese authority. A direct consequence thereof was that the Dalai Lama's return to his land after his sojourn in India, instead of being a vague, if distant, possibility, now became a categorical certainty. In this changed situation, appropriately enough, the Panchen too shifted his stance. Thus on the one hand he asked the Dalai Lama and his Ministers to return to Tibet "as soon as possible", offering his good offices to negotiate, on their behalf, with the Chinese<sup>157</sup> on the other, he reminded the British of their earlier promise of affording him (Panchen Lama) "every facility" in the matter of arms and ammunition. More specifically, he demanded 200 modern rifles, 2 machine guns and sufficient ammunition for defence of Shigatse.<sup>158</sup>

Early in 1912, when it became increasingly clear that the Dalai would soon be returning, the Panchen's importunities with the British became more pronounced. He now made the "frequent request", the British Trade Agent at Gyantse reported, that "an assurance" be given to him that he would

enjoy an independence equal to that which he enjoyed prior to the departure from Tibet of the Dalai Lama.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>153</sup> For details see Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47 and Li, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>154</sup> Bell to India, September 5, 1911 and British Trade Agent, Gyantse to India, August 11, 1911, both in FO 371/1078/283.

<sup>155</sup> For details "Panchen Lama (Ninth)" in *supra*, n. 118

<sup>156</sup> Bell, *Portrait*, p. 97.

<sup>157</sup> Bell to India, February 29, 1912 in FO 535/15.

<sup>158</sup> British Trade Agent, Yatong to Political Officer, December 28, 1911, encl. 4 in No. 14 FO 535/15.

The Trade Agent reported that the Lama had sent the Gam-pa Dzung-pon to him "with the same request for British assistance".

<sup>159</sup> British Trade Agent, Gyantse to India, June 7, 1912, encl. 2 in No. 135, FO 535/16.



For obvious reasons, the British were not prepared to oblige the Panchen albeit they imparted him the reassuring information that it had "informally (been) ascertained" that "action on the latter's (Dalai Lama's) part apprehended by Tashi Lama" was "not contemplated."<sup>160</sup> This, however, did not entirely allay the Panchen's anxiety, much less bury his fears, for the (British) Trade Agent at Gyantse reported to his principals that he (Panchen) was

still uneasy as to future and would like to have a further assurance as to the intentions of the Dalai Lama, and if he (Panchen Lama) should hereafter be unable to come to an understanding with Dalai Lama, to know definitely how he would be received in India.<sup>161</sup>

Finding the British unresponsive, the Lama, "very seriously alarmed for his own and his officers' safety", now

repeatedly requested. . . to urge Government to allow me (Trade Agent, Gyantse) to act, whether officially or unofficially, as intermediary between Dalai Lama and himself at Ralung or Kangma.<sup>162</sup>

Interestingly enough, about the same time, the Dalai Lama was making a similar request to the British Agent at Yatong<sup>163</sup>. He had arrived thither, from India, on a triumphal return to his land, and his people. With mounting pressure from both sides, the Indian government asked Whitehall if it could play any useful role

on the understanding that we are not thereby committed to any responsibility as to any arrangement arrived at between the Lamas being fulfilled.<sup>164</sup>

Wiser by experience, the authorities in London refused to plough the barren sands of controversy and clearly stipulated that, for Delhi, it was "undesirable" to mediate. This, in view both of the risk of encouraging Tashi Lama to count on "our assistance" in future and of the "mutually self-denying clauses" of Article I of the Anglo-Russian Agreement (of 1907)<sup>165</sup>.

Despite their posture of ostensible neutrality, behind the scenes, however, as has been noticed earlier, the British made sure that the meeting between the two Lamas at Ralung<sup>166</sup> would achieve desired results. In fact, the Panchen later conceded as much, and called it a "complete success" for a settlement of "all differences" between him and the Dalai Lama, had been brought about. More, he had been "entirely relieved" of his previous anxiety, albeit his ministers had been "warned" and, for his part, he had again proffered his services as an "intermediary" between the Dalai and the Chinese.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>160</sup> India to Political Officer, June 10, 1912, encl. 4 in No. 135 in *ibid*.

<sup>161</sup> British Trade Agent, Gyantse, to India, June 18, 1912, encl. in No. 146 in *ibid*.

<sup>162</sup> India to Crewe, July 10, 1912, encl. in No. 148 in *ibid*.

<sup>163</sup> Trade Agent, Yatong to India, July 6, 1912, encl. in No. 148, in *ibid*. The Dalai Lama, had asked the Trade Agent to go "as far as Ralung with him in order to mediate between himself and Tashi Lama".

<sup>164</sup> *Supra*, n. 162

<sup>165</sup> Crewe to India, July 12, 1912, No. 167 in FO 535/15.

<sup>166</sup> According to a recent authority the Panchen Lama met the Dalai Lama "ten days" journey from Lhasa at the end of 1912 to accompany the Dalai back to his capital". For details "Panchen Lama (Ninth)" in *supra*, n. 118

<sup>167</sup> India to Crewe, August 2, 1912, No. 167 in FO 535/15.

## **The Panchen Lama seeks Chinese intercession (1913-1914)**

In the tortuous annals of relations between the two Lamas the years between 1912, when the Dalai Lama wended his way back to Lhasa after what seemed to be a sincere rapprochement with the Panchen, and 1914, when the tri-partite Simla confabulations proved abortive, are a complete gap. Detailed, much less authentic, information about what transpired is conspicuous by its absence largely because of (a) a complete eclipse of Chinese authority in Tibet; and (b) a stern refusal by the British to allow their Trade Agent in Gyantse, as well as their Political Officer in Sikkim, to visit the Panchen's headquarters. In the absence of any hard core of facts to bite on, one is constrained to fall back upon a stray bit here or a piece there and re-construct the narrative as best one can.

Even before the Dalai Lama returned to the Potala, early in January, 1913, feelers were thrown out by the new Republican regime in Beijing to resolve its many outstanding disputes with Lhasa. Nor, for that matter, was the Dalai any the less keen. The exercise, through many a circuitous, if also perhaps devious, channel led finally to the convening of a tri-partite conference at Simla, in India, in October, 1913. It would be obvious that Yuan Shikai, the ramshackle Republic's first compromise President, was above all anxious to preserve the status and dignity of Manchu authority which he had inherited. This meant, vis-a-vis the mainland, a subordinate position for the Outer Dependencies. Yuan was thus determined, from the very outset, not to accord Tibet the status of an equal and, understandably, fought every inch of ground before finally succumbing to the inevitable. In this long drawn-out, and tenacious, struggle, Beijing employed two principal props. One was to persuade the Dalai Lama and/or his Ministers, to engage in independent, if exclusive, China-Tibet parleys at Chamdo, in Kham, obviating thereby the necessity for a tripartite meeting that would bring in the un-wanted British. Failing this, if the conference convened at all, the plan was to subvert by confronting it with the fait accompli of a bi-partite settlement. Despite what would seem to be Lhasa's equivocal behaviour at times and the faint echoes of an alleged (bi-partite) settlement, the Chamdo parleys proved still-born.

A second major bid by Beijing was to sabotage the Dalai Lama's position in his own country both by endeavouring to buy his Ministers as well as using the Panchen Lama as the hard core, if also the backbone, for retrieval of what was a well-nigh hopeless Chinese position in Tibet. The brain behind these ingenious, and indeed extremely well thought-out, Chinese moves was Lu Xingqi, a Calcutta-based (Chinese) furrier who, after the withdrawal of Zhong Ying, had been officially nominated as Beijing's Amban-designate to Lhasa. Unfortunately for him, owing to a rigorously enforced British interdict on journeys to Tibet, across the Indian frontier, Lu was, in fact, never allowed to leave Calcutta. Endowed with a razor-sharp mind, though handicapped in terms of movement albeit not funds, which appear to have been in generous supply - Lu operated through a number of Tibetan agents who had fanned out all over the land, broadcasting his news and views and running his all-too-numerous errands. To a large extent thus Lu kept himself, and his political masters in Beijing, well- posted with all that was happening in the Dalai Lama's domain.

To Lu Xingqi's all too obvious blandishments, the gullible Panchen fell an early, if also an easy prey. Thus one of the first bits of news from Lu in Calcutta to his principals in Beijing, on June 6, 1913, mentions the Lama's acceptance of the Chinese President's gifts, and of a newly-bestowed title:

I respectfully prepared (the Lama wrote) an incense altar in the monastery at Tashilhunpo, and after lighting the incense and making nine prostrations, humbly received the present in a kneeling posture and rendered thanks for this mark of celestial favour.<sup>168</sup>

Gratified by this initial gain, Lu confidently wrote home about a final settlement in Tibet presenting "no difficulty", if "external relations" could be successfully tackled. For his part the Panchen Lama, assured that he was now on an excellent wicket with the President - in fact, he had been keen to send a special messenger to Lu to thank Yuan - made a fervent plea

requesting that an order be sent to Tashilhunpo, through the Tanguts, directing that a representative be sent to the Conference in India to take part in the negotiations between China and Tibet.<sup>169</sup>

Lu put in a strong plea and added that the course suggested by the Panchen would greatly benefit both China and the Lama himself. Furthermore, he pleaded that, as desired by the Lama, the fact that he "wants to send" a representative should not be made known!<sup>170</sup>

Despite its plausibility, added to Lu's fervent advocacy, Beijing seemed to be in no dismal hurry to reach a conclusion. It would appear that after talking it over with Ivan Chen,<sup>171</sup> and for once tossing it back into Lu's court,<sup>172</sup> in a telegram on October 29 (1913) Beijing threw on the entire scheme a douche of cold water:

It would appear better (the Chinese Foreign Office wrote) not to cavil at distinctions between Anterior and Ulterior Tibet, since both China and Great Britain have accepted the said representatives it follows that they represent the whole of Tibet.

Besides, Beijing argued

Now that the Conference has begun, there is no advantage in our raising questions of this nature; on the contrary it is to be feared that complications would ensue.<sup>173</sup>

Unsuccessful in his attempt to cut Lhasa to size by securing, through the Chinese, separate and independent representation for Tashilhunpo at the tripartite Conference, the

<sup>168</sup> Lu Xingqi to the President and the Cabinet, June 6, 1913, *IOR*, P & EF, 2350/1913 "Tibet: Intercepted Telegrams."

One of Lu's agents in Tibet reported, inter alia, that the Tibetan officers en-route were "exercising the strictest surveillance" which explained why the Tashi Lama did not correspond "freely", and that there was "great dearth of news" regarding Taahilhunpo.

<sup>169</sup> Lu Xingqi to the President, July 18, 1913, in *ibid*.

To all outward appearances, Lu Xingqi worked with a Calcutta Chinese trading firm of furriers, Thinyik And Company which, inter alia, had played a significant role in arranging for the repatriation of Chinese garrisons in Tibet, through India.

<sup>170</sup> *Loc cit*.

<sup>171</sup> Cabinet to Lu Xingqi, July 24, 1913, in *ibid*.

Among other things, the Cabinet had informed Lu that while his proposal must await Chen's arrival in Lhasa, "in the meantime", it had been transferred to the Board of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>172</sup> Lu Xingqi to Cabinet, September 17, 1913 in *ibid*.

In his telegram, Lu had enquired whether the Panchen Lama "should be instructed to send representatives" as the "present situation affects the whole of Tibet".

<sup>173</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Administrator Lu, October 29, 1913 in *ibid*.

Peking now further underlined the fact that the representatives sent by Tibet to the Conference were "recommended" by Great Britain, and that they were "neither nominated nor sent by China".

Panchen Lama now set himself on a tangential course. Why not, he seems to have argued, plan a visit to Beijing and there seek the active support and intercession of the new regime? And albeit a formal letter of invitation was despatched post-haste, the Chinese in their heart of hearts were a little less than sure. This alone would explain why they asked Lu

to communicate secretly with the Tashi Lama and ascertain if he is really able to undertake this journey. Also please enquire secretly by what route he should travel and find out what conditions prevail in the places through which he will pass.<sup>174</sup>

In sharp contrast to the Lama, Lu, a down-to-earth realist, could clearly see that the journey contemplated by the Panchen may not be an easy one to undertake. In fact, his telegram to Beijing on December (1913) is much more explicit than he probably meant it to be:

If the Tashi Lama dares to make this journey to Peking, the situation in Tibet will no doubt be vastly improved. But the Tashi Lama secretly fears the Dalai and has the greatest dread of the British, so it may be that he is undecided and will in the end do nothing. . . If he travels through India, Britain will devise means of impeding his progress.<sup>175</sup>

Two expressions are of significance: "dares to" and "will in the end do nothing". They are perhaps far more revealing, than Lu may have intended, of the true character of the 9th incarnation of the Abbot of Tashilhunpo. And it may be of interest to note that despite a pressing letter, written at Lu's behest, from the Panchen Lama's own agent in Beijing,<sup>176</sup> the Lama dared not move out of Tashilhunpo; more, unmindful of the noises made and the motions through which he went, the Panchen remained where he was and, in the end, did nothing.

Not that the British were ignorant, much less oblivious, of all that was happening. Thus as early as April 15 (1913), the India Office wrote to the Foreign Office in London about the Lama passing "completely" under Chinese influence. There was an inevitable, if unfortunate concomitant, it noted, to this proposition namely, that Shigatse would become a

<sup>174</sup> Mongolian-Tibetan Bureau to Administrator Lu, December 1, 1913, in *ibid.* Among other things, the Board directed Lu that he "render every assistance" and report "in cypher by telegram from time to time".

The President's invitation to the Lama read:

The said Lama has ever been an advocate of peace and has from the first to last shown his loyalty in the most commendable manner.

His request to visit Beijing is granted.

The Cabinet should instruct the (Mongolian-Tibetan) Bureau to issue the necessary passport.

<sup>175</sup> Lu Xingqi to the Mongolian-Tibetan Bureau, December 7, 1913 in *ibid.*

Lu, on his own, had enjoined the Board "to hold secret deliberations upon the means to be adopted" to bring Tashi Lama to Peking and, off his own bat, undertook to send a "special messenger" to Tashilhunpo to hold a "secret interview" with the Panchen Lama.

<sup>176</sup> Sha Chung's message read:

I beg your Holiness to decide on making this Journey and to appoint a date for your start. You will be accorded a most joyous reception here, so on no account hesitate. Please send all details to Lu Hsing-chi who will transmit them.

From Sha Chung, incharge Tashi Lama's Bureau in Beijing, to Administrator Lu, Beijing to Calcutta, December 27, 1913 in *ibid.*

"centre of Chinese intrigue."<sup>177</sup> No wonder that a few weeks later, the Secretary of State asked the Viceroy to have the Panchen informed

that we wish to warn him in (a) friendly manner that no influence on his behalf by Chinese could be tolerated by us and that if a collision between him and Dalai Lama results from his intrigues, no protection can be looked for from us.<sup>178</sup>

It is sobering to reflect that less than a year earlier, in July 1912, largely through British efforts, and initiative, a scared Panchen Lama had been assured by the Dalai that he held nothing against him (Panchen) and that they could start afresh!

## The Panchen Lama's Flight and its Reverberations

### The Lamas' Mounting differences: Flight of the Panchen Lama

What exactly filled up the years between the abortive Simla Conference (1913-1914) and 1923<sup>179</sup> when the Panchen left Shigatse on his way to Mongolia, and later China, there is no sure way of knowing. Yet insofar as one is aware of what took place both before and after, it would not be hard to deduce that relations between Lhasa and Shigatse continued to deteriorate. Once the ground-swell of suspicion and intrigue built up, it managed to snowball, as it invariably does. There was also perhaps a supplementary reason which could only have added to, and further complicated, the relations. And this emanated from the Dalai Lama's new-fangled pre-occupation, if also a certain obsession, with reform indistinguishable, in Tibetan eyes, from westernization.

From Darjeeling the Lama imported Laden La, the Sikkimese police official who had attended on him during his stay in India, in order to create, out of the blue as it were, a small but viable police force; four Tibetan boys had been sent to England for schooling; young men were drafted to Gyantse, and different places in India, to serve as the nucleus of an armed force in their own land; an English-medium school with a blue-blooded (English) Headmaster had been established at Gyantse and last, but by no means the least, Tibet's until then unexplored mineral wealth, reportedly abundant, was to be prospected- and exploited. Most of these measures, if not all, so vital to development, would have been termed innovations in many Asian lands then; in Tibet, they partook of the nature of a revolution. A lama-ridden, tradition-bound land which for centuries had been a cesspool of political, if also religious stagnation must have felt their earth-shaking impact.

<sup>177</sup> India Office to Foreign Office, April 15, 1913 in FO 535/16.

The India Office noted that should the Panchen Lama, in fact, come under Beijing's control, it would be "directly opposed" to the policy of HMG.

<sup>178</sup> Crewe to Government of India, May 3, 1913, encl. in No. 216 in *ibid*.

That Lu's intrigues with the Tashi Lama were having effect is indicated by the warning from the Government of India that he may be deported. India to Secretary of State, July 27, 1913, encl. in 329 in FO 535/16.

<sup>179</sup> According to "Panchen Lama (Ninth)" in *supra*. n. 118, in 1914, the Panchen Lama sent a message to Lhasa that the Dalai Lama receive him 'at Lhasa' and give him benediction. The Dalai Lama replied in September 1915 that the visit be postponed because he (Dalai Lama) was busy with affairs of state. For various reasons, we are told, it was not until December 1919 that the Panchen Lama was able to go to Lhasa and receive the Dalai's benediction.

Jolted out of its old static stance, and rudely, Tibet showed signs of some life, of movement. The lamas who, besides being rich traders, are the biggest landlords - for the monasteries are richly endowed- constituted the most powerful, if also a strongly-entrenched, vested interest. On the occasion of the Monlam festival in Lhasa, in the winter of 1921, they staged an ill-disguised revolt against the Lama's authority to which Bell, then on a visit to the Tibetan capital, was an eye-witness; un-reported, there may have been others. A clever, and astute, manager and manipulator of men, and affairs, the 13th Dalai Lama crushed the revolt and was soon on top again. But - and not in Lhasa only - the reverberations of the storm that loomed large, threatened, and then blew over must have been felt far and wide, with Shigatse itself perhaps not immune from their impact. Not unlike the reaction of the three great monasteries outside Lhasa, what may have irked Tashilhunpo most, could not have been different. The fact was that the reforms were costly and their burden, in terms of making the monks disgorge their fat, long-cherished, if ill-gotten hoardings hit, where it hurt most.

In the light of the above, it is thus possible to view the breach with Tashilhunpo as part of a larger, deeper and, as it was in Tibet then, an almost universal protest, or resistance. The expression "universal" in the then context of Tibet has a limited connotation being valid in terms of its only vocal, best organized, if also most reactionary, vested interest- the large "armies" of monks in its all-too-numerous gompas. Put differently, even apart from the bad blood, the intrigues and suspicions that bedevilled relations between Lhasa and Shigatse, there was the much more fundamental, if frontal, clash of interests. Tashilhunpo may have hoped, as did many others, that the Dalai Lama would see reason and desist from measures that were bound to be resisted; for its part, Lhasa saw in non-compliance of its administrative fiat a rebellious posture that at the same time afforded it an opportunity to tighten the screw. It argued, plausibly enough, that the Panchen and his estates could not be treated differently from the rest of the country, or the community;<sup>180</sup> like everyone else, he too must pay, and play his part in the new scheme of things. In the words of a knowledgeable authority on Tibet, the situation could best be summed up as

a conflict between the determination of Lhasa to reduce Tashilhunpo to the status - on which there was fair reason to insist - of an honoured vassal, and the reluctance of Tashilhunpo to give up any of the privileges which it had acquired in the past century and more.<sup>181</sup>

Two reports, towards the end of 1922, underline the fact that Lhasa's demands were being vigorously pressed. Thus on November 18 (1922) the British Trade Agent at Gyantse reported that the Panchen Lama was being asked to contribute a quarter of the total expenditure for the upkeep of the proposed Tibetan army. Since remittances sought, and

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<sup>180</sup> In Tibetan theory, according to Richardson, the Panchen Lama's rights over the districts concerned "were never more than those which the Tibetan feudal nobility and the great monasteries" exercised over their large landed estates. He maintains that it were the Chinese who, "to keep alive" the rivalry between Lhasa and Tashilhunpo, "build up" large claims on his behalf to "temporal authority" over large parts of Tibet and also to "spiritual superiority" over the Dalai Lama. Furthermore, Richardson contends, the "simple fact" that the Panchen Lamas were long-lived and did not have to compete with the influence of an active Dalai Lama led to a growth in their prestige and to an "air of independence" in the administration of their fief. Richardson, *History*. pp. 53-54 and 125-26.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*, p. 126.

due, had defaulted, some officials of Tashilhunpo were "already undergoing imprisonment". The Panchen had, understandably, made representations to the Dalai and enquired from the British Trade Agent whether, in case these did not bear fruit, the Government of India "will intervene" on his behalf.<sup>182</sup> "It was clear", the Political Officer wrote forwarding the Trade Agent's report to Delhi, that "in a matter of this kind" such interference would be "impossible", nor would he recommend any. Inter alia, he noted that it had

always (been) curious to me that the Tashi Lama has borne such a small proportion of the expenses of the central administration.<sup>183</sup>

A little over a year later, on December 26, 1923 to be precise, the Panchen Lama, accompanied by a large retinue - a hundred attendants and twice that many mules - left Shigatse<sup>184</sup> amidst contradictory reports that he was on his way to western Tibet,<sup>185</sup> Mongolia,<sup>186</sup> even British India.<sup>187</sup> Under Lungshar, then a rising star and soon to be one of the Dalai Lama's favourites and later identified as the root-cause for all the Panchen's troubles<sup>188</sup> - the Lhasa government despatched three hundred of its troops to Mongolia to intercept the fleeing Lama.<sup>189</sup> This, however, proved to be a wild goose chase; after many a harrowing experience, the men beat back a retreat.

To all outward appearances the Panchen had departed so as to be able to raise sufficient funds to satisfy Lhasa's imperious demands. And yet there could be no mistaking as to where precisely the shoe pinched. As he confided:

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<sup>182</sup> British Trade Agent, Gyantse, to Political Officer, November 18, 1922 in *IOR, L/P & S/12/580, External Collection* 36/16.

The Trade Agent listed what the Lama was supposed to contribute: a) Rs. 650,000 approx. (presumably in cash?); b) 10,000 maunds of grain, valued at Rs. 80,000; c) 2,000 boxes of Chinese brick tea, valued at Rs. 85,000 and d) "other liberal concessions" which were "not specified".

<sup>183</sup> Political Officer to India, December 12, 1922 in *ibid.*

Richardson, *History*, p. 127 regards it as "unfortunate" that the Panchen Lama's request for British mediation was turned down.

<sup>184</sup> India to Secretary of State, December 31, 1923 in *supra*, n. 182

The Indian communication, based no doubt on the Political Officer's report, made two interesting points: one, the Lama "was believed to have set out" for Western Tibet; two, the "object" of his journey was "unknown".

<sup>185</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>186</sup> India to Secretary of State, January 5, 1924 in *ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> Reports appearing in London's *News Chronicle* (February 20) and the *Daily Telegraph* (March 20), mentioned the fact that the Lama had arrived in British India and would soon be "sailing for China". Cited in *IOR, L/P & S/12/580, External Collection*, 36/16.

The Tibetan Ministers too had informed Bailey that the Tashi Lama's intention was to go to China or another country, "through India". *Supra*, n. 186

<sup>188</sup> This was an assessment made by the Nepalese Agent in Lhasa who had spent five years in the Tibetan capital. According to what he told Bailey, Lungshar who "at one time" was an official of Shigatse had reasons "for revenging himself" on some of the higher officials of the Tashi Lama and did this "by raising and pressing the questions" which led to the flight of the Lama. India to Secretary of State, July 9, 1928 in *IOR, L/P & S/12/580, External Collection*, 36/16.

<sup>189</sup> India to Secretary of State, January 5&9, 1924 in *ibid.*

In the latter telegram, India informed the Secretary of State that Laden La, then in Lhasa, had reported that he may be asked to follow the Tashi Lama and persuade him to return. India, in turn, informed Laden La that since he was in the pay of the Tibetan government he should go "if asked to".

Lhasa has been giving me nothing but trouble, sometimes summons were received demanding that I myself should go and appear before them and again at times they advance claims to half our income. Unable to live under these troubles and suffering, I depart.<sup>190</sup>

Despite his inmost rancour and bitterness, the Panchen Lama's official proclamation was couched in a low key. He did not blame the Dalai Lama personally for his ills but roundly condemned the Lhasa officials who were "creating difficulties"; his own representations to the Tibetan ruler, he now revealed, had borne little, if any, fruit. The purpose of his self-imposed exile, he maintained, was both to see whether "mediation" was possible as well as to raise funds<sup>191</sup>.

In sharp contrast to the Panchen's suave, if well-mannered stance, the Dalai Lama was blunt and hit back hard. Unmistakably and without mincing matters he directly blamed the Panchen and declared that the latter's conduct had left a lot to be desired:

You seem to have forgot (sic) the sacred history of your predecessors and wandered away to a desert . . . like a butter-fly that is attracted by the lamp-light. (Nor had the Panchen cared to consult the Dalai, his- Panchen's- teacher or "Lopa") and ran away with his sinful companions who resembled mad elephants and followed the wrong path . . .

As if that were not enough of plain speaking, the Dalai went on:

It is difficult to believe that a person who thinks of himself only and who is not freed from the three sins (anger, pride and ignorance) should be regarded as a Lama or Buddha. As selfishness is a great evil in this world, the wisest course to adopt is to turn repentant and turn back from the wrong path . . .<sup>192</sup>

Unfortunately, for all the Dalai Lama's harsh words - and it is hard to miss his repeated emphasis on the "wrong path" - the Panchen was far away and, ere long, arrived in Beijing where the then derelict Chinese regime showered "royal honours" on its distinguished guest.<sup>193</sup>

The British who had kept a close watch on men and events and were, understandably, keen that the breach between the two Lamas be healed by the Panchen's return, were yet patient and discreet and waited for the initiative to come from the Lama himself. Nor did

<sup>190</sup> Letter from Chandra Shamsheer Jung Bahadur Rana, Prime Minister of Nepal to O'Connor, Resident in Kathmandu, January 20, 1924. The citation here is from the Panchen Lama's "note" which the Prime Minister reproduced. For the text, *ibid*.

<sup>191</sup> Among other things, the Panchen Lama's proclamation, issued on December 26, 1923, indicated that, during his absence, "his acting Prime Minister and four members of his Council" would govern. For the text, *ibid*.

<sup>192</sup> The Dalai Lama's proclamation was issued on January 26, 1924, exactly a month after the Panchen's. For the text, *ibid*.

<sup>193</sup> According to the *Peking Daily News* of February 26, 1924, "as a special tribute to the high status of the visitor", the front gate of the T'ien-men which was only used when the Manchu Emperor worshipped at the Temple of Heaven, was opened on this occasion and the Lama passed through it to Yingtai.

The first news of the Lama's arrival in Beijing came in a telegram to the Foreign Office from the British Charge d' Affaires dated February 25, 1924. For the text, *ibid*.

For a graphic account of the Panchen Lama's reception in Beijing see Gosta Montell, "Sven Hedin and the Panchen Lama", Appendix in Toni Schmid, *Saviours of Mankind. II: Panchen Lamas and Former Incarnations of Amitayus*, State Ethnografiska Museum, Stockholm, 1964, pp. 99-100.



they have to tarry long. To start with, Prince George, the then Duke of Kent, met the Panchen Lama, in Beijing, in 1926. There was an innocuous exchange of small talk, of pleasantries, but no more. Later, in a message through Williamson - having officiated as the British Trade Agent at Gyantse he knew the Lama - who met him at Mukden, in February 1927, the Panchen while conceding that he had left Tibet "owing to his own fault", indicated that he "proposed to return" as soon as possible, even suggesting that he would "go by sea" and "via India".<sup>194</sup> A little earlier, the Lama had addressed a letter to Colonel Bailey, then Political Officer in Sikkim, intimating that the climate of China did not "suit" him and seeking "any help and advice, both in official or private matters" that he could tender.<sup>195</sup> Similar communications, it would appear, had been addressed by the Panchen Lama, among others, to the Maharajas of Bhutan and Sikkim.<sup>196</sup>

In August, and again in October 1927, the Panchen's representatives met the British Minister in Beijing, and gave him to understand that the Lama wanted to return. Furthermore, they suggested a conference between him, the Dalai Lama, and the representatives of the Government of India and enquired if the time was ripe for such an initiative. From all this, Sir Miles Lampson formed the clear impression that the Lama was "wavering" and had not yet made up his mind.<sup>197</sup> Sir Miles' assessment notwithstanding, the Panchen in a letter to O'Connor, then British Resident in Kathmandu, was much more direct and specific. He reminded his old English "friend" about his visit to India in 1905 and the promise which the Viceroy then gave him

to render me all assistance which I might require . . . I wish to obtain your good advice as to how to enable myself to return to Tibet before long.<sup>198</sup>

Feelers to Prince George, Bailey, Williamson, the British Minister in Beijing and O'Connor, listed in the preceding paragraphs, and spanning the early years of the Lama's exile, may be viewed in the nature of informal, even preliminary soundings. Yet perhaps the first formal request from the Panchen was addressed to the British Minister (in Beijing) whom he now importuned for the "good offices" of HMG to enable him to retrace his steps. This was in April 1928. One would deduce that by then it was evident to the Lama that to wait for the civil war in China to draw to a close, would be a long enough wait and, in the bargain, his temples and his priests may be in dire peril of their life and limb.<sup>199</sup>

Both the informal soundings for "help and advice" and the more formal request for the British government's "good offices", were responsible for Colonel Bailey's initiative, early in May 1928, at the instance of his political superiors, both in India and Whitehall. In

<sup>194</sup> Delhi had approved of Williamson (then on his way home via China) interviewing the Panchen Lama in Beijing. For the text of his "Report", dated March 21, 1927, see *IOR, L/P & S/12/580*. External Collection 36/16.

<sup>195</sup> The Tashi Lama had complained to Bailey that officers sent by him to Lhasa "to settle accounts" were arrested by the Dalai Lama's government. His letter was dated December 17, 1926. For the text see Bailey to India, May 28, 1927 in *ibid*.

<sup>196</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>197</sup> Miles Lampson, British Minister in Beijing, to Foreign Office, in *ibid*.

<sup>198</sup> Tashi Lama to O'Connor, December 4, 1927 in *ibid*.

<sup>199</sup> On April 13, 1928, the British Minister reported that the Lama's formal request had been received. For the text, *ibid*.

Earlier, it appears, the Lama's representatives had met the British Minister and told him that the Lama wanted "definitely" to return and implored the intercession of the "good offices" of the Government of India for the purpose.

pursuance thereof the then Political Officer in Sikkim wrote to the Dalai Lama to the effect that the Panchen wanted to come back; more, that he (Panchen) was "a friend" and would accept his (Bailey's) advice. It followed, Bailey wrote, that he "would like to assist" in the matter.<sup>200</sup> The Dalai Lama's response to the Political Officer's overtures, a few weeks later, is eloquent both of the then climate of political opinion in Lhasa and the latter's refusal to brook any interference in its affairs:

It is very good of you, the Political Officer in Sikkim, to send me such letter after having considered matter from broad point of view. You are aware that His Serenity without considering interests of Buddhist doctrine of Tibet, without any reason, fled to China, although we were helping him in every respect. Now if His Serenity returns to Tibet, I shall do my best to help him. I could not reply to you about this at once. I hope you will remember that, in accordance with treaty, British Government should not interfere in internal affairs of Tibet.<sup>201</sup>

Could Bailey have anticipated this sharp rebuff? For the record, it may I recalled that four years earlier viz., in 1924, the Political Officer in the course of his visit to Lhasa, had been discreetly told by the Lama's Ministers about the Tashi Lama returning "by sea", and "through Sikkim", and the need for him (Tashi Lama) of "good advice". It had also been suggested that since he (Bailey) was a "personal friend" of the Lama, might he not go to Beijing, "on my way to England", and advise him (Tashi Lama) to return. To all of which the Political Officer's reply was characteristic:

I said that China was not on my way and I did not know when I should be going on leave. I told the Prime Minister that I thought that if the Tashi Lama were left to himself, he would soon wish to return.

Bailey noted nonetheless that the Tibetans for various reasons, which were mostly of a religious nature, "want him (Panchen Lama) back" very badly. And, on his own, argued:

I do not think that the Tashi Lama would trust to promises made by the Lhasa authorities and, if steps were taken to persuade him, I think that the terms of his return should be guaranteed by the Tibetan government to the Government of India ... I do not think that he will trust any promises made direct to him by Lhasa, and I think that if the Government of India would consent to act to this extent as an intermediary, there would be a better prospect of the Tashi Lama returning, and of removing a means of Chinese and Bolshevik intrigue in Tibet.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Bailey's letter to the Dalai Lama was dated May 5, 1928. For the text, *ibid*.

<sup>201</sup> India to Secretary of State, July 9, 1928 in *ibid*.

<sup>202</sup> Bailey's "Report on Visit to Lhasa, 1924", para 1, pp. 1-2, in Bailey to India, October 28, 1924 in *IOR, L/P & S/10/1113*.

## Efforts to bring about the Panchen Lama's Return : the British, Lhasa and the Guomindang

### Efforts at reconciliation, 1924-1930

In 1924, Bailey had kept himself to himself and refused to share his thoughts-"this suggestion of mine", he had noted, "was not discussed or even. mentioned" to the Tibetan authorities; four years later when he did, the Dalai Lama's rejoinder, as has been noticed, was a firm, if unqualified, rebuff. Bailey was convinced, as was his informant, the Nepalese Agent in Lhasa, that "as long as" Lungshar wielded influence, it would be "impossible" for the Panchen to return. Additionally, the Political Officer now argued, the Dalai Lama would have the Panchen return "on his (Dalai's) terms". More, Bailey's own overtures had synchronised with a "movement" in Lhasa against the Panchen's adherents - his nephew and his step-father had been consigned to the dungeons for an alleged attempt to escape secretly from Tashilhunpo - and were thus ill-timed. It was obvious, Bailey had concluded, that "in these circumstances" the Panchen Lama would not return.<sup>203</sup> His concrete suggestion that the Lama may be given political asylum in India at Darjeeling, or Kalimpong - the Dalai, he pointed out, could scarcely object, for he had lived there himself - was ruled out of court in Delhi. "The danger", the latter argued, in implementing Bailey's proposal, in the face of the Dalai Lama's unfriendly, if hostile attitude would be greater than of leaving the Panchen in China.<sup>204</sup>

As the months rolled by and no headway could be made, or was in sight, the Panchen began harbouring some impractical, if perhaps fanciful schemes. One of these envisaged the raising of a Mongolian force, with Soviet Russian assistance, to attack and oust the Dalai Lama!<sup>205</sup> Nor was that all. An agent "nominally of the Tashi Lama", had set up an office at Chengdu in Sichuan and, reportedly, was in the pay of the local provincial government; another, had appeared at Nanjing. Again, some of the Lama's followers had told Colonel Weir, Bailey's successor as Political Officer, and in a minatory tone, that failing in their efforts with the British, they would turn to China for aid and "raise up" a party in Tibet.<sup>206</sup>

News from Lhasa, in terms of a peaceful return of the Panchen Lama, were not heartening either. For while the "religious - and economic" policies of the Dalai Lama had

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<sup>203</sup> Bailey to India, in *IOR, L/P & S/12/680*, External Collection 36/16.

<sup>204</sup> India to Secretary of State, November 2, 1928 in *ibid*.

<sup>205</sup> Miles Lampson to Foreign Office, December 9, 1929, in *ibid*. The British Minister based his remarks on the statements "allegedly" made by the Panchen Lama to Marshal Zhang Xueliang and communicated by the latter to W H Donald (a British Legation employee?).

<sup>206</sup> India Office Minute, dated April 29, 1929 in *IOR, L/P & S/10/1113*.

The minute stated, inter alia, that while it was not possible to say if the Panchen Lama himself was cognisant of all these happenings. "a man of his disposition lends himself to the machinations of others". It also mentioned a (London) *Times* report that representatives of the Tashi Lama had arrived in Nanjing to urge the newly-established Guomindang regime to assume charge of affairs in Tibet and ensure its incorporation in the Republic as they feared that "Tibet may be a second India".

The bulk of the minute is recorded by H. A. F. Rumbold and is dated April 27 while the final annotation is by J. C. Walton and bears the date April 29.

bred large-scale discontent and the three great monasteries (Sera, Ganden and Drepung) had petitioned for the Panchen's return, they were also said to be "storing" arms!<sup>207</sup>

Faced with a difficult, if delicate, situation Colonel Weir, in a letter written to his superiors on March 7 (1929) argued cogently, and convincingly, that the "principal weapon of a China bent on intervention", namely the Panchen Lama, should be removed from the hands of the Nanjing government. Inter alia, he now suggested that in the course of a visit to Lhasa, he should take up this question with the Dalai Lama.<sup>208</sup> The Foreign Office in London, after consulting their Minister in Nanjing, raised no objections and thus, so far as Whitehall was concerned, there was an unqualified "Go ahead!"<sup>209</sup>

Unfortunately for Weir, as for everyone else, it was akin to staging Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark! Norbu Dhondhup, Weir's assistant and confidant who was in Lhasa on behalf of his master, found it "no easy task" to obtain the required invitation for the Colonel. In the final count, the Dalai Lama's government, "owing to uncertainty" about the Chinese Communist General Feng's movements in northern Tibet, suggested a postponement of the British official's visit.<sup>210</sup> Weir was phlegmatic if also philosophical in pocketing the insult. He explained it away by making out that

if an invitation had been issued to me by the Dalai Lama . . . he would have been assailed by demands for similar invitations to Russian or Chinese officials which he would have found impossible to refuse.<sup>211</sup>

The Political Officer's explanation notwithstanding, the harsh truth that emerged was that an affirmative reply from the Tibetan capital to every British demand could not always be taken for granted. More, contrary to popular belief, Lhasa may have been a satellite, but certainly was not a stooge of the British.

By 1930, however, the situation had changed and, from New Delhi's point of view, for the better. This was largely because of the Indian authorities' active intercession on the Lama's behalf to help defuse a very explosive situation that had brought him almost to the brink of a catastrophic war with Nepal. Through Laden La's visit to Lhasa, undertaken at New Delhi's behest, the Tibetan authorities were made to see reason and save themselves from the near-certain disaster they would have met at the hands of the numerically superior, better-armed, and drilled, Gurkhas. Here undoubtedly was an exercise for which the Lama

<sup>207</sup> Proceedings 6795/28 and 1550/29, both in the India Office Minute, in *ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> Weir's letter was dated March 7, 1929. The India Office noted that, as they viewed it, the "main object" of Weir's mission will be "to attempt a reconciliation" of the Dalai and the Tashi Lamas, for a "continuance of the quarrel" between the two could "only be advantageous" to the Chinese. India Office Minute in *ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> Whitehall over-ruled possible Chinese objections to Weir's visit insofar as the earlier visits of Bell (1921) and Bailey (1924) had attracted "no undue attention" in China: the Beijing government had been told of Bell's visit after he had left India and was on his way to Lhasa, whereas no such communication was deemed necessary in the case of Bailey. For details, India Office Minute in *ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> Weir to India, July 19 and August 13, 1929 in *JOR*, L/P & S/10/1113.

The Dalai Lama's letter of July 20 was sent as an enclosure to the Political Officer's communication of August 13. Inter alia, the Lama wrote:

The foreigners are troubling (us) with applications for permission to allow them to come to Tibet and at present the Chinese are also introducing innovations through the north and it is not known what (they) will do.

<sup>211</sup> Weir to India, August 13, 1928 in *ibid.*

must have felt greatly beholden. Indicative of his new mood was the "wish" he now expressed that the Political Officer may visit Lhasa "to discuss important matters".<sup>212</sup>

Among the subjects that Weir raised with the Dalai Lama, the question of the return of the Tashi Lama was, understandably, the most important. There was what the Political Officer termed, a free and frank exchange of views. Inter alia, the Dalai Lama revealed that initially, and this shortly after the Panchen's arrival in Beijing - and "in interest of Tibet and for his own health's sake" - he had written to him. In reply, the Panchen, while avowing that "their relations were those of father and son" and that "there was no enmity between them", had said "nothing" about returning. To his second letter, assuring the Panchen that there was "nothing between them" that could not be settled "in accordance with their religions, and ties", the Abbot of Tashilhunpo had vouchsafed no reply. Weir noted that the Dalai Lama appeared "very concerned" about the Panchen's health, as "recent photographs" showed him both "worn and aged". The real difficulty, Weir noted, was the Panchen's refusal to answer. Further, he remarked that

His (Dalai Lama's) conversation about Tashi Lama lasting three quarters of an hour had given impression that he would really like to see Tashi Lama re-installed (at) Tashilhunpo. Fear is loss of face in event of curt rebuff from Tashi Lama.<sup>213</sup>

It is interesting too that the Dalai Lama drew a clear line (even as the Panchen had done in reverse) between the Abbot of Tashilhunpo on the one hand and his followers who "misdled" him and were responsible for all the "trouble" that had resulted on the other. For his part, Weir had conceded the Lama's claim that the flight and, therefore, the return of the Panchen were Tibet's internal affairs. And yet "owing to a possibility" of hostilities between the two Lamas breaking out, he made it plain to the master of the Potala that New Delhi could not remain "a disinterested spectator" to war in a country "on their frontiers".<sup>214</sup> All in all, Weir carried the distinct impression that the Dalai Lama "will again" open negotiations with the Panchen "to induce him to return" to Tibet.<sup>215</sup>

On his way back from Lhasa, Weir visited Shigatse and Tashilhunpo - the first time a British Officer had undertaken this journey since Bell's visit in those crowded, if critical days of November, 1906. Inter alia, the Political Officer noted that

after the activity of Lhasa, Shigatse appeared dead. An air of apathy hung over it. As is only natural, the inhabitants sullenly resent the sterner rule of the Central Government and are longing for the return of the Tashi Lama to his home.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Report on Political Officer's visit to Lhasa in 1930, Para 2, in Weir to India, November 18, 1930 in *IOR, L/P & S/10/1113*.

<sup>213</sup> Political Officer to India, September 15, 1930 in *IOR, L/P & S/12/580*, Political & External Collection 36/11.

<sup>214</sup> *Loc. cit.*

Also see Political Officer (Lhasa) to India, September 29, 1930 in *ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> Para 10 (a) in *supra*, n. 213

<sup>216</sup> Para 23 in *ibid.*

The year of Bell's visit to Shigatse is 1906 and *not* (as mentioned) 1908.

Application (original sent by Air Mail)

India Office and Peking

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L.M. G.M.  
36/11

Telegram P. N. 12(3)-P/30 dated (and recd) 29th Sept 1930

From.....Political Sikhim, Lhasa.

(Lhasa)

To..... Foreign, Simla.

Weir (on P.L.'s Return)  
(Sept 1930)

Government of India's decision regarding wool monopoly was communicated by me to Dalai Lama at interview on September 26th. His Holiness expressed gratitude and asked that arrangement might be allowed to continue until after the end of winter of 1930, 2-337. Reason for request was that if terminated in October 1930 wool business for that year would only be half completed. I said that I would convey his request to the Government of India.

I then asked him with reference to previous interview what conclusion he had arrived at regarding Tashi Lama. He replied that he had given matter much thought but had not reached definite decision. He rather implied that it was an internal affair of Tibet. I replied that at last meeting this was (group omitted) but that owing to possibility of hostilities between Tashi Lama and Dalai Lama Government of India could not remain disinterested spectator to war in country on their frontiers. He replied that Tashi Lama was a man of peace and that his followers alone are responsible for any trouble that has been caused. He added that he hoped amicable settlement would be arrived at by early date. I said Government of India would be as pleased as he to see such a satisfactory termination and would be ready to assist in bringing about an assurance which appeared to be appreciated.

It is clear that Tashi Lama since our last discussion sought advice or advice who unfortunately are not covers in presence on Tashi Lama which culminated his flight. His Holiness probably feels that he was frank at former meeting but I think that the point

1930  
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## The Panchen draws closer to China; the Dalai Lama's Death

The Dalai Lama's renewed overtures to the Panchen, it would appear in retrospect, were singularly unavailing. This fact, added to the use which the Nanjing government was by then making of him, put the Abbot of Tashilhunpo once again high on the agenda for Weir's next visit to Lhasa, in 1932.<sup>217</sup> No doubt anticipating British anxiety on this count, the Lama had himself suggested the subject in his telegram to Weir of August 10 (1932) inviting the latter to the Tibetan capital.<sup>218</sup> Once there, the Political Officer interceded, and it would appear powerfully, on the Panchen Lama's behalf. He noted that

after several discussions with the Dalai Lama I induced him to release the relatives of the Tashi Lama who had been imprisoned in chains for several years. He also eventually agreed to write a sincere friendly letter to the Tashi Lama asking him to return.<sup>219</sup>

Weir rated this to be a "great concession" on the Dalai's part, more so as the Panchen had maintained a "stubborn silence" towards previous letters from Lhasa. For himself, the Political Officer noted that if the Panchen

fails to respond to the friendly overtures now made, he deserves little further consideration at our hands.<sup>220</sup>

Sometime in October (1932), the Dalai wrote his promised letter which, it was arranged, should be delivered through the British Minister in Nanjing.

Despite his studied courtesies on receiving it and the interest he evinced, the Panchen was far from responsive:

I assured him (the British Charge d'Affaires noted) of the Government of India's anxiety to bring about a reconciliation between him and the Dalai Lama and to promote his return to Tibet, and of my belief that the Dalai Lama was also genuinely anxious to attain the same end. The Panchen Lama whose attitude was most friendly, expressed his gratitude for our assistance; there was, he said, no personal animosity between himself and the Dalai Lama and immediately on receipt of the original text of the latter's letter he would study it carefully and communicate with him again.<sup>221</sup>

Far from enthusiastic with the Panchen's attitude, Ingram's own feeling was that New Delhi was not well-advised in "pressing for" his return:

<sup>217</sup> For the text of the report, "Visit of the Political Officer in Sikkim to Lhasa in 1932" see Weir to India, March 1, 1933 in *IOR, L/P & S/12/578*.

<sup>218</sup> Para 3 in *ibid*.

The Dalai Lama's telegram asked Weir "to come to Lhasa and render assistance" by discussing matters "concerning China and the Tashi Lama".

<sup>219</sup> Para 10 in *ibid*.

<sup>220</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>221</sup> E. M. B. Ingram was the then British Charge d' Affaires in Nanjing. He called on the Panchen Lama, in Nanjing, and handed the letter — "a copy of the English text of the Dalai Lama's letter and a summary of the contents in Chinese". His report on what transpired is contained in para 22 in Ingram to Simon, January 9, 1933 in *IOR, L/P & S/ 12/578*.

The Dalai Lama's original letter did not arrive in Beijing until December 21 by which time the Panchen had already gone to Nanjing.

He has been so long in Chinese territory and has been subjected to Chinese influences and flattered by Chinese government to such an extent that it seemed to me that it was more than a possibility that if he returned to Tibet he might become a tool in Chinese hands and facilitate the spread of Kuomintang influences in that country in a manner which might subsequently prove very embarrassing to the Government of India.

In further support of his view, the British official revealed that at a press interview in Nanjing on December 20 (1932) the Panchen while "emphatically denying" his intention of effecting his return to Tibet by use of armed force made the significant point that he had been in China for ten years, during which he had visited many parts of Mongolia and the interior of China for the purpose of winning over his followers to Nanking... He only hoped that the Tibetans would return to the fold of the Central government so that the Government would be relieved of its anxiety regarding the western frontier.

A few days later, Ingram noted that at a ceremony marking the inauguration of the Panchen Lama as "Special Commissioner for the Western Border", Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, then head of the Guomindang government in Nanjing, said inter alia that

He (Chiang) deplored the gulf which seemed to have separated the Government and the people of the Western border, and expressed the belief that by virtue of his high spiritual authority the Panchen Lama would spread the teachings of Dr Sun Yat-sen and thereby promote political progress.

The British official underlined the fact that while the importance of both these incidents - the Panchen Lama's press interview and the remarks of the Chinese head of state - may not be "unduly exaggerated", he cited them

merely to show the nature of the influences to which the Panchen Lama is constantly subjected and his public reaction to them.<sup>222</sup>

By the end of 1932, it is thus apparent, the Panchen Lama had arrayed himself solidly behind the Guomindang regime in Nanjing which, in the then political situation in China, appeared to represent his solitary oasis of hope and viability. It may be recalled that in the decade following the death of Yuan Shikai, China had broken up into ill-defined, if also overlapping and ideologically non-descript north and south factions, and among a myriad warlords. Out of this political chaos the Guomindang under Chiang Kai-shek had gradually emerged, by the end of the twenties, as a possible stabiliser. Even as it did so, it was not slow to recognise in the Panchen a possible solvent to the Tibetan imbroglio. What followed on either side was easily predictable: the regime showered gifts and honours, and a substantial allowance; the Lama owned up the cause of the Central government and fervently pleaded for Tibet's return to the embrace of the Motherland. In the evolution of this new political relationship it was significant that, by the close of 1932 Chiang's overtures to the 13th Dalai Lama had proved singularly unproductive, as earlier had the Panchen Lama's numerous efforts to stage a return to his beloved Tashilhunpo. The Panchen was grist to Chiang's mill; in reverse, China alone, the Lama calculated, could help salvage his future. No wonder, to China - and Chiang - he stuck, and tenaciously.

Two things are of interest in the new-born ties between the Panchen Lama and the Guomindang regime. One, that even though Chiang encouraged him in all possible ways - through a judicious mixture of honours and rewards - the Chinese ruler did not give up his

<sup>222</sup> Para 24 in *ibid.*



efforts, simultaneously, to make an accommodation, independently of the Panchen, with the master of the Potala. It followed that in helping the Panchen's forlorn cause, a line was always sought to be drawn indicating the extent to which help and encouragement was forthcoming, or beyond which it was to cease. It is equally significant that, in reverse, the Panchen had no second string to his bow, unless the British link may be viewed as such. One may hasten to add, however, that the latter was a poor, shaky and tenuous string, even at the best of times. Broadly, the Panchen's increasing reliance on the Chinese would largely explain why he was, outwardly at any rate, far from responsive to the Dalai Lama's repeated overtures. It is possible that he was not oblivious of the fact that a settlement with the master of the Potala may have been unworkable in any case. It may be recalled that in his letter of October 9 (1932), referred to earlier in the narrative,<sup>223</sup> the Dalai pointedly complained that none of his earlier communications - in 1923 and again in 1926- had brought forth a reply from the Panchen. Nor, so far as is known, did the letter under reference.<sup>224</sup>

Typical of the strained relations between the two Lamas was the fact that as soon as hostilities broke out in East Tibet in 1931, from an inconsequential quarrel across the mutually unsatisfactory (Teichman) truce line of 1918, they found themselves solidly pitted against each other on opposite sides of the fence. The Panchen unreservedly put himself up as a champion of the Be-ru monastery, whose cause the Chinese had owned up and whom Lhasa had branded as the aggressor. The result was an unseemly row for the

old quarrel between him (Panchen Lama) and the Dalai Lama broke out again, each trying to persuade the Nanking government of the responsibility of the other for the troubles.<sup>225</sup>

Before the 13th Dalai Lama retired to the Heavenly Fields, in December 1933, the fracas on the frontier had been patched up, at the local level at any rate. This was largely owing to the outbreak of a civil war in Sichuan resulting in a settlement that was not altogether unsatisfactory from Lhasa's viewpoint.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> For the text of the letter, see encl. in Weir to India, October 11, 1932 in *IOR, L/P & S/12/578*. Also see *supra*, n. 221

<sup>224</sup> There is an intriguing one-sentence reference in the Dalai Lama's letter to Williamson in March 1933 to a communication he had received from the Panchen Lama and the reply he proposed to give; unfortunately, it has not been possible to track down the text. For details see Dalai Lama to Political Officer, March 27, 1933 encl. in Williamson to India, March 31, 1933, in *ibid*.

<sup>225</sup> For details see "Note on Tashi Lama" appended to India Office Minute by J. P. Donaldson dated December 2, 1932 in *ibid*.

<sup>226</sup> Inter alia, Shakabapa informs us that he accompanied the Tibetan negotiator, as "Keeper of the Seal", and "took a number of photographs of the Chinese camp as well as of the signing of the treaty and other functions". Shakabapa, *History*, pp. 269-70.

According to Richardson, *History*, p. 136, the result of the local arrangements, "in which the National Government had no part", was that the Tibetans gave up everything to the east of the Yangzi but kept possession of the Yakalo (Yanjin) district which had hitherto remained a Chinese enclave to the west (of the Yangzi).

Also see entry under September 21, 1933 in Williamson to India, January 6, 1934 in *IOR, L/P & S/12, External Collection 36/12*.

Be that as it may, the Panchen's ill-concealed advocacy of the party that Lhasa had branded as the aggressor must have been an eye-opener to the Dalai, and no doubt the British. It is thus not without significance that in September, 1933, in the course of his talks with the new Political Officer Williamson (who had replaced Weir), the Tashi Lama again figured prominently.<sup>227</sup> At the same time it may be noted that negotiations, then said to be "in progress", between the Dalai Lama and the representatives of the Tashi Lama, in Lhasa, had registered "no progress."<sup>228</sup>

## Efforts to bring about the Panchen Lama's Return : the British, Lhasa and the Guomindang

### The Panchen Lama keen for a settlement: British mediation

The death of the 13th Dalai Lama in December 1933, marks a distinct watershed in the recent history of Tibet; more, it opens a new and indeed significant chapter in the story of the Panchen Lama. For the next four years, until he himself was no more, the Lama waged a relentless battle to return home to the peace and tranquillity of his monastery and his monks- but only as the spearhead of an armed Chinese escort. It may be recalled in this context that preliminary thinking along these lines, which was later to become a fixity and an obsession, is noticeable among the Lama's more ardent followers as early as 1929. That year they had supplicated the British- in pursuance of the latter's alleged promise of 1905- to furnish the Lama "a reasonable quantity of arms, ammunition and supplies" which would enable him to raise, and equip, a force on the Sino-Tibetan frontier and indeed in China itself.<sup>229</sup> In November of the same year, the Gansu authorities, we are told, had made him "an offer" of 10,000 soldiers. Later, in the opening months of 1932

it was again rumoured that he would return to Tibet with the help of the Chinese and that, in that event, the Dalai Lama had ordered his immediate arrest.<sup>230</sup>

That use of *force majeure* was in the air is evident too from the letter which the Dalai Lama wrote to the Panchen in October 1932 and has been referred to earlier in the narrative. The Dalai Lama's hint here is broad enough and yet unmistakable in its intent:

It cannot therefore be possible that you are now acting in a way calculated to rupture this relationship (between the two Lamas). The extent of the harm which

<sup>227</sup> Williamson who met the Dalai Lama in Lhasa in September (1933) noted inter alia:

We also talked about the Tashi Lama. . . He (Dalai Lama) was very familiar in his manner and patted me on the back constantly. He was very frank in his views on the frontier situation. . . In any case he did not want a Chinese official ever to visit Lhasa as all that the latter would want to do would be to pave the way for the renewal of Chinese domination.

Williamson to India, January 6, 1934 in *IOR, L/P & S/12*, External Collection 36/12.

<sup>228</sup> "Visits to Lhasa made by Political Officers in Sikkim since Sir Charles Bell" in *ibid*.

It may be noted that the India Office viewed Williamson's (1933) visit as "social" rather than "official", designed to, apart from maintaining "existing cordial relations", help explain to the Lama that the British were unable to persuade the Chinese "to accept our mediation".

<sup>229</sup> "Note on Tashi Lama" in *supra*, n. 225

<sup>230</sup> Loc. cit.

has been done by the conspiracy of some of the conscience-stricken servants is well-known. But you naturally would not for a moment think of plunging Tibet into war, the country which is administered by the father and the son; yet rumours are rife in Lhasa to that effect.<sup>231</sup>

Nor is it without significance that the Huang Musong mission which repaired to Tibet in October 1934, ostensibly to mourn the death of the 13th Dalai Lama but in reality to coax, or cajole, the new Tibetan administration into a more, from the Chinese viewpoint, meaningful relationship with the motherland, kept the Panchen Lama very much in the forefront of its talks. In the course of its negotiations, it was reported, the Tibetan government had expressed itself as willing to guarantee that "no harm" would befall the Panchen or his followers, and that all his former "powers, estates and other property" would be restored to him, should the Chinese, in return, pledge to take "all his arms and ammunition away". Whereupon both the

Kashag and the National Assembly agreed, adding that, as a religious person, the Tashi Lama required no arms. If China took away the arms and munitions, they would welcome the Tashi Lama, guarantee his personal safety and the return of his powers and property. They added that the Tashi Lama should be asked to return via India according to the wishes of the late Dalai Lama.<sup>232</sup>

Unfortunately, the Huang Musong mission proved to be an expensive failure - for all the time, money and effort expended, its net gain, in terms of concrete achievements, was far from impressive.<sup>233</sup> This disillusionment appears to have been shared, among others, by the Panchen and his coterie of advisors. Two snippets of news are of interest in this context. The first related to Huang holding out a threat to the Tibetan government that the Panchen Lama would return "by force of arms", if Tibet refused to fall in line.<sup>234</sup> Another related to the visit to Lhasa- and to Williamson in Gangtok-of Chwang Tseh Cheun Lin (Gyang-tse chho-ling?) Huthukthu, said to be a brother of the Tashi Lama. It is interesting that the Huthukthu was re-assuring on the then widely-held belief that a British national was acting as a military instructor in the Tibetan army, or that the country was swarming with British nationals. Both reports the incarnation asserted were untrue.<sup>235</sup>

It may be of interest to recall here that as early as 1927 the British Consul in Chongqing had reported that it was a "common belief" there that Britain had "designs" on Tibet. Later that year, we are told, a "Save Tibet Society" was founded at Chongqing.<sup>236</sup>

<sup>231</sup> *Supra*, n. 223

<sup>232</sup> The proposed settlement between the Tibetan government and the Tashi Lama was incorporated in Article 12 of the draft proposals for a Chinese-Tibetan settlement presented to the Kashag on November 1, 1934. For details see Williamson to India, November 22, 1934 in *IOR, L/P & S/12, External Collection 36/14*.

<sup>233</sup> This was a view held even by the Chinese: Thus a (Chinese) newspaper underlined the fact that whereas Huang had been sent to Tibet to "seek peace and make a compromise", he had returned with "no success to his credit". Extract from the *Yong Bao*, March 27, 1937, encl. in Embassy (Beijing) to Viceroy (Simla), April 8, 1937 in *IOR, L/P & S/12, External Collection 36/27*.

<sup>234</sup> India Office minute by D. M. Cleary dated December 31, 1934 in *IOR, L/P & S/12, External Collection 36/14*. For the threat, under reference, see Proceeding PZ/7709/34.

<sup>235</sup> This appeared as a news item under the headline: "Tibet Employing no British Military Instructor" in the *China Weekly Review* dated January 26, 1935, encl. in Williamson to India, March 1, 1936 in *IOR, L/P & S/12, External Collection 36/14*.

<sup>236</sup> Consul-General, Chongqing to Minister, Beijing, October 10, 1927, in *IOR, L/P & S/10/1228*.

Interestingly enough while a lively discussion proceeded apace all over China, of converting Tibet into "a province" or of splitting it into three parts- with headquarters at Batang, Lhasa and Tashilhunpo respectively - the Tibetans showed "no enthusiasm" whatsoever for these proposals.<sup>237</sup>

A word here about Williamson's visit to Lhasa in 1935 may not be out of place. It is necessary to underline the fact that in according its approval to the Political Officer's projected journey, and his efforts at promoting a settlement between Lhasa and the Panchen Lama on their "internal and religious dispute". HMG was quite categorical that this was to be

without the assumption (by HMG) of any responsibility for its maintenance . . . If guarantee is asked for by Tibetans, Williamson should merely undertake to refer question for orders . . . (for, insofar as Whitehall was concerned) guarantee could not at the very outside go beyond standing offer to mediate or possibly arbitrate in any future difficulties regarding the maintenance of the settlement and it is doubtful whether we will be prepared to go so far...<sup>238</sup>.

In this context, a minute by the India Office on the subject makes interesting reading. The official (i.e. Walton) noted *inter alia*, that the guarantee "now asked for" from the British would be "risky" and

could hardly at the moment go beyond a standing offer to arbitrate; even this would be an advance on our previous attitude which has been confined to the mildest form of mediation.<sup>239</sup>

It is also worth observing that Lhasa went a long way towards meeting the dictates of the Panchen Lama, including restoration of "practically all" his movable and immovable property - and this in spite of the fact that some of the demands made by the Lama, or on his behalf, were viewed as "outrageous".<sup>240</sup> As for British mediation, it is interesting to note that the Tashi Lama's own representatives wanted Williamson to settle, on their behalf, and "as much as possible", with the Lhasa regime. Unfortunately, the Political Officer's brief was singularly narrow in its scope with the result that in a communication he told the Lama that

<sup>237</sup> Consul-General, Chongqing to Minister, Beijing, November 28, 1928 in *ibid*.

<sup>238</sup> Secretary of State to India, August 17, 1935, in IOR, L/P & S/12, External Collection 36/12.

It may be noted that the (British) Minister in Nanjing was averse to any British mediation between the two Lamas, for China, he felt sure, was "likely to take offence". He had, therefore, suggested that no information should go to the press on the subject of Williamson's proposed initiative, a suggestion later endorsed by the Secretary of State in his communication to India referred to above. For details see Alexander (later Sir Alexander) Cadogan to the Foreign Office, August 12, 1935 in *ibid*.

<sup>239</sup> India Office Minute by J. C. Walton, July 16, 1935 in *ibid*.

<sup>240</sup> *Inter alia*, these conditions included the Tashi Lama asking for control over the dzongs of Nagartse, Shigatse, Namling and Penam -none of which had been "under his control before". In reply to the Lama, Lhasa had also insisted on continuing to recruit the Tsang (or Labrang) army and pay it out of central revenues; nor could a part of Tashilhunpo's immovable property, it felt, whose proceeds had been distributed to certain monasteries, be now "collected or returned". For details see Battye to India, December 16, 1935 in *ibid*.

Battye's report was entitled "Settlement between Tashi Lama and Tibet".

it would be best for Your Serenity to return without Chinese officials or soldiers and that thereafter it will be easier to settle outstanding differences.<sup>241</sup>

Even as the Tashi Lama's representatives were keen for a settlement, so were the Tibetan authorities. Thus when, in November 1935, Captain Batty, who temporarily took over after Williamson's death in Lhasa itself, went to make a farewell call, the Regent earnestly pleaded that HMG should "bring pressure to bear" on the Tashi Lama so as to make him accept the Tibetan offer.<sup>242</sup> It may be noted that, for its part, Whitehall was satisfied that the Tibetan "offer" was "reasonable" and that "when and if" the Tashi Lama arrived in Lhasa it may be necessary to tender the British Government's "good offices" - for, "apparently", it had concluded, both parties "desire assistance"<sup>243</sup>

## The Panchen to spearhead an armed escort: Lhasa "Firm"

Not long after Captain Batty's return from Lhasa, Basil Gould took over the late Williamson's place as the new Political Officer. No sooner did he do so, than the question of his mediating in the dispute between the Tashi Lama and the Tibetan authorities came to the fore again. Understandably, New Delhi was willing that

if Tibetan Government agrees, (Gould was) to address Tashi Lama and act as mediator between him and Lhasa. If Lhasa accepts, Gould will have to go and guarantee a settlement.

The real nub of the problem was the modicum of "responsibility" that Gould's mediation would attract - a responsibility that would, in the final count, devolve on India, and HMG. More, it was necessary to define the nature of the sanctions, if any, should the two contending parties prove recalcitrant. To resolve the dilemma, it was suggested that if the Tashi Lama should back out "due to nonobservance of agreement", New Delhi may refuse him asylum, should he, as a run-away, seek it. Nor, may it be forgotten that the Panchen's province of Tsang adjoined India. If, however, Lhasa misbehaved, it could be threatened with "withdrawal of diplomatic support" and non-supply of "arms and precious metal", on favourable terms.<sup>244</sup> Reluctantly, Whitehall agreed to the solution proffered yet, while giving Gould "discretion" regarding tactics, clearly stipulated that he would avoid

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<sup>241</sup> From the telegram drafted by the Political Officer (Williamson?) and sent to Tashi Lama "by his representatives, through the Chinese wireless". For details, *loc. cit.*

<sup>242</sup> This was on November 18, 1935. For details, *loc. cit.*

<sup>243</sup> India Office Minute on "Batty's Report from Lhasa", dated February 21, 1936 in *IOR, L/P & S/12, External Collection 36/12.*

HMG noted with satisfaction the Tibetan government's anti-Chinese attitude "exemplified" by their (Tibetan) refusal to "compromise" with them (Chinese) until escort question - "on which they had taken a strong line" - is solved.

<sup>244</sup> India to Secretary of State, April 13, 1936 in *IOR, L/P & S/12, External Collection 36/27.*

New Delhi made it clear that in its view the Tashi Lama's return to Shigatse, in which it appeared to have a vested interest, "may avert" a threat which Tibet most feared, and strengthen the position of the Regent. More, the Lama's return would subserve British ends - "if it comes about peacefully and particularly if it is secured with our (British) cooperation".

The Panchen Lama to spearhead Guomindang armed escort: Lhasa "Firm"

(6/10/35/20/22) B. & F. 21/12

Copy to Peking.

Translation:

To

The excellent Lonchen Sanib.

The reason of sending this message.

I have duly received your kind message dated the 1st day of the 9th month (28th October 1935) which you so kindly sent me through my representatives, Ngagchen Rimpoche and others. In this you inform me that, among my demands there are three points on which the Tibetan Government are unable to agree with me.

They are

- (1) my wish to have control over the whole of the army (in Tsang),
- (2) my desire to have control of more Dzongs than before and
- (3) my wish to bring Chinese officials and soldiers.

To avoid all possible trouble in the future I must be frank. I have already told my representatives what they should tell the Tibetan Government with regard to my demands. Kindly note that the Tibetan Government's statement that I wish to bring Chinese officials and soldiers with me is untrue. This is not one of the points in my demands. Kindly make enquiries as to this. I would request that the British Government may be kind enough to bring the differences between the Tibetan Government and the Librang (the Tashi Lama's administration) to a definite settlement in accordance with the list of the demands which I have already made. Kindly let me have a reply by wire so that I may take a definite line of action.

Dated the 7th day of the 9th month (3rd November 1935).

responsibility for maintenance of settlement barring provision that both parties accept our mediation in any future dispute arising out of settlement.<sup>245</sup>

While spelling out its detailed instructions for Gould, New Delhi further dotted the i's and crossed the t's in the India Office dispatch. Inter alia, the dispatch now laid down that the Political Officer should not act as "guarantor" but may show a "willingness" to assist in "disposal of disputes". Additionally, it stipulated that, in supersession of an earlier proposal, the Tashi Lama's escort, as he entered Tibet, was to comprise, not British, but Tibetan government troops and that Gould's letter to the Lama was to reach him before he (Lama) entered Tibet.

Nonetheless the.

actual terms of settlement cannot be profitably discussed until you are able to confront Tibetan authorities with Tashi Lama in your presence at place to be decided on with the Tibetan Government.

The above "mediation" by the British, the Tashi Lama was to be told in no uncertain terms, was "conditional" - on his returning to Tibet "without Chinese escort or officials".<sup>246</sup>

Even as Gould's brief was being finalised and the Political Officer braced himself for the visit, Norbu, then in Lhasa, informed New Delhi, in the middle of July, of a marked shift in Tibet's earlier stand. The latter, Norbu told his principals, while it welcomed Gould's proposed communication to the Tashi Lama - just then it had forwarded (through Norbu) its own unqualified protest to China regarding the Lama's escort - was "not keen" any longer on British mediation which, earlier, it had solicited repeatedly.<sup>247</sup> This made New Delhi a little less than certain as to whether Lhasa was indeed serious about coming to terms with the Panchen. More, although for its part India would "welcome" a "direct settlement" between the two, it feared Lhasa "may (yet) play us (British) or him (Panchen Lama)".<sup>248</sup> Actually, with the Communist threat abating, and the "Long March" wending its way to the north-west, the Tibetan capital had become a little less jittery.

Additionally, it may be recalled here that the Lama's advance baggage, which had arrived at Nag-chhu-kha, was found to contain "rifles, ammunition and bombs" — a discovery that raised some inconvenient question marks about his bona fides. Last, but by no means the least, Lhasa's protest in Nanjing, now relayed through the British, made its position unequivocally clear:

We the Ministers of Tibet, send this letter to inform you that . . . in view of the fact that the outstanding Chinese-Tibetan question has not been settled, we cannot allow Chinese officials and troops to enter Tibet . . . As we have repeatedly informed you. . . If the escort is sent with the Tashi Lama, the majority of Tibetans

<sup>245</sup> Secretary of State to India, May 21, 1936 in *ibid*.

<sup>246</sup> India to Political Officer, June 3, 1936 in *ibid*.

A little later India told the Secretary of State that there was a "possible danger" in continuing to give the Tashi Lama's representatives in China an "entirely non-committal" reply as to HMG's, and the Government of India's, attitude to his requests for mediation. It therefore suggested that his representatives may be informed, when they met British officials in Beijing, that Norbu, Gould's under-study had preceded him to Lhasa to help in mediation and that a communication had been sent to him (Tashi Lama). India to Secretary of State, June 19, 1936 in *ibid*.

<sup>247</sup> India to Secretary of State, July 14, 1936 in *ibid*.

<sup>248</sup> *Loc. cit*.

will become suspicious and religious bonds between the two countries will be severed and very serious harm may result.<sup>249</sup>

On its own, and without bringing in the British, Lhasa too had supplicated the Panchen Lama. Inter alia, it reminded him that "previously" he had affirmed his intent not to bring in "Chinese officials or soldiers", assuring him at the same time that a Tibetan escort would be sent to meet him while the three principal monasteries would "guarantee" his safety. At the same time, however, it was made abundantly clear that the Tibetan regime "cannot concede" his demand for control of troops, nor his claim for exercise of authority over Shigatse Dzong.<sup>250</sup> Even as this was being done, Gould started on his mission to Lhasa amid reports that the Lama was sixteen marches south of lake Kokonor- with a "very great armed" following "actually with him", or indeed "ready to join him".<sup>251</sup>

Understandably, in the light of what has been retailed above, rumours had continued to persist that the Tashi Lama might force his entry with a retinue of Chinese officials and a military escort of three hundred picked troops. In one of his earlier reports from Lhasa, in October (1936), Gould gave expression to the view that the Lama was "now practically a prisoner of the Chinese" and much influenced by his staff "who were soaked in Chinese money and ideas".<sup>252</sup> It is significant, however, that at the time of Williamson's last visit to Lhasa, in 1935 - he was to die in November while still there - the Tashi Lama had requested for British mediation, an offer repeated by him in 1936. The British Minister in Nanjing, however, as has been noticed, was averse to his country doing anything towards "compromising differences" between the Lama and the Tibetan authorities for the simple reason that the Chinese were "likely" to "take offence".<sup>253</sup>

To be candid, in the post-1933 period, the question of the Panchen Lama's escort became increasingly complicated if largely because the Lama's own position seemed to be somewhat confused, if also ambivalent. Thus, significantly, on a direct enquiry, the Panchen Lama had told Williamson in 1935, that "this (viz., the escort) is not one of my demands". Yet later when some efforts were made for bilateral negotiations between the Tashi Lama and the authorities in Lhasa, the Lama's position seemed to be far from clear or categorical. As Gould later summed it up:

so far as I am aware he has never demanded of the Tibetan Government that they should assent to his being accompanied by a Chinese escort, although it is equally true that he had not replied to telegrams addressed to him by the Tibetan government in which they have requested him not to bring the escort; and there is reason to believe that quite recently he informed the Chinese Commissioner in Kham that he does not want the escort.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> For the full text of the "Summary in English" see India to Secretary of State, July 22, 1936 in *JOR, L/P & S/12, External Collection 36/27*.

<sup>250</sup> India to Secretary of State, August 18, 1936 in *ibid*.

Norbu had intimated that two letters had been handed over to Ngagchen Rimpoche (Tashi Lama's representative) who had wirelessly to the (Tashi) Lama.

<sup>251</sup> India to Secretary of State, September 30, 1936 in *ibid*.

<sup>252</sup> Gould to India, November 4, 1936 in India to Secretary of State, November 6, 1936 in *ibid*.

<sup>253</sup> Alexander Cadogan to Foreign Office, August 12, 1935 in *JOR, L/P & S/12, External Collection 36/12*. Also see *supra*, n. 238.

<sup>254</sup> Para 20 in "Lhasa Mission, 1936-37", encl in Gould to India, April 20, 1937 in *ibid*. This is a very useful, and comprehensive, report on Gould's visit to Lhasa and is cited, et seq., as "Lhasa Mission".



Briefly, to recapitulate the sequence leading to Gould's visit, it may be recalled that initially the Tibetan government had protested vigorously - both to the Chinese and to the Tashi Lama himself - against the escort. Again, it was to prevent Lhasa from falling into the Chinese trap that the British Government had decided to lend diplomatic support to these protests.<sup>255</sup> Understandably, even though these were, in fact, lodged, Nanjing denied that any protests had been received (from Lhasa). This made New Delhi rule that Tibet should renew the protests and, in order not to give the Chinese an alibi, route them through the Government of India and HMG's Minister in Nanjing. More, it was decided that in order "to maintain touch, ascertain and report on the situation", and at the same time be at hand "for mediation", Gould should repair to Lhasa.<sup>256</sup> An invitation for the visit was sought, and obtained, through Norbu Dhondhup, the Assistant to the Political Officer referred to earlier in the narrative.

## The Panchen to spearhead an armed escort: Lhasa "Soft"

Interestingly enough even as Gould was preparing to leave, early in October (1936), news was received that, in face of contrary advice from its National Assembly, the Tibetan government had softened in its attitude towards the Panchen Lama. Reports gained currency that the Lama's Chinese escort had "secret orders" not to fire "if opposed, but to return to China bringing the Tashi Lama with them". The Kashag was also said to be much less keen about British good offices: "they are at present more anxious for our diplomatic support in China than for mediation": Paradoxical as it may seem, Lhasa still talked of being "compelled" to oppose the Chinese escort "by force" yet feared that "such action will be followed by war with China".<sup>257</sup> The whole situation was pretty confused and as Gould conjectured:

It (was) likely to crystalize when the Tashi Lama arrives at or near de facto Tibetan limits, i.e., possibly in two or three weeks' time. Tibetan government will then be obliged to take full stock of the situation; Tashi Lama and Chinese Government will have to decide on definite line of action; and the result of protest will presumably be known. Situation may be affected by the actual position at that time both of the Chinese government and of the Communists.<sup>258</sup>

Lhasa's alleged "softening", if also its seemingly contradictory attitude, may be attributed to two factors. One, that the Chinese had thrown out feelers "with a view to (a) settlement of the points of difference" between themselves and Tibet, more specifically in terms of "negotiating for settlement" of the Sino-Tibetan boundary.<sup>259</sup> Two, the Regent

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<sup>255</sup> Para 1 in "Lhasa Mission", in *ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> These proposals were made in a communication to the Secretary of State on April 13, 1936. Para 2 in "Lhasa Mission", *ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> India to Secretary of State, October 10, 1936 in *IOR, L/P & S/12*, External Collection 36/27.

<sup>258</sup> Gould to India, October 7, 1936 in India to Secretary of State, October 10, 1936 in *ibid.*

<sup>259</sup> Gould to India, October 16, in India to Secretary of State, October 17, 1936 in *ibid.* Gould's informant was an official "who is on very intimate terms" with the Kashag.

The Panchen Lama to spearhead an armed escort: Lhasa "Soft"

Panchen Lama to spearhead KMT armed escort: Lhasa "Firm"

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DECRYPTER OF TELEGRAMS.

(COPIES CIRCULATED) From Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, to Secretary of State for India.

Dated Simla, 10th October, 1936.

Received 10.30 p.m., 10th October, 1936.

2306. FIRST OF TWO PARTS.

XXX

Addressed to Secretary of State for India, repeated to Peking and Gould, Lhasa.

W 7286

Our telegram No.2302, 10th October, repeating Gould's telegram No.157.

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unreliable

Your telegram No.2633, 9th October, regarding mediation on behalf of the Tashi Lama, has since been received and repeated to Gould. Meanwhile Gould's latest information from Tibetan sources is that the Tashi Lama is expected to leave Rgya Gumpa immediately for Jyekundo, where he might arrive towards the end of October, and is believed to be accompanied by force of his own and complete Chinese escort of 300. Tashi Lama's agent in Lhasa has informed Gould in confidence that the Chinese escort have secret orders not to fire if opposed, but to return to China bringing the Tashi Lama with them. Attitude of Kashag towards mediation at present appears to be that they do not definitely ask for it, but circumstances may arise in which they will invite it. They are at present more anxious for our diplomatic support in China than for mediation (see our telegram No.2268).

7242  
copy attached

SECOND AND LAST PART.

They have also stated that they will be compelled to oppose the Chinese escort by force, though they fear that such action will be followed by war with China.

2. In the circumstances we entirely agree that

who, as head of the administration, provided leadership was "hopelessly venal" and not only in big things but

even in small matters, and disinclined to view any matter otherwise than from the point of view of his own financial advantage.<sup>260</sup>

Nor was that all, for Gould discovered that he (i.e. Regent) had by threat of resignation, obtained from National Assembly and all officials an undertaking that they would unquestionably abide by his decision in all matters.<sup>261</sup>

Was it a matter of any surprise then that the invitation to the British to mediate was being soft-pedalled? In its place Lhasa

would prefer to rely on its own efforts to bring about a settlement of "family differences" (and) offered to the Tashi Lama concessions on several points in regard to which its attitude up-to-date had been unaccommodating.<sup>262</sup>

Gould's instructions, alluded to earlier, had included, inter alia, the clear injunction that he should impress on Tibetan authorities the "need of strengthening their own position" by "making peace" with the Tashi Lama. While doing so, Lhasa was to be left in no doubt as to effective support on the part of the Government of India and the promise of diplomatic (but not of direct military) support vis-a-vis China...

Again, Tibet was to be assured that

HMG who would not in any event negotiate with China over the head of the Tibetan Government, would like, if it were possible to arrange it, to be represented at any general negotiations that might take place between China and Tibet.<sup>263</sup>

This was in August 1936, when Gould's instructions were being drawn up; by the time he left Lhasa, in February 1937, the Political Officer had concluded that

as between the Tibetan government and the Tashi Lama little or nothing remains in dispute except two points on which the Tibetan government stand firm, viz., civil control by the Tashi Lama of a separate army for the Tsang province. The argument of the Tibetan government is that there must be not two Tibets, but one...<sup>264</sup>

As regards the question of the Tashi Lama's escort Lhasa's position, as Gould viewed it, was a delicate one. On the one hand it was prepared "to go to any reasonable lengths" to secure the Lama's return; on the other, it could clearly see that the admission of the escort may lead to the "subjugation of their country, to the ruin of many individuals who are in power, and possibly also to the impairment of their religion."<sup>265</sup> A further complication arose from the fact that the Panchen had been far from categorical on the question and, twice over, as has been noticed, was on record for saying that he was not committed to an accompanying Chinese escort.<sup>266</sup> Repeatedly rattled, the Tibetan authorities, according to Gould, "have resolved, not once, but many times" that should the escort attempt to "force a

<sup>260</sup> Gould to India, November 4, 1936 in India to Secretary of State, November 6, 1936 in *ibid*.

Gould gathered this impression from Ngagchen Rimpoche, the Panchen Lama's agent, then visiting Lhasa.

<sup>261</sup> Gould to India, November 11 in India to Secretary of State, November 14, 1936 in *ibid*.

<sup>262</sup> Para 3 in "Lhasa Mission", *supra*, n. 254

<sup>263</sup> Para 5 in "Lhasa Mission" in *ibid*.

<sup>264</sup> Para 18 in "Lhasa Mission" in *ibid*.

<sup>265</sup> Para 21 in "Lhasa Mission" in *ibid*.

<sup>266</sup> *Supra*, n. 254

direct issue", they would oppose it "by force". It is also significant that "after six months of close association" with Cabinet ministers and many others he (Gould) was

unable to discover any indications that the repeated protests have not been genuine or that at the present time the Tibetan government are otherwise than determined to oppose the escort if necessary by force...<sup>267</sup>

Two caveats may be entered here. One, that the Regent evidently worked on more than one wavelength and that with his known, and indeed notorious, love for "filthy lucre" his loyalties were bound to be sharply divided. Thus in his report of November 4 (1936) from Lhasa, Gould intimated that

shortly before leaving India [sic (misprint for Lhasa?)] on tour Regent had secretly authorised Chinese officer to inform the Chinese Government that, in the event of the Tashi Lama and Chinese escort proceeding towards Lhasa, they will not be opposed...

Significantly, Gould added, "this communication had been made without the knowledge of the Kashag or of the National Assembly"<sup>268</sup>

Five weeks later, his assessment was no different :

Regent and Kashag are incapable of taking strong line about anything or of following any consistent policy except that of waiting on events.<sup>269</sup>

## British attitudes to the Panchen's return

Revealing as the Tibetan attitude is, no less intriguing is that of the British. Thus it is evident that by the middle of December (1936), Whitehall itself was not clear as to what it wanted Lhasa to do for, as an India Office minute recorded :

As a matter of fact, the Regent's attitude does not seem to indicate that the Tibetans would put up much, if any resistance. Nor is it at all certain that we should want them to do so, especially as it is possible that the Chinese might make it a pretext for a more serious invasion . . .<sup>270</sup>

Two days later, and now much more categorically, the India Office defined its attitude in a communication to the Foreign Office:

it does not seem at all certain that this (active resistance to Chinese escort) would be the wisest course for the Tibetan government to adopt if, despite HMG's representation at Nanking, the escort should actually enter Tibet. . . in any case it seems desirable to avoid any risk that the Tibetan government on the departure of the (Gould) Mission from Lhasa, might be left under the impression that HMG would encourage such a course.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> *Supra*, n. 265

<sup>268</sup> Gould to India, November 4 in India to Secretary of State, November 6, 1936 in *IOR, L/P & S/12, External Collection 36/27*.

<sup>269</sup> India to Secretary of State, December 12, 1936 in *ibid*

<sup>270</sup> India Office Minute by J C Walton, December 16, 1936 in *IOR, L/P&S/12, External Collection. 36/27936 in ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> India Office to Foreign Office, December 18, 1936 in *ibid.*

A few days earlier Denys Bray, then a member of the Secretary of State's India Council, had minuted that if there were a clash "with our Mission actually in Lhasa and the Tibetans armed with our munitions, a difficult and potentially dangerous situation" might arise. "The weaker China is," he argued, "the greater the probability of her bringing her case" before the League of Nations. But with no Mission (or one only in Lhasa) "we could still play the part of mediator".<sup>272</sup>

Whatever the credibility gap in the case of the Regent and the Kashag, a question that formed the subject of serious contention between Gould (in Lhasa), the Government of India and Whitehall related to the advice that was to be tendered to the Lhasa authorities in the light of views expressed by HMG, and retailed in the preceding paragraph. Initially, it would seem, on the lines of the minute cited, Whitehall had concluded that Gould should intimate that it (HMG) would not favour the Tibetan government offering any resistance to the Tashi Lama's escort. This ruling, however, was to arouse the Political Officer's strong opposition. He argued, and convincingly, that it was at New Delhi's instance that Lhasa had reiterated its protest to China "in strong terms"; that since, "of late", Tibetans had become "more resolute", tendering such advice would imply:

- (a) that Tibetans "would be completely puzzled and suspect our motive";
- (b) that it would be tantamount to "tendering overt advice";
- (c) that if the advice were followed "they would throw on us responsibility for the consequences"; if rejected, a "bad precedent" would be established;
- (d) that if intimation (of the advice tendered) leaked out, the Chinese would see "less reason than now" to go slow over escort- while Tibetans would be deprived of their best asset in what was "a game of bluff".<sup>273</sup>

New Delhi in lending its support to Gould's line of reasoning, as spelt out above, noted that it was afraid that "however tactfully couched", HMG's advice to Lhasa "might be misunderstood" and weaken the latter's "professed opposition" to the Chinese escort.<sup>274</sup>

Meanwhile as exchanges between Gould, New Delhi and Whitehall proceeded apace, Lhasa's and HMG's protest to the Chinese government against the Lama's escort brought forth from the latter a categorical rejection for an answer, even though the reply was tactfully worded and garnished by a variety of assurances. Nanjing maintained that the question had been "carefully considered" and that, essentially, the escort had been viewed by it as a "suitable administrative step". Its "object", the Chinese regime stressed, was to "maintain dignity" of Panchen Lama in accordance with "traditional custom", as well as to "protect" him during his journey. As before, in this case too, a "peaceful policy" guided China's "present action" and insofar as the Panchen Lama was in constant touch with the Tibetan authorities, there was no possibility of a misunderstanding arising. In sum

Chinese government will take utmost care to see Panchen Lama's return to Tibet gives rise to no international complications which cause HMG or Government of India to suffer any disturbance of peace on account of geographical propinquity.<sup>275</sup>

The upshot of all this was that on the question of Lhasa offering armed resistance to the Tashi Lama's escort India Office foreswore the responsibility of giving advice of one sort

<sup>272</sup> Minute by Denys Bray, December 16, 1936 in *ibid*

<sup>273</sup> India to Secretary of State, January 12, 1937 in *ibid*

<sup>274</sup> *Loc. cit*

<sup>275</sup> Knatchbull-Hugessen to Foreign Office (repeated to Viceroy) February 2, 1937 in *ibid*.

or another.<sup>276</sup> With this view, the Foreign Office appears to have concurred, with the result that, after "full consideration", it was decided not to tender any advice. It is interesting to note that an important reason adduced in favour of this decision was that the fact of such advice having been offered would inevitably come to the knowledge of the Chinese government and would tend to prejudice the Tibetan government in the spheres of bluff, procrastination and diplomatic manoeuvre.<sup>277</sup>

## **Nanjing withdraws support: the Panchen Lama's death (1937)**

Characteristically all through his stay at Lhasa, Gould was far from remiss in maintaining his contacts with the Panchen Lama. Thus it may be noted that he assiduously cultivated one of the Lama's closest advisors, Ngagen Rimpoche who was then in Lhasa. The Political Officer observed that besides being a "genial, bald-headed, much-travelled little man with a goatee beard and a twinkle in his eye", he was a "great" diplomat. For when he first came to see the British Mission "he quibbled to such an extent" that, Gould recorded, "we discovered nothing". Later, however, things changed for the better and on one of his visits he was "in a most confidential mood" with the result that, Gould noted, no high official in Lhasa was proof "against his caustic but generally just" criticism<sup>278</sup>.

From being "somewhat difficult and retiring" to start with, the Rimpoche gradually became, Gould recorded, "more communicative", while the Political Officer "impressed" upon him to keep his master informed of "our exercise of good offices" on his (Lama's) behalf. When he left for China, early in January 1937, he expressed his firm belief that "some way will be found" for getting the Lama back "in peace" and that too "during 1937".<sup>279</sup> More, the Rimpoche had been appreciative of the role which the British Mission had played for, he confided in Gould, that "very good progress" had been made during its stay. Blame for the Panchen's

failure to return this year (1936) had been largely due to stubborn attitude of Tibetan Government prior to arrival of mission and to bad influence of certain members of Tashi Lama's entourage which he (Ngagchen) hopes to counteract by establishing personal touch with Tashi Lama.

What was more, the Rimpoche concluded

Tashi Lama must realise that, in the matter of his return, it is probably case of "next year or never" and he (Rimpoche) thought present difficulties in China might facilitate return.<sup>280</sup>

Of his own mission, Gould was convinced that it had acted as a "conciliator", though not an "official mediator" and that

<sup>276</sup> India Office to Foreign Office, February 8, 1937 in *Ibid*.

<sup>277</sup> Para 22 in "Lhasa Mission", *supra*, n. 254

<sup>278</sup> "Lhasa Mission Diary" for November 2, 1936 in *IOR, L/P & S/12*, External collection 36/25.

<sup>279</sup> Para 23 in "Lhasa Mission", *supra*, n. 254

<sup>280</sup> Gould to India, December 23, 1936 in India to Secretary of State, December 29, 1936 in *IOR, L/P & S/12*, External Collection 36/27.

Nanjing withdraws support: the Panchen Lama's death (1937)

British attitudes to the Panchen's return

13.

This is quoted therein any further comments  
on this subject the under-mentioned letter  
and number may be quoted, and the reply  
addressed to—  
The Under Secretary of State for India,  
Political Department,  
India Office,  
London, S.W.1.  
P. 7. 514/37.

INDIA OFFICE,  
WHITEHALL,  
LONDON, S.W. 1.

8th February, 1937.

Sir,

I am directed by the Secretary of State for India to refer to Foreign Office letter No. F 7826/4/10 of 23rd December, regarding the Chinese escort accompanying the Government of India's telegram No. 241 of the 22nd January, 1937, Tashi Lama, and to enclose

a copy of a telegram from the Government of India on the subject.

2. It appears to the Marquess of Zetland that it is desirable, if possible, to avoid the responsibility of giving advice of one sort or another to the Tibetan Government regarding the question of armed resistance to the escort, at any rate at this stage. He would therefore be prepared to agree with the Government of India and Mr. Gould that the proposed intimation to the Tibetan Government should not be made in a form which would be construed as a positive offer of advice. The object of the instructions in India Office telegram No. 5701 was rather to correct any impression (which it appeared from Mr. Gould's telegram of 9th December that the Tibetan Government might have received) that His Majesty's Government were necessarily in favour of Tibetan resistance. It still seems desirable to take steps to correct any such impression, and with this object it is proposed, if the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs agrees, to telegraph to the Government of India as in the enclosed draft, leaving to Mr. Gould's discretion the best method of doing so. I am to enquire whether Mr. Secretary Eden concurs.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,

The Under Secretary of State,  
Foreign Office,  
S.W.1.

FRED J. WALTON

Document 7: India Office to Foreign Office regarding advice to Tibetan government, February 8, 1937.

(By courtesy of the India Office Library and Records)

nothing now stands in the way of the return of the Tashi Lama except such demands or conditions as would be inconsistent with the maintenance of Tibetan unity and effectual independence and with established British policy in regard to Tibet ...<sup>281</sup>

Meanwhile, it is evident that inside China public opinion, in terms of what can be gleaned from newspapers or comments in the press, was getting restive on the question of the Lama's interminable delays:

by snow in spring and winter and by rain in summer and autumn. Then, is there any date during a year at which he will be able to return to Tibet? Is he procrastinating intentionally?

The aim of the Nanjing regime, in lieu of its "exceedingly generous and gracious" treatment of the Tashi Lama, the paper noted, lay in its "hope" of utilising his religious position "to form a link" between the Central government and the Tibetan local government. It followed, it argued, that he must go back with "material force"- a contingency in which the British were "not (to) be allowed to interfere". As to use of *force majeure*, the exploits of Zhao Erfeng and, under the Manchus, of Generals Yin Changheng and Yin Zhengxian were dutifully recalled: they had marched troops into Lhasa and duly established Chinese "prestige". Events now, the paper stressed, pointed in much the same direction:

Since the Central government now has so many troops, why not send a portion of them westwards to Tibet? If this is not done, Tibet will sooner or later be wiped out of the map of China....<sup>282</sup>

As debate proceeded apace, the Lama readied himself over again for his journey. Thus it is reported that sometime between June and September (1937) the Panchen informed Shigatse that he was leaving Jyekundo "shortly" (for Tibet). Further, he intimated that arrangements be made for himself and his party at various stages of his stops-over and also for grain - "for about 2,000 ponies and mules".<sup>283</sup> Presently, two developments, however, cast a grim shadow over his fortunes. The first was a frontal Japanese onslaught on China in the wake of the famous-infamous Marco Polo incident of July 1937. Since the British were a major source of moral as well as material support to the Nanjing regime in what appeared to be a mortal blow directed against its very being, the latter took to an immediate elimination of all likely irritants. Understandably, the Panchen's progress on his intended march to Tibet was initially, to the Lama's great chagrin and disappointment, temporarily halted and a little later firmly countermanded. According to Richardson who had been head of the residuary British Mission in Lhasa after Gould's departure, the Panchen Lama had, in August 1937, moved to Rashi Gompa, just on the Tibetan border- whereupon Lhasa "ordered mobilisation", thereby "reaffirming I ts intention to resist". Soon enough however,

<sup>281</sup> Para 42 in "Lhasa Mission", *supra*, n. 254

<sup>282</sup> Extract from the *Yongbao*, March 27, 1937, *supra*, n. 233

<sup>283</sup> "Lhasa Mission Diary", for June-September, 1937 in *IOR, L/P & S/12*, External Collection 36/25.

It is interesting to note that the Diary underlined the fact that the Tashi Lama's officials in Shigatse did not wield "much influence", whereas Dzasa Lama, the Lhasa appointee, was "very much" liked. It was he who had met with the Tashi Lama's request for supplies "as far as possible", being "desirous of returning" to Lhasa on the Tashi Lama's arrival.



9. Copy for "mission" file. COPY OF 9215 1936 SECRET  
Original on Tashi Lama file. 3036. 24/12/36

IT/PJM/LEI.

(172 groups.)

DECYPHER OF TELEGRAMS.

(COPIES CIRCULATED)

From: Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, to Secretary of State for India, repeating telegram from Gould.

Dated: New Delhi, 29th December, 1936.

Received: 3.45 p.m., 29th December, 1936.

XXX

3034. Addressed to Secretary of State for India repeated to Peking. Following from Gould 213, December 23rd. Urgent.  
3035. Ngagchen called yesterday. He expects to leave on (corrupt group) to China via India. He said that, thanks largely to presence of the mission, very good progress has been made during the past few weeks in conversations with Tibetan Government with a view to return of Tashi Lama, and that he himself now definitely expects that Tashi Lama will return to Tibet next summer. Failure to return this year had been largely due to stubborn attitude of Tibetan Government prior to arrival of mission and to bad influence of certain members of Tashi Lama's entourage, which he (Ngagchen) hopes to counteract by re-establishing personal touch with Tashi Lama. He added that Tashi Lama must realise that, in the matter of his return, it is probably case of "next year or never" and he thought present difficulties in China might facilitate return. He stated explicitly that continued presence of mission would definitely tend to keep Tibetan Government in a reasonable frame of mind and would contribute towards confidence of Tashi Lama and prospect of his return.

2. I was careful to try to discover whether Ngagchen was speaking from conviction or was intent rather on staging a good "getaway" Both during conversation and in subsequent more intimate talk with Norbu he gave every indication of speaking conviction. What is open to doubt is whether in his absence Tibetan Government will continue to be reasonable. Ends.

as has been noticed, the Chinese, with a major war with Japan on their hands, were "compelled" to call off the Panchen's expedition.<sup>284</sup>

Even as Nanjing did so, the Tibetans, in a "diplomatic counter-stroke", renewed their request to the Panchen Lama to return and were "even considering", we are told, the admission of a small escort.<sup>285</sup> The Lama, however, refused to oblige and, reportedly, returned to Jyekundo. Old, disappointed and fatally stabbed in the back, on the very eve of realising his life-long ambition, he fell ill and died on November 30, 1937 - "to the mingled sorrow and relief of the Tibetan people".<sup>286</sup>

The Panchen Lama's death, sad and tragic, and away from his hearth and home, laid low, for the time being, the ghost of Chinese armies forcing their way into Tibet on the plea of restoring the ruler of Tashilhunpo to his seat of authority. Additionally, it ended, if temporarily, the impending political confrontation which may have disrupted, and well-nigh completely, the rickety, inefficient, if remarkably corrupt post-13th Dalai Lama regime in Lhasa. For their part, the Political Officer and his masters in New Delhi, no less than in Whitehall, must have heaved a sigh of relief for escape from a situation which, as the preceding pages reveal, would have been embarrassing, to say the least.

## The New Incarnations

### The 14th Dalai Lama installed at Lhasa (1940)

The 13th Dalai Lama died in December 1933, the 9th Panchen followed him four years later; both, un-reconciled to the last. Strange as it may seem in retrospect, their new reincarnations demonstrated how, on rebirth, the two did not long persist in their old, unhappy legacies.

Usually, in Tibetan tradition, Chen-re-si would reincarnate in a human body at about the same time as it left the old. There may be instances, however, where this restless spirit would tarry a while before taking human form. Thus it was that the child who was eventually discovered to be the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in 1937, had actually been born in June 1935. His discovery, a fascinating tale.

To start with, sometime around 1935, the Tibetan Regent, Reting Rimpoche, had repaired to the sacred lake of Lhamoi Latso, at Chokhorgyal, roughly 150 odd kilometres to the south-east of Lhasa. The lake's waters, tradition has it, hold clues to the visions of the future. The Regent reportedly saw three letters, 'Ah', 'Ka' and 'Ma', reflected clearly in its waters along with the picture of a monastery with a roof of jade-green and gold. And a house with turquoise tiles. The vision was reduced to writing and kept a closely guarded secret.

In the autumn of 1936, three search teams, each headed by an incarnate lama and including both monk and lay officials, were dispatched. One, to the north-east, Amdo; another to the east, Kham; and, a third, to the south-east, Takpo and Kongpu.

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<sup>284</sup> Richardson, *History*, p. 146.

<sup>285</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>286</sup> *Loc. cit.*

Nanking withdraws support: Panchen Lama's death (1937)

19.

10R Encl. in Encl. (Peking) - Urey (Encl.) D. 8-4-37  
L/109/12/138/27

Translation:

EXTRACT from 'Yung Pao' of 27th March, 1937.

The Panchen Lama has long been on his journey back to Tibet. The Central Government has appropriated large sums of money and despatched a special Secret Envoy in connection with the Panchen Lama's return to Tibet. It has been made a great event. But the Panchen Lama up to today has been lingering at Jyekundo and delaying his journey. According to press reports the Panchen Lama has been prevented from setting out on his journey for Tibet by snow in spring and winter and by rain in summer and autumn. Then, is there any date during a year at which he will be able to return to Tibet? Is he procrastinating intentionally? Or is there any other reason? It is learned that the Panchen Lama has been forced to postpone his trip to Tibet because Britain does not want him to go back to Tibet. Nominally the political power in Tibet is in the hands of the Jöchen Kutuktu but actually the pro-British elements and the British Advisors are the most influential in political circles in Tibet. Britain only wants the Panchen Lama to return to Tibet to take charge of religious affairs and does not want him to have a hand in political affairs. The Panchen Lama, however, does not quite agree with the proposal, hence his return to Tibet has been refused. The Central Government has not adopted appropriate measures in dealing with Tibet. Two years ago General Huang, Mu Sung was sent to Lhasa to seek peace and make a compromise, but General Huang soon after returned to China with no success to his credit. The relation of Tibet to the Central Government is but superficial and nominal but the Central Government has been exceedingly generous and gracious to the Panchen Lama with the hope of utilizing the religious position of the Panchen Lama to form a link between the Central Government and the Tibetan Local Government. When the Panchen Lama was in Nanking, Mr. Tai Chi T'ao and other prominent Government leaders "koto'ed" to him as his disciples.

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The 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, then living in Jyekundo invited the Kham team to meet him, which it did (February 1937) and told them about three somewhat unusual boys. With their own list of 12, the additions suggested by the Panchen made for a formidable number.

It is common for small children who are reincarnations to remember men and things, from their previous births; some can even write the scriptures they have neither seen nor read earlier.

By the time the search party started, of the three boys suggested by the Panchen Lama one had died. The second when shown the articles which belonged to the late Dalai Lama ran away, crying. It was the third, the young, two-year old boy from Taktser (Taktse) in Dokham district of Amdo who seemed to answer all the requirements. Exposed to three tests: two identical black rosaries, two drums and two walking sticks, he did, in each case, distinguish the genuine from the fake. More, he, it would appear, saw through the guise of his visitors and distinguished the spiritual lama from the latter's lay attendant.

Nor was that all. Other parts of the Regent's vision in the lake seemed to fall in place: the letter 'Ah', for Amdo; 'Ka', for Kumbum, one of the largest monasteries of the Gelugpa, not far from the village which the Regent had seen reflected in the lake's waters. Above all, together the letters 'Ka' and 'Ma' stood for the gompa of Karma Rolphai Dorje situated on a mountain above the village.

The survey team appeared to be strongly persuaded that they had indeed spotted the future Dalai Lama in the little two-year old boy of unadulterated Tibetan stock, his parents' forefathers had originally hailed from central Tibet. It was an average agricultural family of sixteen births of whom seven children eventually survived - which, apart from tilling the land, bred cattle and horses. When the team's findings were reported to Lhasa, there was little hesitation in endorsing its choice.<sup>287</sup>

Difficult, time-consuming though the selection proved, the more ticklish question remained. It was to map out the mechanics, and work out the modalities, for extraditing the young Taktser boy to his seat of spiritual and lay authority in holy Lhasa. Amdo was part of the Chinese province of Qinghai whose quasi-independent governor, Ma Bufang, wanted his price for releasing such a prized possession. And so did, for that matter, his proforma political masters, the Chinese government, in Chongqing. If only through the boy lama, they could perhaps tag on some conditionalities for re-asserting their then non-existing control in Tibet proper.

Communications with Lhasa were of the most primitive sort; its only telegraph link being with Gangtok, via India. It was a circuitous, time-consuming, if also frustrating experience for messages, in code, had to be routed from Xining, through Chongqing, via India to Lhasa. And, in reverse. Nor were the coffers of the Tibetan government so full as to meet Ma's extortionist demands which rose with his mounting expectations. For the more he and his advisors realised that the Taktser boy was Tibet's future Dalai Lama, the greater his greed for gold and the more impossible his demands. To be sure, his initial pitch for 100,000 Chinese silver dollars (£ 7,50,000) quadrupled as the search party's anxiety to depart became more pronounced. While Ma's major pre-occupation was filthy lucre, his

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<sup>287</sup> Bell, *Portrait*, p. 397

Bell rests his account of the Tibetan expedition to the north-east for the discovery of the Dalai Lama on that of Basil Gould who himself was at that time in Lhasa.

For more details see Basil Gould, *The Jewel in the Lotus*. The 16<sup>th</sup> chapter in this book, "Lhasa: the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, 1940" detailed a firsthand account of the search for the child lama.

masters in Chongqing were keen not to miss such a godsend opportunity to re-establish some vague control in Lhasa. And had set their heart on a Chinese armed escort to accompany the boy Lama, ostensibly to safeguard his life!

In the event, was it any wonder that it took almost two years (1937-9) for the arrangements to work out! And the search party eventually left as part of a large conglomerate of some rich Xining merchants on a pilgrimage to holy Mecca, by way of Tibet and India. Apart from the escort they provided, the party had also stood surety for the additional 300,000 dollars (£25,000/-) for Ma and his retainers to be reimbursed to them only on arrival in the Tibetan capital.<sup>288</sup> All in all, it was not until October (1939) that holy Lhasa was reached!<sup>289</sup>

The 14th Dalai Lama's enthronement ceremony (February 1940) has been the subject of an acute controversy, more especially in regard to the role which the Chinese representative played. To get a proper perspective, it would help to scrutinise the two versions; the Chinese narrative of events as well as the non-Chinese (viz. British), recital of what transpired.

The Chinese author, Li Diezeng (Li Tieh-Tseng) suggests that he had been staying in Lanchow - "not far from Chinghai and Tibet - during the critical years, 1937-40" and had flown to Xining and seen the child lama at Kumbum. He strongly repudiates the suggestion that Ma held "the claimant to the Pontiff throne" as a "hostage" with demands for unreasonable "blackmail". Not only did he not hear of such a "scandal" but Li also rules it out as "incredible". More, he avers that the Chongqing government "ordered" the abbot of Kumbum "not to place any obstacle" in the path of the boy lama's departure for Lhasa. To the contrary, it took the "initiative" in making a special appropriation of "a generous sum" to cover all the expenses of the journey and asked Ma to provide "careful protection" along the route.

Off its own bat, in December 1938, the Chinese government appointed Wu Zhongxin, then Chairman CMTA, to coordinate with the Tibetan Regent Reting, "jointly to supervise" all matters relating to the reincarnation and installation of the new Dalai Lama. It was also decided to designate Wu as the Chinese government's representative "to officiate" on its behalf. Lhasa reportedly expressed a "hearty welcome" but stipulated that Wu come by the sea route, and *not* overland.

The British visa for Wu's journey across India was not forthcoming until October 1939. And when it finally did, Li tells us, it was more because of the change in the international situation - World War II had broken out in September (1939) - than the exertions of the Chinese embassy in London. After a brief halt in Calcutta and Kalimpong, en route, Wu arrived in Lhasa on 15 December "to a colourful welcome". Only to discover that the Regent had "eliminated" the other two contenders, leaving the "candidate from Kokonor" as the "only claimant". There was, it should be obvious, no alternative to Wu accepting the fait accompli by Tibet's "pro-Chinese" Regent! He insisted nonetheless that

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<sup>288</sup> Bell maintains that since the Chinese "could hardly pretend any more" that a large Chinese escort was necessary, "twenty men only" were sent. He further reveals that the Chinese government in Chongqing contributed 55,000 dollars "for the (Dalai Lama's) search and the journey back." For details. Bell, *Portrait*, p. 399.

<sup>289</sup> The return journey, Li tells us, started from Kumbum on July 1 and ended in Lhasa on October 7. Li Tieh-tseng, *op. cit.*, n. 215, p. 283.

the Regent formally request Chongqing for exemption of the lot drawing ceremony from the golden urn and that he (Wu) "identify" the boy in a "private" interview. Upon receiving the Chinese commissioner's "favourable report", Chongqing complied. And, vide its "order" of 5 February (1940), the lot drawing process was dispensed with and the boy proclaimed as the 14th Dalai Lama.

Despite "some objections" by the lamas - which were over-ruled by the Regent - Wu did manage a "private" interview with the boy Dalai Lama and was duly impressed by the "dignified and natural" manner of the 4-1/2 year old.

At the installation ceremony - also called "sitting in the bed ceremony" - on 22 February when representatives of Nepal, Ladakh and Bhutan also attended. Wu sat on the same side as the Dalai Lama, his parents and his tutor, "all facing south". It was because of "this seating arrangement", indicating the privileged position the Chinese representative occupied, that his British counterpart, Sir Basil Gould, refused to be present. Li is convinced that from the seating of Wu alone, it should be apparent that the Chinese representative asserted "the traditional position" of China in Tibet and did much more than- what his detractors maintain- "present a ceremonial scarf."<sup>290</sup>

For a proper assessment, the Chinese version of events needs to be juxtaposed with some known facts. To start with, the search party took almost two years (1937-9) before it could leave Ma's territorial domain. If he were truly the God-fearing ruler who allegedly had utmost deference for the sentiments of his Mongol and Tibetan subjects or for that matter the Guomindang regime in Chongqing did exercise the control it allegedly claimed on the Qinghai governor, would not matters have smoothened much earlier?

Again, the fact that the Tibetan cabinet and the national assembly, acting in unison, proclaimed the young boy to be the future Dalai Lama months before Wu and his escort surfaced in Lhasa shows that there was need to anticipate an adverse turn of events. And quash, in anticipation, any Chinese claims of having had anything to do with the new Tibetan ruler's choice. In the face of this unequivocal declaration, the Chinese representative Wu's later insistence on the Regent seeking Chongqing's prior approval for dispensing with the drawing of lots ceremony; or for Wu personally scrutinising the boy's bona fides so as to accept the validity of his candidature, sound impressive exercises in make-believe. Self-satisfying for a bloated ego no doubt, but singularly bereft of all meaning. And even seemingly foolish. The fact that with a "pro-Chinese" Regent in the saddle notwithstanding, Wu did not always have his way calls for no comment.

As to Wu's "privileged" position at the installation ceremony, a brief comment may be in order. At the outset, it is interesting to note that Wu's turn came after the Regent, the prime minister, members of the cabinet, the family of the Dalai Lama, abbots of monasteries and incarnate lamas had paid their obeisance to the boy Lama and been blessed in turn. Wu apart, the Nepalese, Ladakhi and Bhutanese representatives were present too. And the same ceremony repeated a number of times, day after day, after day. And principally to enable as large a number as possible to witness, and celebrate the return of their Dalai Lama among his people. It is also remarkable that apart from a few inconsequential gestures, the alleged seating arrangement for instance, the Chinese do not appear to have had any special role to play at the ceremony. The British Indian

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<sup>290</sup> Li furnishes a fulsome account of the Dalai Lama's journey to Lhasa as well as his installation ceremony basing it squarely on Wu Zhongxin's official report on his mission submitted to the Chinese government. For details, Li. *op.cit.*, pp. 180-4

representative, on the other hand, was granted an "exclusive audience" with the Dalai Lama at which he could present his gifts.

While there is no denying that the Regent succumbed to Chinese gifts and gold - and blandishments - to defer to Wu's vanities, any unbiassed assessment would suggest that the Chinese version of events sounds "implausible". It may be recalled that earlier too, at the time of the installation of the 13th Dalai Lama, around the turn of the twentieth century, Lhasa had openly defied its Chinese masters by doing away with the golden urn ceremony. In the context of the early 1940s there was therefore no question of soliciting Chongqing's nod for dispensing with the ritual. Besides, Chinese influence in Lhasa was almost negligible. For Wu's "generous gifts" to his Tibetan interlocutors notwithstanding, he is known to have drawn a blank in his twin objectives of improving the Motherland's somewhat tenuous communication links with Lhasa or of defining Tibet's less than independent status vis-a-vis China. Nor yet did he succeed in effecting a return of the old Panchen Lama's men, and remains, to his seat of authority in Tashilhunpo. In the final count, Wu was sorely driven to "notifying" the Tibetan authorities about opening a branch office of the CMTA! The Kashag's not untypical response, was to ignore his communication, deeming it to be both unimportant if also perhaps irrelevant. This brought to an end an almost six-month sojourn laced with a generous supply of gifts, and filthy lucre, for almost everybody in Lhasa's monastic as well as lay fraternity. And with Sino-Tibetan relations remaining exactly where they were before Wu's arrival - or even after his departure. One way or another, the visit is known to have made no difference.<sup>291</sup>

## The 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Installed at Kumbum (1949)

The story of the 10th Panchen Lama is easily told. The 9th Panchen Lama's labrang - his office and officials who had sworn fealty and stood by him during his long years of exile and been generously funded by Chiang Kai-shek's government in Nanjing - had discovered a prospective candidate as the new reincarnation in Chinese-controlled Qinghai. Chongqing nonetheless held back its hand in recognising, and installing, him as the new incarnation of the 9th Panchen Lama. The hope was that in doing so, it would wield some modicum of influence in Lhasa and not antagonise it any further in a manner where a later reconciliation may become difficult, if not impossible. Finally, on 10 August (1949), the die was cast: Nanjing formally acknowledged its candidate as the new Panchen Lama and installed him in an elaborate ceremony at Kumbum, declaring that he was the only genuine candidate. And proclaimed, as if from the house tops that the process of selection was at an end. Sadly

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<sup>291</sup> Basil (later Sir Basil) Gould, then Political Officer in Sikkim, was India's official representative at the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's installation ceremony. His detailed eye-witness account is to be found in his book, *Supra*, n. 287

Inter alia Gould avers that Wu's account "as detailed as it was inaccurate" rests on the premise that the Chinese representative "had been the chief actor" in the scene. Gould also suggests that "reports from several sources" indicated that Wu had been "dissatisfied with the position" accorded to him at the installation ceremony and for this reason did not visit the Potala on the occasion of the presentation of gifts from China. For details, *Ibid.*, pp. 234-5

for him, whatever political mileage Chiang hoped to gain with the government in Lhasa, was undone barely three weeks later. For on 1 September, Xining, the capital of Qinghai, fell to the advancing Red armies of Mao Zedong. In the event, the town's most important occupant, the Guomindang-installed new child Panchen Lama, found himself to be a captive in the hands of Mao and his men.

As was not unusual, in the choice of the Panchen Lama - as often times in the case of the Dalai Lama too - more than one candidate was discovered. By 1944, it would appear, survey teams headed by Tashilhunpo officials who had fanned out in Kham, short-listed what the Dalai Lama calls "two possible candidates" for the Panchen Lama's vacant seat.<sup>292</sup> There was, in addition, a boy from Amdo, in the province of Qinghai, sponsored by the Panchen Lama's runaway labrang who had bided with him in his long years of exile. In 1945 or thereabouts, Lhasa asked all the three candidates, including the one discovered in Qinghai, to repair to the Tibetan capital so that a final selection could take place. This proposition had the active support of Lhasa's three great seats of learning - Ganden, Sera and Drepung. While the two Kham-based candidates hastened to fall in line, the old Panchen Lama's officials (who had been on the pay-roll of the Guomindang for many a year now), ostensibly under Nanjing's direction, refused to oblige. In the event, the two "Tibetan" candidates- of whom one died somewhat prematurely- were brought to Tashilhunpo for suitable religious training before their final selection while the lone "Chinese" candidate held back. His sponsors no doubt feared that once he was out of their hands, Lhasa would take advantage of him. In the event, he stayed put at Kumbum.

According to the Indian Mission's Annual Report for 1947, "no progress" had been made towards the arrival in Lhasa of the prospective candidate for the future Panchen Lama. Tashilhunpo officials sent to Qinghai to negotiate had, in defiance of the Tibetan government's brief, acknowledged the candidate who had been enthroned at Kumbum in 1944 without the necessity of his being brought to Lhasa. Their "recommendation" is said to have been made under "pressure" from local Chinese officials and troops. Meanwhile the Qinghai governor, Ma Bufeng who had earlier caused no end of trouble for the young Dalai Lama was said to be contemplating to use the "presumptive" Panchen Lama as an "excuse" for launching a cross-border "invasion". It was pointed out that the late Panchen Lama's entourage who had been responsible for enthroning the boy Lama did so as their income "depends" upon payments from the Chinese government<sup>293</sup>.

The situation prevailing in Qinghai was not a little confused. On the one hand, the provincial governor Ma was facing trouble from advancing communist armies; on the other Guomindang troops on the Tibetan border had been greatly reduced in number. As noticed in a preceding paragraph, officials from Tashilhunpo who had gone to Qinghai to negotiate had, in defiance of orders from the Tibetan government, recommended acknowledging the Qinghai candidate who was reported to have been enthroned (1944) without bringing him to Lhasa. Meanwhile the Tsongdu in the Tibetan capital appears to have been uncompromising in its resolve that if Chinese troops entered Tibet along with the Qinghai candidate for the Panchen Lama, Lhasa will fight it out.

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<sup>292</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), p. 96

<sup>293</sup> *Indian Mission Annual Report for 1947, IOR, Mss Eur D 998/23*. The report was signed by H E Richardson as Indian Trade Agent, Gyantse and Officer Incharge Indian Mission, in Lhasa.



-2-

### C. Relations between Tibet and U.S.A.

1. The visit of Mr. Lowell Thomas (see my report for August 1949 para VI) has given the Tibetan Government an opportunity to make their case known to the United States. Mr. Thomas commands a very large audience and his influence on American public opinion appears considerable; he also claims close official contacts at very high levels. He is clearly an intelligent observer but seems to lack background knowledge about Asian affairs.
2. I had several talks with him and found him sympathetic to Tibetan aspirations; and he obviously grasped the fact of Tibetan practical independence which has lately been underlined by the removal of the Chinese Mission from Lhasa. But he appeared to know nothing of American policy towards Tibet and to be unaware that the State Department consider Tibet as part of China.
3. I understand that, at first, he made excessively optimistic statements to the Tibetan Foreign Bureau and Kashag about Tibet's position, alleging that they were safe for ten years. After I had explained to him the greater imminence of danger to Tibet I hear that he became more cautious and more aware of the urgency of the position and that he promised to do all he could to enlist U.S. aid "if it could be done in time".
4. The Tibetan Government, at his request, gave him a short statement about their position and aims which he intends to show to President Truman and Mr. Dean Acheson and also to broadcast in his talks.
5. With regard to practical help from the United States of America he suggested to me that America might supply arms to Tibet. I told him at once that if there was any such idea the supplies would have to be a gift or on a long loan - with little prospect of repayment - as the Government of India could not be expected to find dollars to enable Tibet to pay.
6. As I heard that several officials had been asking Mr. Thomas about the availability of Dollars for Tibet I took the opportunity of telling him that in fact Tibet was earning no dollars at all - unless new arrangements had been made for direct sales of wool to the United States of America and that such help as the Government of India had been able to provide in this matter had been given as an act of grace and on a very liberal interpretation of Tibet's claim to earn dollar exchange.
7. The Tibetan Government appear to have made good use of their opportunity to convert U.S. opinion and will watch eagerly for statements by Mr. Thomas. If his efforts bear no fruit, I feel that it will be a long time before any more foreign visitors are allowed to come to Lhasa.
8. I have suggested to the Government of India that in view of the Chinese Communist allegations of India being party to an Anglo-American plot regarding Tibet, they should give the United States Government full information on the Government of India's position regarding Tibet. Late though it is the United States Department of State may now feel inclined to change their view that Tibet is part of China seeing that such a doctrine would accept Communist domination of Tibet. But as it seems doubtful whether any public support of Tibet by the United States of America would have much practical effect - unless there were any possibility of the United States of America concerting military measures with the Government of India - the United States Government may consider that any form of diplomatic intervention by them would merely cause them to lose face and perhaps incite the Communists to early action against Tibet.

### II. DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.

1. The Tibetan Government have had no news of the whereabouts of the Panchen Rimpoche candidate from Em Bum since the reported fall of Sining. They have sent orders to the Commissioner in Shan to look out for him in Tibetan territory, in case he has left Em Bum, and to send him at once to Lhasa if this is possible - i.e. unless he has a large Chinese escort. The Commissioner has also been instructed to tell the exiled Tsakhilung officials that, in spite of past disagreement, they need not fear for their position if they return to Tibet.

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Document 10/ Excerpt from IMMR, 15 September 1949  
(Courtesy British Library)

As if the above were not confusing enough, it was "reported" that the Chinese government had not "actually 'confirmed'" the enthronement of the boy Panchen Lama but were "watching developments carefully." Again it was suggested that the party with the principal candidate in tow "who would probably be accepted once he came to Tibet"- moved in the summer to the Tibetan border but "later" returned to Kumbum.<sup>294</sup>

Reviewing developments over the three years, August 1945 through August 1948, Hopkinson, then Political Officer in Sikkim, revealed that in 1945 the Chinese representative at Lhasa, T L Shen, had "of his own motion" opened talks with him. Insisting that the real obstacle to a settlement in Tibet was the "likelihood" of British aggression and the Chinese "fear" thereof. The Raj however saw it differently. While outsiders deemed an agreement between China and Tibet "desirable"- and New Delhi had withdrawn its earlier objection to being "consulted"/"informed" about such talks- the "sole obstacle" to such a settlement, as Hopkinson viewed it, was "continuing Chinese intransigence; for ignoring such facts, they will accept nothing short of complete Tibetan surrender." Nor had the change of regime in New Delhi in the wake of Indian independence made any difference to "tone down" Chinese claims to Indian territory in Assam.<sup>295</sup>

Lhasa's half hearted attempt to push the candidature of its boy was confined to repeated radio broadcasts that apart from its own candidate, the other two must undergo requisite religious tests in Shigastse before its seal of approval on the final choice could be affixed.<sup>296</sup> And the true reincarnation proclaimed. Meantime the Tsongdu appears to have convened in April (1949) to consider inter alia the "situation in China" and the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. While the candidate from Paksho reached Lhasa, there were "no signs" that his counterpart, the "favoured candidate from Kumbum" would surface.<sup>297</sup>

Reports emanating from Lhasa in July (1949) suggested that the Chinese government had decided to accept the Kumbum candidate as the reincarnation of the Panchen and he had "apparently been installed" by General Ma as well as the chairman of the Nanjing Commission for Mongolia and Tibet (CMTA). The Tibetan government was informed of this development not by the Chinese government but by a telegram from General Ma himself. It was argued that the provincial governor may think it would be to his advantage to bring the boy Lama along with him into Tibet in case he and his government were forced to take refuge there<sup>298</sup>.

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<sup>294</sup> Loc cit.

<sup>295</sup> *Review, August 1945 to August 1948*, by A J Hopkinson, P 0, in Sikkim, *IOR*, Mss Eur D 998/23, para 18

It may be of interest to note that both Hopkinson's official "review" as well as Richardson's annual report for 1947 had reached Whitehall through a devious channel and *not* through Government of India in New Delhi. Hopkinson, it would appear, had kept copies of these reports which he was "good enough to loan" to the Commonwealth Relations Officer in London when he visited there "to see us". A note in the CRO, Pol. Est. 6120/49 dated 19 January 1949, addressed to one H S Shattock in the UK High Commission's office in New Delhi while forwarding copies of these reports revealed that the Government of India "seemed to have kept (these reports) to themselves". For details PRO. FO 371/76315.

<sup>296</sup> Robert Ford, *Captured in Tibet*, p. 86

Ford maintains that Radio Lhasa's broadcasts, in the face of powerful Communist propaganda were "timid".

<sup>297</sup> *Indian Mission Monthly Report* (abbreviated IMMR) for April 1949, PRO. FO 371/76315

<sup>298</sup> IMMR for July 1949, FO 371/76315

The Chinese hospital has all but vanished. The Doctor left for China in August 1947 and has not been replaced. It appears that some locally trained compounders open the dispensary from time to time; but the reputation of the place has gone and attendance at our hospital, which suffered a decrease when the Chinese hospital, ~~which~~ was a new thing, has increased to an almost embarrassing extent.

The Wireless station continues to operate.

Social relations between the Indian Mission and the Chinese officials are good.

#### The Chinese and the Conspiracy against the Tibetan Government.

As noted above it was disclosed that the Reting Rimpoche asked for Chinese aid. It is understood in ~~Shigatse~~ Lhasa that the Rimpoche's agents were rebuffed by the Chinese Government but it is believed that the conspiracy blew up too soon for the Chinese to be able to do anything if they had wanted to, and that they would have taken advantage of a successful coup d'etat by the conspirators.

#### Gyalo Dhondup and Taktser Rimpoche.

Gyalo Dhondup, a brother of the Dalai Lama has remained in China in spite of efforts by the Dalai Lama himself to get him back. The eldest of the family, Taktser Rimpoche, who left Lhasa for China in November 1947 will probably make a further attempt to secure the return of Gyalo Dhondup.

Taktser Rimpoche himself is going to Kum Bum Monastery in Chinghai of which he is an Incarnate Lama and where he proposed to stay for about two years.

#### The Panchen Rimpoche (Tashi Lama).

No progress has been made towards the arrival of the candidates at Lhasa. Officials from Tashilhumpo were sent to Chinghai to negotiate, and it appears that in defiance of the ~~Chinese~~ orders of the Tibetan Government they recommended acknowledging the candidate who was reported in 1944 to have been enthroned, without the necessity of bringing him to Lhasa. The Tibetan National Assembly returned a firm refusal. There is apprehension that Chinese pressure and Chinese troops were at the back of the recommendation by the Tashilhumpo officials and the National Assembly recorded a resolution to fight if Chinese troops entered Tibet with the candidate. ~~It~~ trouble about the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet, will use the presumptive Panchen Rimpoche as an excuse for invasion.

The situation is far from clear. The persons mainly responsible for enthroning the candidate as Panchen Rimpoche appear to have been the entourage of the late Panchen Rimpoche whose income depends on having in their possession a living Holy Man. It is reported that the Chinese Government have not actually "confirmed" the enthronement but they are watching developments carefully.

A party containing the principal candidate, who would probably be accepted once he came to Tibet, moved towards the Tibetan border in the summer but later returned to Kum Bum.

L In particular  
see in Jan. with  
Ma-Pu. Feng, who caused  
trouble

1 Dec. 11/ Excerpts from "Annual Report 1947 on the Indian Mission Lhasa"  
by H.E. Richardson / 10R Miss EurD 998/23  
(Courtesy British Library)

Another undated report by Richardson from Lhasa suggested that the dispatch of the boy Panchen candidate from Kumbum seemed "doubtful" and for two good reasons. To start with, Ma "just now" (August-September 1949) was in no position to undertake adventures westwards. Again, it was "even possible" that the Tibetan government might be able to strike a "cash bargain" with Ma even "as they did earlier" in the case of the Dalai Lama<sup>299</sup>.

As late as September, the Tibetan government hitherto completely in the dark regarding the whereabouts of the Kumbum candidate, had sent instructions to their Commissioner in Kham to keep a watch for him should he enter Tibetan territory. And in case he did, hasten his progress to Lhasa in the event of his not being accompanied by a Chinese escort. At the same time the Commissioner was to assure the Tashilhunpo officials in exile that past disagreements notwithstanding, they need not fear for their position should they decide to return home.<sup>300</sup>

Meantime reacting to reports about the Panchen Rimpoche's installation by the Chinese authorities, Lhasa decided to lodge a protest. While "it was almost certain" that the Tibetan government would accept the Kumbum Rimpoche if he were to come to Lhasa as a candidate, they took strong umbrage on the alleged enthronement of a Tibetan dignitary by the Chinese government "outside" of Tibet. This was contrary to precedent and aroused suspicions about their true motives.<sup>301</sup>

Later reports suggested that the Kumbum candidate had left before the town's capture by Mao's men. There was conflicting versions as to whether he had fled to Formosa or was still in the Kokonor area.<sup>302</sup> Before long Beijing radio broadcasts appealed to the Tibetans, "on behalf" of the Panchen Rimpoche candidate, to "shake off" the rule of the Dalai Lama.<sup>303</sup>

Among a surfeit of reports, some mutually contradictory, a few facts emerged. To start with, even though sponsored<sup>304</sup> by the Guomindang regime, now on the run, the boy lama and his entourage had hitched their wagons overnight to the rising star of Mao and his men. And this no sooner than Xining's fall into the hands of the advancing Red armies. Both for the Panchen Lama and his men, as well as Mao, the arrangement was mutually satisfactory. The Lama's entourage may as well have argued that Lhasa would "impose" its own candidate and that automatic recognition may not be extended to theirs solely because he was enthroned at Kumbum. For Mao's propaganda mills, the Panchen's recognition was demonstrative of their profound respect for religious freedom. For had they not just put their stamp of approval on a candidate who had initially been sponsored by their political rivals, the much-reviled Guomindang!

Lhasa's constraints were obvious enough. To start with, by putting its candidate on the Tashilhunpo throne, it would annoy, nay alienate, powerful lamaist communities in Xikang, Qinghai and Mongolia who had backed the "Chinese" candidate at Kumbum. More, the latter's non-recognition would be in the nature of a "challenge" to the new Chinese regime.

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<sup>299</sup> IMMR for (?) 1949, FO 371/76315. Only page 2 of the report which bears Richardson's signature is extant.

<sup>300</sup> IMMR for September 1949, FO 371/76315

<sup>301</sup> IMMR for August 1949, FO 371/76315

<sup>302</sup> IMMR for October 1949, FO 371/76315

<sup>303</sup> IMMR for December 1949, FO 371/76315

<sup>304</sup> Tsering Shakyas. *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, London 1999, pp. 36-7

And further antagonise, the already much-alienated province of Tsang whose people had been anxiously looking forward to the return of the Panchen's old court.<sup>305</sup>

It was plain as a pikestaff that so long as Beijing's candidate remained in the field, and under Chinese tutelage and protection, the prospect of a Chinese army bringing him to Lhasa, as in the case of the 9th Panchen Lama, remained alive. It should also be clear that during the last years of direct Sino-Tibetan contacts, the problem of the Panchen Lama had remained as part of the pending, if also divisive, unsettled agenda. A major force for destabilising the Regent's government at Lhasa and indeed hanging like a sword of Damocles over his uneasy head.

Secret US diplomatic communications indicate that the Tashilhunpo monks who had arrived in Xining early in 1947 had plans to escort the young Panchen Lama back to Tibet. This move which appears to have had the support of the Lhasa nobility was stalled by Chinese soldiers protecting the Panchen Lama<sup>306</sup>.

A word on the Panchen. Born Gonpo Tseten (3 February 1938) he was ordained Lobsang Trinley Lhundrup at the village of Karang Bido in Amdo, north-eastern Tibet. The Guomindang regime "enthroned him forthwith", thereby acquiring "a convenient figurehead" for their own selfish purposes. When the Communists won the civil war in 1949, it did not take them long to realise what a prize had fallen into their laps, and "without any inconvenient sense of irony", pronounced him both as the spiritual as well as temporal leader of his country and Chairman of the "Provisional Government of Tibet". More, Tibetan government reports from Chambo indicated that officials of the Panchen Lama in Xining were sending telegrams "repeatedly" asking the new Communist regime "to take early action" for the "liberation" of their land.<sup>307</sup> All the while Lhasa, while explaining its attitude towards the boy whom the Chinese "treat as the 'true' Panchen Lama", reiterated its earlier position. Namely, that that all Panchen Rinpoches were selected at Lhasa with traditional Tibetan ceremonies and that no candidate could be "recognized" until some formalities had been completed.<sup>308</sup> Before long Beijing radio announced that the Panchen Lama himself had invited Mao "to liberate" his land and that the Chairman graciously pledged that the PLA would "satisfy the yearnings of the Tibetan people."<sup>309</sup>

## Tibet's "Liberation"

### China's "liberation" of Tibet and the May 1951 Agreement

As was to be expected, even before Mao proclaimed his People's Republic of China, the old Panchen's entourage hastened to swap their loyalties. And, to no one's surprise, hitched up their wagon, and their future, to the new dominant power in China. On 1 October

<sup>305</sup> Tsung-Lien Shen & Shen-Chi Liu, *Tibet And Tibetans*, Stanford, 1953, p. 61

<sup>306</sup> Grunfeld, op cit, p. 75

<sup>307</sup> IMMR for the period ending 15 February 1950, PRO, FO 371/84453

<sup>308</sup> IMMR for the period ending 15 April 1950, PRO, FO 371/84453

<sup>309</sup> Mary Craig, *Kundun*, p. 178

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1950

FROM *Command*  
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REFERENCES

(Print)

MINUTES

As always, this report has arrived too late to be of great interest. The reference to the concentration of Chinese troops for the invasion of Tibet, and the conclusion that (on the 16<sup>th</sup> August) the invasion seems more likely is interesting, but perhaps no longer valid. We have no reason to suppose that the Chinese will invade before extending the possibility of delaying their plans by negotiation.

NW  
244

NW  
11/10

"Negotiation" of course is a euphemism for unconditional acceptance of Chinese terms which may not however be too unreasonable provided the Tibetans do what they are told. *A.A.B. Franklin*  
28/8

(How disposed of)

(Action completed) (Index)

19/10/50

20/11/50

Doc. 12/  
 1950 R. for period ending 15 August 1950,  
 Annotations in CRO  
 (Courtesy British Library)

(1949) in the name of their young master, the Panchen Lama's 8men addressed a telegram to Mao and Zhu De:

I am now living in Qinghai and waiting for an order to return to Tibet ... From now on ... it will not be long before' Tibet is liberated.

More, "on behalf of all the people of Tibet", the youthful Panchen Lama offered the victorious Chinese leaders "our heartfelt support". And pleaded for the "liberation" of his country. Mao's reply promised the "liberation of Tibet and unity between Chinese and Tibetan peoples".<sup>310</sup> Significantly, the young Lama had also supplicated for China's "righteous troops to liberate Tibet, eradicate the traitorous elements and rescue the people of Tibet."<sup>311</sup>

A word on Tibet's "liberation" Recent studies confirm Moscow's overt as well as covert support, at once moral and material, in the "liberation" of Tibet. Mao, it would appear, raised the issue directly with Stalin during his official visit to Moscow, December 1949- January 1950. The Soviet leader is said to have applauded Mao's decision to take the Tibetan issue "in hand" and presumably agreed to the loan of transport planes. Later, in the wake of Tibet's "liberation", Beijing sought help in "establishing control" over the country. The Soviet viewpoint, articulated by Stalin, was clear and unambiguous: "Tibet is a part of China. Therefore, Chinese troops should be stationed there." More, Moscow was prepared to lend assistance for better communications with Tibet such as the construction of a motorable road.

"There is little doubt", a Russian scholar has suggested, that Stalin's counseling strongly affected decision making by Beijing in the crucial years 1949-52. The Soviet ruler is also said to have given Mao the "go ahead" for Tibet's military occupation by the PLA in October 1950. Anticipating events it may be recalled that Moscow was to welcome the May 1951 agreement and lent its support to the myth of the country's "peaceful liberation" from Western imperialism. Almost a decade later the Soviets pronounced the March 1959 rebellion, in consonance with Beijing's own verdict, as an "imperialist provocation" resulting from an unholy collusion between the "reactionary" Tibetan administration and the "Chiang Kai-shek gang". Not unexpectedly, Moscow was to vehemently oppose the Dalai Lama's attempt to appeal to the UN.

Apart from considerable diplomatic support, the Soviets rendered some tangible help in building transport communications between China and Tibet and training PLA units in the early 1950s. For obvious reasons, Moscow was not interested in an independent Tibetan state which, it calculated, would

"most likely" ally itself with the imperialist West rather than the communist East.<sup>312</sup>

Reverting to events as they unfolded in the wake of Beijing's "peaceful liberation" of Tibet, the Dalai Lama's government it may be recalled appointed a 5-member delegation to repair to China to negotiate a settlement. Three of its members, including their chief and leader, Ngabo (Ngawang Jigme), then Tibetan governor of Kham, crossed over from Chamdo while the remaining two, including Lhawutara Thupten Tender, left Yatung and were scheduled to go by sea. While en route to the Chinese capital, they had called on the Indian Prime Minister in New Delhi. Lhasa's fervent hope was that Nehru may well be persuaded to make India participate actively in the impending negotiations and act as a

<sup>310</sup> Endorsement in Nanjing to FO, 27 December 1949, cited in Goldstein, op cit, pp. 684-5

<sup>311</sup> *Loc cit.* The Panchen Lama's telegram was addressed to a Field Commander of the PLA.

<sup>312</sup> Alexandre Andreyev. "Russia & Tibet", op cit

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Earlier reports also indicated that there had been a Communist revolt at Lhasa but these do not seem to have been repeated.

The Tibetan Government's action was surprisingly decisive. I was aware that they were anxious about possible developments in connection with the Chinese Mission at Lhasa - see the monthly report for June 1949 para B - but had never expected them to do anything about it.

The Government of India have expressed the view that the action was too precipitate and that it would have been better to allow the officials to remain and to remove only persons suspected of subversive activities. But there is a good deal to be said for the Tibetan Government. The Chinese Mission are believed to have received no money for five months; and their source of supply has apparently been cut off by orders from Shanghai to the Bank of China to make payments to "reactionaries". I understand privately that some of the staff - persons not known to associate with suspicious Chinese here - have been talking of the possibility of serving the "new government" in the same way as National Government officials in parts of China occupied by the Communists have done. There is also the very important consideration that, if there were a Chinese Mission in Lhasa, it would be possible for the Communist Government to send officials to take it over in due course. The Tibetan Government perhaps hope that, if the Communists eventually make such a demand, they will be able to bargain with them for recognition of Tibet on a higher status than that accorded by the National Government.

At all events, they seem to have postponed the likelihood of Communist activities at Lhasa by removing suspicious persons and to have postponed - but who can say for how long - their contacts with the Communist Government

2. The Chinese Government have decided to accept the Kun Dun candidate as the reincarnation of the Panchen Rinpoche and he has apparently been installed at Kun Dun by General Ma Fu-feng, Governor of Chinghai, and the Chairman of the National Government's Commission of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs. The Tibetan Government were informed of this, not directly by the Chinese Government but by a telegram from General Ma. It is also learned that the exiled Taashilunpo officials at Kun Dun have sent a message to the Panchen Rinpoche's officials at Taashilunpo advising them of the action taken and asking them to hold similar ceremonies at Taashilunpo. This will not be done without the consent of the Tibetan Government whose reactions are not yet known. It is likely that they will adhere to their decision not to recognize the candidate until he has reached Tibet. The Chinese Government of General Ma may think that it would be to their advantage to have a puppet Panchen Rinpoche to bring with them into Tibet in case they are forced to try to take refuge there.

## II. DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

1. After arrangements were made to remove the Chinese from Lhasa and until they left, a curfew was enforced in the city, all the approaches to which were patrolled. This had a welcome effect in checking robbery.

2. There was a very mild flurry in the city when the troops took up positions before the Tibetan Government's decision was conveyed to the Chinese Mission. No one knew what was happening and some youths spread rumours that an aeroplane was coming or that the Communists were coming. The alarm was promptly put down.

3. In connection with the alarm mentioned above a servant of Kapshopa Chape was arrested on the statement of one of the youths who was caught spreading rumours and who said he had been told to do so by Kapshopa's cook. Kapshopa was detained at Norbhu Lingka while an enquiry was being made. He was not removed from office; but as his detention has now continued for over a week and has become more strict, it is believed that there are other, and more serious charges against him. He is a self-centred, self-seeking person who habitually sails too near the wind and has been in trouble before. He also lives extravagantly and is always in debt. His friends are few and his enemies many, so Lhasa is watching developments with interest.

Document 13/ Excerpts from IMMR, July 1949<sup>1</sup>.....  
(Courtesy British Library)



guarantor for the Sino-Tibetan agreement that may emerge. Nehru ignored the specific request but offered some straightforward advice. Inter alia, he expressed the view that Tibet may concede that it was a part of China since it was seen as such in the eyes of the world. Again, while Lhasa may have to agree to Chinese control over its foreign relations, he strongly advised against stationing of Chinese "troops on Tibetan soil."<sup>313</sup>

Negotiations in Beijing were dominated, almost exclusively it would appear, by the unfinished agenda of the preceding quarter century: the return of the Panchen Lama and restoration of his powers and functions. At the very outset, Beijing insisted that there could be no parleys with Lhasa's delegation until its Qinghai candidate for the reincarnation of the 9th Panchen Lama, was recognised by the Tibetan government. According to Goldstein, Lhasa had, inter alia, instructed Ngabo to ask Beijing ignore the trouble-making activities indulged in by the late Panchen Lama, and the Tibetan Regent, Reting Rimpoche as well as their respective entourages<sup>314</sup>. The Tibetan plea notwithstanding, Beijing underlined the fact that in its view, the issue of the boy Panchen Lama was "one of most important" concerns for the Tibetan people everywhere and could not be sidetracked, much less wished away.<sup>315</sup>

To the Tibetan demand that two to three other candidates were also being considered and that "divinations and other tests" had to be conducted before Lhasa accorded its approval, the Chinese retorted by "refusing to discuss anything else" until this particular issue was out of the way.

When the stalemate persisted over 6-7 meetings, Beijing issued what was tantamount to an ultimatum. And averred that insofar as the boy Lama had accepted Mao as the new leader of China "before" the liberation of Qinghai, the "face" of Mao, and China, would be seriously compromised by Lhasa's obduracy. Driven into a corner as it were, the Tibetan delegate Ngabo telegraphed Yatong where the youthful Dalai Lama was then holding court - having earlier, in the wake of the Chinese "liberation" of his country, fled from Lhasa. The chief Tibetan negotiator now confided in his principals that Beijing would not begin any serious negotiations until its Qinghai candidate had been officially recognized by the Tibetan government.

As has been noticed, Lhasa had hitherto taken the position that it would not accept Beijing's candidate until he had been sent to Tibet and, along with other contenders, undergone a formal selection in accordance with traditional, time-honoured procedures. Now, in the face of a virtual ultimatum, it was left with little choice in the matter. In the event, the Dalai Lama and his advisors relented. A lottery divination was ordered which conveniently reported that the Beijing candidate was the true reincarnation of the Panchen Lama.<sup>316</sup>

According to Tsering Shakya, on 17 May (1951) when the two delegations met to discuss the draft agreement, Li Wei-han, the chief Chinese negotiator, underlined that even

<sup>313</sup> Goldstein, op cit, p. 759. Also see Tsering Shakya, op cit, p. 64 Goldstein rests his account on an article (1982) written by one of the members (Lhautara) of the Tibetan delegation who had met the Indian prime minister in New Delhi.

<sup>314</sup> Goldstein, op. cit., p. 745.

<sup>315</sup> Goldstein has relied heavily on his interview with Rimshi Sambo, one of the Tibetan negotiators at the Beijing talks.

For details, Goldstein, op cit, pp. 761-3

<sup>316</sup> Tsering Shakya, op cit, pp. 68-9. Shakya rests his account on Ngabo's speech at the 2nd plenary session of the fifth Tibetan Autonomous People's Congress (1989).

though problems concerning the central and local governments of Tibet had been resolved, there "still remained" the internal problem concerning the conflict between the 13th Dalai Lama and the 9th Panchen Lama. And asked Ngabo about his instructions concerning the 10th Panchen Lama. The Tibetan negotiator responded by saying that he had no mandate to discuss Tibet's "internal affairs". Li's response was that the issue was much too important to be lightly brushed aside and "must be settled". And clearly indicated that unless it was resolved there was "no point" signing the Agreement.

It would appear that Ngabo had "stubbornly refused" to discuss the Panchen Lama issue even though he knew that the Dalai Lama and the Kashag had already agreed to recognise Beijing's choice for the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama. It should be obvious that he had forewarned his masters as soon as he heard of the boy Panchen Lama arriving in Beijing. And advised recognition. Since representations regarding the new Panchen had been received from Tashilhunpo too, the Dalai Lama and the Kashag "finally" decided to recognise him.

The deadlock in the negotiations at Beijing was broken at last by some behind-the-scenes parleys. And the text finally adopted (23 May) was a compromise of sorts which averred inter alia that the new relationship between the two Lamas would be the same as the one between the 13th Dalai Lama and the 9th Panchen Lama before an unfortunate rift between them developed in the early 1920s.<sup>317</sup>

The Dalai Lama's revised stance cleared the way for the stalled negotiations to begin in earnest. And in less than a week, a 17-point agreement had been knocked into shape. And signed, and sealed, in Beijing on 23 May (1951). It provided inter alia that the established status, functions and powers of the Panchen Ngoerhthehni "shall be maintained."

The above was further elaborated in the stipulation that followed:

By the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Ngoerhthehni are meant the status, functions and powers of the 13th Dalai Lama and of the 9th Panchen Ngoerhthehni when they were in friendly and amicable relations with each other.<sup>318</sup>

When the Tibetan negotiators objected to the preceding articles, the Chinese made it abundantly clear that if the Panchen Lama's rank, functions and powers were not to be mentioned in the agreement, those of the Dalai Lama should find no place either. And enquired of the Tibetan delegates if they desired to withdraw the Dalai Lama's name too. To no one's surprise, the Tibetans conceded the point.<sup>319</sup>

Shakya refers to the two delegations being later received by Mao who in an hour-long address recalled inter alia the oppressive policies of the Manchu and Chiang Kaishek regimes. As also the conspiracy of the imperialists to split the motherland. Now that the worst was over, he concluded, there would be no oppression of one nationality by another. And Tibet and China would "live like brothers".

By enforcing the Agreement immediately after signature, the Chinese had refused to wait for such diplomatic niceties as Tibetan ratification of its terms or their own for that matter; their principal objective, it would appear, was to score a major propaganda victory. And this they did. It should also be clear that there was little that the Tibetan delegation in faraway Beijing, or even the run-away Tibetan government, now ensconced across the

<sup>317</sup> Loc cit

<sup>318</sup> Article 6 of the Agreement. For the text see Appendix 6.

<sup>319</sup> C Sen, *Tibet Disappears*, Bombay, 1960, p. 78.

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a few brigand nomads may be met. It is essential that no publicity should be given to the movements of this party; and that has been impressed on the Tibetan Government.

3. The Tibetan Government have refused permission to Mr. Trumbull, Delhi correspondent of the New York Times and to Mr. Steele, correspondent of the New York Herald Tribune, who has been in Tibet before to visit Lhasa at present.

4. The Government of the U.S.A. have thanked the Tibetan Government for permitting American missionaries in the Sino Tibetan border territory to travel through Tibet on route for Burma.

## II DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

1. The Tibetan Government are reported to have taken action to discourage possible Communist infiltration into Tashilhunpo (see I.B.4 above) by searching the quarters of monks about whom they had suspicions.

2. Ngapho Tsipen has been appointed additional Shap-pe and will relieve Lhalu Shap-pe as Commissioner in Kham this year. This change is generally welcomed as Lhalu, although he made a good start, is said to have become careless.

3. About 1200 recruits for a new regiment have arrived in Lhasa recently.

4. Increased rates of pay have been sanctioned for the Tibetan Army. Each man will receive an additional money payment of about Rs.8/- per month.

5. There is some talk of improving the standard of living by bringing empty land under cultivation and letting it to landless persons on low rents; but so far nothing practical has been done.

6. There are some signs of attempts by villagers to put pressure on the Government by sending deputations to Lhasa to complain of the local administration. The Tibetan Government is taking this seriously but want to avoid increasing the flow of complaints by making any great concessions.

7. Two broadcast statements have been made from Lhasa during the month under report. One contrasted the troubles in the rest of the world with the peace prevailing in Tibet and gave the credit of this to the fact that Tibet is ruled by religion. This statement was made in Tibetan and English by a Tibetan official. The second statement explained the Tibetan Government's attitude towards the Panchen Rimpchhe candidate whom the Chinese treat as the true Panchen Rimpchhe. It stressed that all Panchen Rimpchhes were selected at Lhasa with traditional Tibetan ceremonies and that no candidate could be recognised until these formalities had been fulfilled. The statement avoids any provocative remarks about the Chinese.

8. A number of very skilfully forged notes of 100 sungs (about Rs.20/-) have been found in Lhasa. The Tibetan Government are investigating.

9. An outbreak of smallpox is feared and the Tibetan Government have asked for vaccine to be secured from India.

10. The Monlam passed peacefully and the Tsomchen has begun in a quiet way. There are fewer monks attending than usual.

## III. ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

The exchange rate has fluctuated mildly between 4 sungs 5 zhokengs and 4 sungs 7 zhokengs. Normally it might be expected to fall when the price of Tibetan wool is as high as it is at present; but the Tibetan Government's need for Indian currency may have a part in keeping the exchange rate high. Tibetans are probably acquiring Indian currency against

*Document 14 / Excerpt from 1998, April 1950  
(Courtesy British Library)*

Sikkim border within an earshot of India, could really do to restrain the Chinese. Not unexpectedly, even as Beijing broadcast the news of the Agreement, the Dalai Lama and his ministers were in for "a terrible shock". Its terms were, the Lama noted, "far worse and more oppressive" than what he and his ministers had anticipated. Besides, it was clear that their outer facade of "negotiations" and "mutual consultation" notwithstanding, the contents of the agreement were no whit different from what the Chinese had broadly proclaimed in the wake of their military victory at Chamdo in October 1950<sup>320</sup>.

On two counts, both the Lama and his government were strongly persuaded. To start with, that Ngabo and his colleagues in the Tibetan delegation, had been held as "virtual prisoners" in Beijing and yielded ground, under duress, to sign on the dotted line. Again, resting on the assumption that Tibet was "a part of China", the preamble and much else that followed was tantamount to a complete travesty of truth. This was especially so in regard to such statements as imperialist forces having penetrated into China and Tibet had carried out "all kinds of deceptions and provocations." And that the PLA had marched in to eliminate their "evil designs" and free the Tibetan people so as to return them to the "big family" of the great Motherland (viz, the People's Republic of China).<sup>321</sup>

There were promises galore. That Tibet's existing political system would stay put; that its people's religious beliefs, customs and habits would be protected, as also their much-cherished gompas ; that the country's agriculture would be developed and the people's standard of living raised. At the receiving end, and virtually helpless, all that the Lama and his government could hope for was that the Chinese would keep their side of "this forced, one-sided bargain."<sup>322</sup>

## Lhasa vis-a-vis Tashilhunpo

In the first decade of Chinese rule in Tibet, two trends appeared to be quite pronounced. To start with, a determined, if deliberate, attempt to undermine Lhasa's distinct identity, and preponderance, by building up to a near-equal status the regimes based at Chamdo in the east and at Shigatse to the south and the west. In the process, the Dalai Lama's hitherto higher, superior, position was sought to be pulled down a notch or two. And that of the Panchen pushed up- at Lhasa's expense.

The upshot of downgrading the Dalai Lama and his government's hitherto unchallenged supremacy in all matters, at once lay as well as spiritual, was to keep alive the flames of mutual jealousy and discord between Lhasa and Shigatse which had sadly persisted over the preceding decades. To nobody's surprise, Beijing was now engaged in a sustained effort to ensure that its game plan of *divide et impera* succeeded. And, in the bargain, enhanced its own power and prestige at the two Lamas' expense.

It may be recalled that Art 5 of the May 1951 agreement envisaged the early restoration, within his birthright, of the Panchen Lama who had thrown in his lot with the Chinese. This was a direct result of his predecessor's flight from Tibet and the near-usurpation of his domain by the then Tibetan government in Lhasa. The latter had now been forced to agree that "the established status, functions and powers" of the Panchen

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<sup>320</sup> Tsering Shakya. op cit, p. 71.

<sup>321</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), pp. 80-82

<sup>322</sup> *Loc. cit.*

Ngoerhtehni "shall be" maintained. The article that followed clarified the position further; it stipulated the restoration of the status quo as it obtained when the two Lamas had acted as official leaders of the lamaist church.<sup>323</sup>

It is hardly necessary to underline the fact that the Dalai Lama-Panchen Lama feud had served to provide first the Guomindang regime, and later its Communist successors, with a ready to hand weapon for use against the authority of Lhasa. And that both the 9th Panchen Lama and later his youthful reincarnation, the 10th, were only too eager to recover their birthright. Sadly for the latter, the former died (1937) without achieving his objective. The new Panchen Lama, "discovered and installed" by his Chinese masters, and now fully entrenched with his corpus of advisors on Chinese soil, offered Beijing's new masters - even as his predecessor had its old rulers- on a platter as it were, potentially perhaps the most effective instrument to help further their claims against the central Tibetan government.

For Beijing's new rulers, from the very outset it would appear, at the heart of their entire policy vis-a-vis Tibet lay the determination to redefine the concept of the so-called "Local Government of Tibet". It was the "other party" officially so designated in the 1951 agreement, with regard to whom Beijing had legally assumed obligations therein. The latter therefore started, as has been briefly noticed in a preceding paragraph, by dividing Tibet as a jural entity into three separate and, for all practical purposes equal, and independent, territorial units. There was Central Tibet, ruled by the Dalai Lama, at Lhasa; the separate, if smaller, jurisdiction of the Panchen Lama at Tashilhunpo, in the Shigatse district; and finally, the special province of Chamdo. Needless to add there was no historical evidence to support this division. Nonetheless it served admirably to achieve Beijing's real intent which was to promote its own ultimate control over the three competing components. And, in the process, relegate the Lhasa government to a position where it stood simply on a par with the two other regional administrations. Its jurisdiction, now strictly confined to central Tibet.

While Beijing's *de facto* partitioning of Tibet, as outlined above, may have been totally unprecedented, if illegitimate, the subterfuge proved fully effective. And whether legal or otherwise, contributed appreciably towards a reasonably effective consolidation of Chinese control over the newly won land.

To start with, Chamdo, the natural gateway from the Tibetan highlands to China, was earmarked for a much closer integration with the mainland than with the rest of the country. In January 1951, a so-called Chamdo Liberation Committee was established with headquarters at Chamdo and formally endowed with powers to administer the area. At its head was placed Kalon Ngabo, the Dalai Lama's former governor of Kham and commander of the ill-fated Tibetan troops on the eastern frontier. Fully restored to his civilian title and functions, Ngabo was no longer even pretending to act as the Dalai Lama's nominee. For his "Administrative Council" maintained direct contact with Beijing and decided all local issues without even the affectation, or formality of a reference to Lhasa.

Developments at Shigatse ran along a parallel course. All the same, in sharp contrast to Chamdo, Chinese influence at Shigatse was extended indirectly and with greater sophistication, if also circumspection. For even though the Panchen could be personally depended upon, the ground reality in and around Tashilhunpo needed to be savoured. And tested.

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<sup>323</sup> For the text of the May 1951 Agreement, see Appendix 6.

Two factors helped. One, the traditional rivalry between the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama, and their respective entourages, was made to reappear, sharpen, and even accentuate. At the same time, the Panchen Lama, forced to lean on Communist Chinese support in his unending, if lethal dispute with Lhasa, was keen to be elevated (and who would not?) to a status of parity with his rival. Later, the Chinese could fall back on him in settling their own scores with the master of the Potala.

A few details need to be filled in here. To start with, Che Jigme and Talama, the Panchen's principal aides who had earlier arrived in Lhasa in the train of the first PLA units, left the Tibetan capital for Shigatse on 7 February (1952) while their master was still en route to Lhasa. Among the Chinese top brass, preparations were now afoot to accord the Lama a grand reception. Inter alia, he was to stay in a room in the Lhasa cathedral "especially prepared" for him<sup>324</sup>.

Strongly persuaded that the Panchen's presence would turn the scales in favour of their cause, the Chinese had been not a little concerned about the Lama's somewhat slow progress on his journey. As a matter of fact, his escort had found the crossing of Nagchhuka a hard nut to crack while the Tangla was blocked by snow.<sup>325</sup> Was it any wonder then that the Panchen was tarrying along longer than expected?

Meantime reports from Shigatse spoke of the high-handedness of the Panchen Lama's personal staff- Che Jigme, Talama, Rimshei- who were forcing certain habitual dwellers of Tashilhunpo out of their living quarters. And threatening them with dire consequences such as dispatching them to China for "re-education" - should the old timers resist the dictates of the new comers.<sup>326</sup>

The Panchen himself arrived in Lhasa on 28 April being "enthusiastically" received by the Chinese while the Tibetans are said to have welcomed him in the "correct traditional" style.

On the morrow of the Panchen's arrival, the Chinese approached the Dalai Lama with the request that the abbot of Tashilhunpo be excused from the ceremony of prostrating himself before the high priest, but elicited no support. "Not even" with their own protege, Ngapho. This "outlandish" Panchen, the Indian mission in the Tibetan capital informed its political bosses in New Delhi, was not exactly popular, being the target of popular ridicule. His detractors insisted that he wagged a tongue "few could understand"; more, he looked "older than he should". The Monthly Report suggested that his "glory" in his own country had been much "too short-lived."<sup>327</sup>

That the Panchen's homecoming was not exactly to the liking of many people may be gauged from the lines of a popular Lhasa street song that found wide acceptability:

We won't see, won't see  
 Won't see the Chinese Panchen  
 Panchen be not angry, please  
 We don't want your blessings.

Why give up the golden mushroom (growing) on our  
 Hillside, and pick the white (mushroom)

<sup>324</sup> IMMR, 15 December 1951, *PRO*, FO 371/99659

<sup>325</sup> IMMR, 16 March 1952, in *Ibid*

<sup>326</sup> IMMR, dated 16 April 1952, in *Ibid*

<sup>327</sup> IMMR, dated 16 May 1952, in *Ibid*

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attending school. The school in Lhasa has not evoked popular enthusiasm. It caused distress and consternation among Tibetan parents who hastened to buy their children monastic outfits and pack them off to the relative safety of monasteries and nunneries. To relieve popular anxiety about the school, the Chinese issued a notice assuring parents that they had the option of not sending their children to school.

Incidentally, the present Director of the Chinese Bureau of Propaganda is A. Lo, who is shrewd and efficient but has not much culture or education in the formal sense.

While on the subject of Chinese propaganda, a word may be said about Tibetan counter-propaganda which runs on the usual religious lines. From 6th - 8th June, His Holiness called the faithful to a 3-day "Kashho" ceremony during which he preached sermons and read texts from the scripture "Lamrin". According to our reports, public response to the Dalai Lama's call was most encouraging.

Chinese anxiety over the transport of food grains through India to Tibet became even more acute during the month, despite the Government of India's decision to allow these supplies to pass through. Evidently the Chinese were not happy to leave transport arrangements in Indian territory entirely to Indians, and so they got up a delegation of 3 men, viz. Wu Li-ping (leader), Wang Wei-tu (Secretary) and Chao Jui-kwang (Attache) to visit New Delhi "for negotiations on the problem of food transportation from India to Tibet". These men are said to be on the staff of a mysterious "National Tibetan Trading Company". However, under instructions from the Government of India official entry visas were issued on 17th June to the 3 delegates for 3 months' stay in India.

Incidentally, the Chinese asked me to give Mr. Wu Li-ping a letter of introduction to our authorities, but when I asked to see Mr. Wu before giving him the letter, they told me he was "somewhere near Gyantse". Only a day earlier, they told me that he was in Lhasa. Anyhow I did not give the letter of introduction, despite a good deal of wheedling.

Obviously to facilitate the despatch of food supplies to Tibet, the Chinese sent Yin Fa-tang, Political Commissary of the 52nd Division of the Chinese Army, to Gyantse to supervise the construction of a notable road from Gyantse to Nathu la. A similar road is now under construction from Cinawa to Lhasa with hired Tibetan labour.

It is not fortuitously that Tibetans dubbed the Panchen Rinpoche as the "Chinese Panchen"; while in Lhasa, he placed himself entirely in the hands of his Chinese patrons who assumed full responsibility for his welfare and safety. Visitors called on him with Chinese permission.

Apparently the Chinese will not tolerate a situation where the Panchen is weak, made subordinate to the Dalai Lama and controlled by Lhasa; they are bent on resuscitating a Panchen who will be one of the two religious potentates of Tibet with extensive authority and power of his own. To this end they have set about energetically to restore and rehabilitate the fortunes which the late Panchen left in Tibet, and which will now belong to the Chinese protect. Under pressure from the Chinese a Joint Committee of Lhasa and Tashilhunpo officials has been set up to consider, among other things, the extent of the assets left in Tibet by the late Panchen, the restoration of such properties as were confiscated from officials who fled to China in the train of the late Panchen, the amount of tax to be levied hereafter by the Tibetan Government on Tashilhunpo estates, and the grant of a loan to Tashilhunpo for the repayment of debts incurred by the Panchen Rinpoche in China and the rehabilitation of Tashilhunpo estates.

The Panchen himself claims, on the basis of a deed granted by the Seventh Dalai Lama, that Lhasa has no right to levy taxes on Tashilhunpo estates. It will be recalled that this favour which was granted by

Document 15/ Excerpt from 1952, June 1952  
(Courtesy British Library)

### Why forsake the Dalai Lama

#### What have we got to do with a Chinese Lama?<sup>328</sup>

Lhasa reports suggested that Tibetans dubbed the Panchen Rimpoche a "Chinese Lama" for other things apart while in the capital, he "placed (himself) entirely" in the hands of his Chinese patrons. Even to the extent that visitors called on him only after the requisite "permission" from the Chinese.

Beijing's game plan was simple. It did not want a Panchen who was a "weak subordinate" of the Dalai Lama but one with "executive authority and power" of his own. Presently, "under pressure" from the Chinese, a joint committee of Lhasa and Tashilhunpo officials was constituted which, among other things was to consider (a) the assets left in Tibet by the late (i.e. 9th) Panchen Lama; (b) restoration of such confiscated properties belonging to officials who fled to China in the train of the late Panchen Lama; c) the quantum of taxation to be levied hereafter by the Tibetan government on Tashilhunpo estates; (d) grant of a loan to Tashilhunpo for the repayment of debts incurred by the Panchen in China; and e) rehabilitation of Tashilhunpo estates.<sup>329</sup>

The much-touted, high profile installation ceremony of the Panchen took place at Shigatse "on or about" the 30<sup>th</sup> of June (1952). To mark the occasion, the Tibetan government granted him a rehabilitation loan of 60,000 dotse, approximating to Rs 500,000 in cash and 20,000 khes in grain. It was stressed that another loan was "under consideration."<sup>330</sup>

## The Dalai Lama versus the Panchen Lama

Here it is necessary to recall that for most Tibetans, the two Lamas stand at the apex of the monastic pyramid. With the Panchen Lama assigned, according to the pundits, and the purists, a degree of spiritual precedence in dogma; a technicality with little or no practical effect. On the other hand, in the realm of lay authority, the Dalai Lama's powers were paramount even though their actual exercise was very materially modified by the ground realities of Tibet's feudal mode of living.

Again, as to the Panchen Lama's territorial estate, a number of districts in the province of Tsang were held in fief by him personally. While numerous others were attached to the corporate body of the monastery, of which the Panchen acted as the religious, and administrative, head. These estates, earmarked for furnishing the inmates of Tashilhunpo with their basic means of sustenance, were managed by the Panchen's own staff. The arrangement was by no means unique to the Panchen's estates; it was, in fact, common to all major and important feudal estates.

It may be of interest to note here that the unusually large size of Tashilhunpo's land endowment, with a correspondingly impressive number of serfs, and the affluence of its treasury, necessitated that the administrative organization, responsible to the Panchen Lama, for the management of his properties be much more elaborate than what obtained on other private, or semi-private, estates. Again, because of the Panchen's spiritual

<sup>328</sup> *Supra*, n. 324

<sup>329</sup> IMMR, dated 16 June 1952, in *Ibid*

<sup>330</sup> IMMR, dated 16 July 1952, in *Ibid*



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together and pressed Ragashar to accept the post. This is interesting because among the Shapas, Ragashar still maintains, albeit precariously, a reputation which is both high and untarnished. A similar situation arose when the time came to decide which of the Shapas should represent the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government at the Panchen's installation ceremony at Shigatse. Once again the Shapas pressed Ragashar to perform the duty; but His Holiness decided otherwise and firmly ordered Kampa Kulon Lama to prepare for the journey.

While the Kashag is powerless and ineffective, the Foreign Bureau has practically gone out of existence. The Lay Foreign Secretary (Surkhung Dzasu) is dead and the Monk Foreign Secretary is on long leave. The office itself has been left in the charge of a junior monk official.

The situation here sadly reminds one of the last days of the Kuomintang in China.

Cyalo Dhondup found his presence in Tibet a source of embarrassment to his family. He told me that the Chinese were trying to use him against his brother, the Dalai Lama. In the circumstances, he felt that it would be advisable for him to escape. He fully realizes the risks involved but has carefully laid his plans with the active help and support of the Dalai Lama. For some time before he left Lhasa, he was going round inspecting the Dalai Lama's outposts and the Chinese did not raise objections. It happens that the Dalai Lama has an outpost at Chayul which is close to Towang. So Cyalo went on a tour of inspection at Chayul with the hope that he would be able to take the Chinese unawares and slip into India. Meanwhile, if and when the Chinese get to know of his escape, the Dalai Lama would express surprise and say that his brother Cyalo Dhondup has always been an irresponsible nonad.

Prior to his departure, Cyalo assured us that he would not make either Darjeeling or Kalimpong his headquarters in India and that he would scrupulously avoid involvement in politics.

The Panchen left Lhasa on 9th June for his installation ceremony at Shigatse. He is expected to return here in time for the opening of the Administrative and Military Committee. This Committee for which provision was made in the terms of the Peking Agreement will meet in a building which is still under construction inside the compound of Juthek House, which is General Chang Ching-wu's headquarters in Lhasa. General Chang can in fact watch the proceedings of the Committee from his drawing-room window.

#### ECONOMIC

A Chinese-sponsored Tibetan Trade Mission consisting of Lo Gedun Sadutsang and Kusho Goshumpa left Lhasa for Peking on 18th May. It was reported from Gyantse that three Chinese officials were accompanying the Tibetan delegates. It is likely that two of these three Chinese officials belong to the party which is proceeding to Delhi to discuss the problem of transporting food grains to Tibet.

Sg: S. SINGH

Officer-in-Charge

Document 16. Excerpt from IMMR, June 1952  
(Courtesy British Library)

eminence, a formal retinue and an official court, including a council of advisors, vaguely reminiscent of the Lhasa cabinet, accompanied him wherever he went. And publicly attended on his person in a miniature replica of the spiritual companions, and aura, of the Dalai Lama. Again, in view of the prestige enjoyed by the Panchen Lama, the central Tibetan authorities would ordinarily refrain from interfering in his internal matters concerning such administrative details as fell within his jurisdiction.

To say all this is not to unsay that the Panchen Lama was not the secular equal of the Dalai Lama. Nor, even in a technical sense, an independent ruler in his own realm, to say nothing of being a pretender to the Dalai Lama's throne at the Potala. The harsh truth is that in the Shigatse area itself, a number of districts formed part of the Dalai Lama's domain and fell exclusively under Lhasa's jurisdiction. In the event, the Tibetan government posted provincial governors at Shigatse who administered the region in its name. And at the same time coordinated their actions with the Panchen Lama and secured his assent to such policies as might affect his sphere of influence and authority. It should follow that for the smooth functioning of the Panchen Lama's executive authority in his own domain, a measure of coordination, and cooperation, with Lhasa was called for. The reverse may be viewed as equally valid: a modicum of understanding with the Panchen and his officials would smoothen the task of Lhasa's officials posted in the Shigatse area.

With Tibet's "liberation" in 1951 started what may best be described as years of "uneasy co-existence" between the marching PLA and its cadres and a resentful Lhasa administration of the Dalai Lama increasingly driven into difficult - and, often times, unsavoury- compromises.

To start with, it bears emphasis that the Maoist approach, as indeed that of Chiang's Guomindang regime before him, rested on an unabashedly uncompromising Chinese nationalism; in the unshaken belief that the territorial limits of traditional China lay, across Tibet, in the foothills of the Himalayas. Happily for all concerned, earlier Chinese rulers - and the Qing- had been content with territorial claims on Tibet through a symbolic presence; that of the Amban or a nondescript Chinese functionary who, for most part, viewed his job as a punishment. Their brief tenures - there were seventy-eight of them in a little over hundred odd years (c. 1792-1912)- more symbolic, than real. In sharp contrast, the enthusiastic if overzealous PLA and its cadres saw themselves as instruments for transforming the land of the lama over-night as it were into a socialist paradise.

For an unexpectedly large number of Chinese cadres, a major problem at the very outset was that of logistics: stationing, housing, and feeding, of thousands of PLA personnel who arrived with their uncouth armies of ponies, yaks, camels- whatever. This unwelcome mass of humanity, and denizens of the animal kingdom, was enough to ruin Tibet's hitherto fragile, barely subsistence-level economy. Inevitably, it were the poor who suffered most, with their already meagre share of food, and daily necessities, ruthlessly whittled down, if not virtually disappearing.

Like all good propaganda, the Chinese was multi-pronged. For the rural masses it were the song and dance troupes; for the Lhasa/Shigatse urbanites, newsreel films. Invariably of the communist war, and victories, against the Japanese and the Guomindang. There was also large scale induction into the economy of the Chamdo minted silver yuan.

## Beijing gains the upper hand

To no one's surprise, before long top Chinese officials came into a head-on clash with Tibet's lay and spiritual prime ministers, Lukhangwa (Tsewang Rapten) and Lobsang Tashi. To start with, both of them stood their ground, as indeed did the Kashag. And refused to be browbeaten into submission. No wonder, for their people, both Lukhangwa and Tashi emerged as virtual folk heroes. However, even as their own people overwhelmingly approved of their conduct in government they became correspondingly unacceptable to the Chinese. Who viewed them as obstacles if not a major hindrance to their singular objective of integrating Tibet into the larger whole of the great motherland.

In February 1952 Beijing announced the establishment of its Military Area Headquarters in Lhasa with the appointment of General Chan Guohua as commander-in-chief and Raghavar and Ngabo Shaps as vice commanders. The event was to mark the consolidation of the Chinese Liberation Army with the "local army" of Tibet into a "joint" fighting force. The Chinese general availed himself of the opportunity to proclaim that dissensions between the Dalai and the Panchen Lamas were now "bad memories" of the past. And that the "grace" of Chairman Mao had helped to restore "normal friendly relations" between the two<sup>331</sup>.

In the initial stages, opposition to Chinese rule manifested itself in various ways. Since a large Chinese influx meant sky-rocketing consumer prices and lack of availability of essential items, hardly anyone could have remained unconcerned. By early 1952, astute observers of the Lhasa social scene noted that the economic situation in the country was steadily deteriorating; that goods were "scarce and expensive"; that meat and butter were available "only at fancy prices." The Chinese, flush with money, were the "best customers" for these commodities and "did not bargain" but paid "what is asked of them."<sup>332</sup>

Partly to protest against these "disastrous" economic trends and discuss measures to halt a fast deteriorating situation, villagers all the way from Lhasa to Chushul held meetings of their village assemblies in the months of February and March (1952). More, "perhaps inspired by monks", they decided to draw up a memorandum of sorts for the Tibetan government. Presented to the Kashag on 31 March, it appealed to the authorities to prevail upon the Chinese "to withdraw" most of their troops, leaving behind "only a small force". While returning, the villagers are said to have left behind three of their representatives at Lhasa to pursue matters. Their demands, "primarily economic", observers noted, touched on the political insofar as the withdrawal of Chinese troops was concerned.

Almost synchronizing with the petition to the Kashag, the Chinese revealed that on the night of 1 April, Tibetan "rebels" armed with rifles raided the house of Ngabo Shape. Engaged by his Chinese guards, three of them were allegedly overpowered. Visibly outraged and in high dudgeon, the Chinese charged that a mass organization "led and inspired" by "imperialist agents and certain officials" had surfaced. And was directed against them.

The Chinese account was at considerable variance with the Tibetan version. The latter revealed that some interlopers from the neighbourhood had barged into the Shape's vegetable garden had been caught in the act of stealing; nothing more nothing less. On the

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<sup>331</sup> IMMR, dated 16 February 1952, in *PRO, FO*, 371/99659

<sup>332</sup> *Loc cit*

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however, received some comfort from the Chinese assurance that rice supplies for the Liberation Army in Tibet would soon be coming from the province of Kwantung via India. The garrison in the Chumbi valley would be charged with the task of handling the onward transport of rice from Yatung to other centres where Liberation troops are stationed.

14 It appears that the Chinese have concentrated about 2,000 men in the Kongbo area, and despite the discomfort this has been causing to the local people, they are not willing to withdraw them. These men, according to the Chinese, will start building a road between Giamda and Lhasa early in Summer.

15 There is a daily 2-way traffic of Chinese troops from Lhasa to Chunsul. The reason for this traffic is not known. It was reported from Gyantse recently that some troops left the station for Lhasa.

16 Precautions have been taken to defend all buildings occupied by the Chinese during the turbulent Monlam period (Tibetan New Year celebrations) when monks from the three large monasteries will flood the town. Sandbag and stone parapets have been built on rooftops where sentries maintain a round-the-clock vigil.

17 Meanwhile the Chinese are harassing people found loitering in town during curfew hours. Some Tibetans who were caught were kept under detention for a number of days.

18 Tashilhunpo officials, Cho Jigmo and the Talama, left for Shigatse on 7th February. They were seen off by General Chang Ching-wu and other high Chinese officials.

19 The Panchen Rinpoche is still en route to Lhasa. On arrival he will stay in a room in the Lhasa Cathedral which has been specially prepared to receive the distinguished guest. General Chang told me that the Panchen Lama's arrival in Lhasa would synchronise with important developments.

20 During the month Chinese officials were engaged in the drive against corruption, bribery and waste of public funds (San Fan). While high officials like General Chang Ching-wu confessed their crimes, others had to undergo close interrogation. The significance of the drive was explained to the men at meetings addressed by high officials. General Chang is said to have confessed that he wasted large sums of public money in entertaining the officials of Lhasa, but Peking regarded his confession as irrelevant and accused him of buying a gold wrist watch for Rs. 4,000/-.

21 It is indeed strange that the Chinese, who have taken on the onerous task of liberating Tibet and who are doing everything conceivable to unify Tibet with China, should be assuring Tibetans that their stay in Tibet will not be longer than is absolutely necessary. They say they have come with the object of creating a strong and self-reliant Tibet. As soon as they achieve their objective they will leave the country. This mood of self-abnegation among the Chinese has had the effect of cheering some of the Tibetans.

22 At Gyantse the Chinese kept up the fun-fair atmosphere as they continued to entertain the local populace with dance performances and stage shows. These performances were not unlike those staged in Lhasa. Already the Chinese are looking out for a site to construct permanent barracks for the Gyantse garrison.

INTERNAL:

23 The Chikyap Khempo, Ngawang Namgyal, resigned on 21st January. As the ex-regent's pet, he was a highly unpopular man during his

/tenuro

Document 17 / Excerpt from IMMR, June 1952  
(Courtesy British Library)

face of it, the Chinese had "invented" the story with mischievous intent. And, as may be apparent, used it as a plausible excuse for breaking the backbone of the "seething discontent" which was fast spreading among a large section of the Tibetan people.

Not unexpectedly, the Chinese were unstoppable. Following the "incident" they summoned the two Tibetan prime ministers and "for hours threatened, abused and bullied" them. More, the Kashag were warned that if they "failed" to restore "normal conditions" and brought the "rebels" to book, the "liberation" of Tibet would no longer be achieved through peaceful means- but by "force."

Keen observers of the Lhasa political landscape viewed this "fake" incident of 1 April as a benchmark for Chinese policy in Tibet. A precursor to the arrival of the "iconoclast" Panchen, the incident was to mark a dogged determination on their part "to turn into rubble" the "anachronistic" men and institutions of Tibet. In the event, "stubborn" efforts were mounted to "implicate" the lay prime minister Lkhangwa in the village protest movement.<sup>333</sup>

Understandably, pressure was mounted on the Dalai Lama too to relieve his two prime ministers. They were dubbed anti-national, believed in Tibet's independence (! How dare they?); blindly pursued a policy of rigid opposition to the Chinese and gave aid and comfort to the village rebels with whom they had "furtive relations." Not unexpectedly, they stood condemned even without the fig leaf of a hearing, much less the "formality" of an enquiry or trial.

For days to come, the highest in the land- the Kashag, the abbots of Sera, Drepung and Ganden- went a-begging to the Chinese commander for compassion. And for a whole day, Chinese gunmen faced the living quarters in the Potala which the Dalai Lama was occupying for the moment. Up against this "steady and unrelenting pressure of the cloak and dagger type", the Dalai Lama was left with little if any choice in the matter.<sup>334</sup>

Nor was that all. For the Chinese commander had delivered a personal threat to the Dalai Lama who, he alleged, had "aided and abetted" the two prime ministers in their stubborn opposition to the progressive forces of Tibet's "liberation".

By a strange coincidence the prime ministers were relieved a bare 24 hours prior to the arrival of the Panchen Lama in Lhasa! Earlier, sometime in February (1952), General Chang had confided in the Indian official in charge of the Mission in the Tibetan capital that the Panchen's arrival would "synchronise with important developments."

The end-result of the two prime ministers' departure, the Indian official noted, was not without significance. In the aftermath, he confided in his political superiors that the then Tibetan government

resembles an army which has lost all its generals after a series of tactical defeats in the field; they are leaderless, without morale and rapidly disintegrating.

The fact was, he elaborated further that the "little Kashag", a small coterie with Ngabo in the lead, had become "a willing instrument" of the Chinese. And the rump, with "divergent views and incompatible interests", somehow managed to carry on- "skirting and shifting" responsibility.

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<sup>333</sup> IMMR, dated 16 April 1952, in *Ibid*

<sup>334</sup> IMMR, dated 16 May 1952, in *Ibid*.

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tenure of office as Chief of the Ecclesiastical Department. The Dalai Lama will personally select a successor to him from a list of names submitted by the Yiktsang.

19 The death occurred on 26th January of ex-Rogent, Takta Rimpoche, at his monastery after a short illness. There was no official mourning.

25 Surkhang Shape, who went on 6 months' leave in August last, returned to Lhasa on 11th February.

26 For reasons not quite obvious, Ngapho made the startling proposal that a Commission should be set up to enquire into the conduct of certain Shaps during the critical days of November/December, 1950. Although the proposal has been approved by the National Assembly, there does not seem to be much enthusiasm over it. The man who is most likely to come under censure if the enquiry takes place is Lhalu Shap, but Lhalu has enough resources and power to silence his critics.

27 For the benefit of the poor in Lhasa, Tibetan Government are selling brick and paid tea at cheap rates from Government stocks.

28 The Dalai Lama seems to be keen on buying a 3-seater car and 10 motor cycles for use in Lhasa. Nishi Pangdatsang, Tibetan Trade Agent at Yining, who is in Kalimpong, has been asked to make enquiries about the cost and to report to Lhasa. One wonders if the Dalai Lama's latest fad has been inspired by the arrival of Chinese jeeps in Lhasa.

29 The Gyayun (Dalai Lama's mother) is said to be returning to Lhasa along with Gyalo Dondup and his family sometime in March.

#### ECONOMIC

30 The economic situation seems to be steadily deteriorating. Goods are scarce and expensive. Meat and butter are available only at fancy prices and the Chinese are the best customers. They do not bargain; they pay what is asked of them. The rupee fetched 5 Sangs and 4 Shokangs in mid-February in the market, although the People's Bank of China has not changed its rate which is still at 5 Sangs to the rupee.

31 The Maharaja of Bhutan's sister, Ache Wengmo, passed through Trizam (near Lhasa) for Tsibu monastery on 21st January. She is staying in the monastery.

Sgd: S. Sirha  
Officer in Charge.

*Document 16 / Excerpt from MMR, February 1952  
(Courtesy British Library)*

Nor was that all. For while the Kashag was "powerless and ineffective", the Tibetan Foreign Bureau had "practically" gone out of existence. The situation, the Indian official who had earlier a long innings in Chiang Kai-shek's China confessed, reminded him of "the last days" of the Guomindang.<sup>335</sup>

And all this within a year of the signing of the May 1951 with its solemn pledges "not (to) alter the existing political system in Tibet" nor yet the "established status, functions and powers" of the Dalai Lama! There had also been the additional commitment that "officials of the various ranks shall hold office as usual".<sup>336</sup>

The issue of the prime ministers was not the only one on which the Dalai Lama and the Kashag yielded ground. For they also caved in on the question of disbanding the Mimang Thutsog (literally, peoples' representatives), a popular movement that had emerged almost spontaneously without any known deliberate or organized effort. For the record, of the two prime ministers, Lakhangwa (died February 1966), fearing for the worst, sought refuge, across the Indian border, in Kalimpong while Lobsang Tashi reverted to his monastic duties.

As may be obvious from the preceding paragraphs, with the Panchen's return to Shigatse, within a little over a year of the May 1951 agreement, Beijing had been able to establish effective authority while the Tibetan government was seen floundering; virtually lacking in direction and leadership. To showcase the Chinese achievement and nothing could score more powerful propaganda points- large numbers of Tibetans were invited to visit the mainland with its booming cities and busy factories. While with its small population, an economically weak and culturally backward Tibet was to be unduly impressed by all that it saw by way of rapid development. And the added assurance that the Chinese stood for national unity and would neither oppress the Tibetan people, nor yet exploit their weaknesses.

All this while Beijing mounted a concerted drive to downsize India which over the years had come to control almost 70 per cent of Tibet's trade while the mainland accounted for less than 20 per cent. A staple of Tibet's trade, it may be recalled, was wool, the country's major export. By cornering most of it, the Chinese overnight as it were took over control and almost effortlessly ended the alleged Indian, and Nepalese, "stranglehold" over Tibet's economy. Nor was that all. Gradually, the Chinese made the Tibetan army and Lhasa's foreign bureau- both established by the 13th Dalai Lama- virtually toothless, if also irrelevant. There was, they argued, no need for either. In the event, Indian as well as Nepalese nationals were asked to report to the newly established Chinese foreign office (now staffed by Chinese members of the old Tibetan foreign bureau). For relations with India and Nepal, it was pointed out, were now conducted from Beijing, not Lhasa. Cleverly, if also tactfully, the Chinese, co-opted most Tibetan officials working in these offices into their new governing structure.

It should follow that the Tibetan government soon became well-nigh superfluous, if also redundant. As noted above, the Indian official in Lhasa, an astute observer of the contemporary scene, had suggested that the Dalai Lama's administration resembled an army which had lost all its generals after a series of tactical defeats in the field. It was practically leaderless, its morale pretty low. Above all, it was rapidly disintegrating. Among the

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<sup>335</sup> IMMR, dated 16 June 1952, in *Ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> For the text of the agreement see Appendix VI

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From: The Officer in Charge, Indian Mission,  
Lhasa, P.O. Gyantse, Tibet.

To: The Political Officer in Sikkim,  
Gangtok, Sikkim.

Memorandum No. X(10)-L/52

Dated: Lhasa, Tibet, the 16th May, 1952

Monthly report for the period ending 15th May, 1952

EXTERNAL

Sino-Tibetan Relations

Following the shooting affray on the night of 1st April near Ngapho's house, the Chinese launched a frontal attack on the two Prime Ministers of Tibet behind whom the Tibetan Government and the Dalai Lama had comfortably hedged themselves. The Prime Ministers were accused of a number of crimes: they were anti-national, they held treasonable views inasmuch as they continued to believe in the independence of Tibet, they blindly pursued a policy of rigid opposition to the Chinese disregarding the true interests of Tibet, and they gave aid and comfort to the village rebels with whom they had furtive relations. This formidable charge-sheet was revealed to the Kashag with the sinister comment that had the two Prime Ministers been Chinese they would have faced a shooting squad or the gallows, depending on the local convenience of one or other of the two instruments of liquidation. However, the unfortunate fact being that they were not Chinese but Tibetans, the Chinese were generously according them a chance to atone themselves from public life. Indeed sentence was passed and the Prime Ministers publicly condemned without even the formality of a hearing or an inquiry. One wonders if this is not a crude version of the system of public trials so widely practised in China. The principle underlying it seems to be that the proving of guilt depends entirely on the force with which the charges are made. The blatant ferocity with which the Chinese accused the Prime Ministers on the manner in which they carried the crusade into Government offices, monasteries and the camp, fairly left many Tibetans gasping, but none, despite the prevailing confusion and fear, gave credence to the apocalyptic denunciations. The irony of the fact is that the very reasons for which they were being accused endorsed the Prime Ministers all the more to their people. Tibetans know them for their integrity of character and devotion to duty, and will remember them long after they have departed from the political scene for the noble and courageous efforts they made to rescue the Tibetan administration from becoming a subsidiary bureau of the Chinese. Admittedly the Prime Ministers had often enough opposed Chinese guidance out of blind respect for tradition, but as it so often happened elsewhere, the external domination of their country made them political intriguers.

For days the highest in the land, the Kashag, Trungtel and the abbots of the three pillars of state, viz. Sera, Drepung and Ganden, went begging to the Chinese for compassion in dealing with the two Prime Ministers. They asked for a period of grace during which the Prime Ministers could voluntarily retire from office. Assassins and

/envoys

Document 19/ Excerpt from IMMR, May 1952  
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Kashag, the dominant tendency was to disown responsibility and "ultimately to avoid public criticism"<sup>337</sup>. As months rolled into years, the awareness about the "motherland" gained wider acceptability; it was the new Mecca for modernisation and technical advance. Tibetan aristocrats soon began sending their children to China for education - thereby demonstrating their fidelity to the new regime. As if to show his own concerns, the Dalai Lama set up a new reform office under Ngabo and Surkhang Wangchen Galek. Its major thrust, critics aver, seemed to be merely "tinkering" with the existing system and making "minor" changes. For structural changes seemed to be ruled out, if only because the religious institutions were opposed to all reform of the status quo.<sup>338</sup>

In his autobiography, the Dalai Lama underscores his concern for reforms in the domain of the judiciary, education, communications. And, above all, rural indebtedness, especially the inequity of "inheritable debt". His "main ambitions": an independent judiciary; "good" educational programmes and, to cap it all, abolition of inheritable debt. Conscious that the reforms he envisaged may not be "very popular" with the nobility or people with vested interests, he had the requisite decrees printed on wooden blocs, ordinarily used for printing scriptures. He was "determined", the Lama declares, to do all he could "to propel" Tibet into the twentieth century. His most notable achievement, the Dalai Lama was to record later, was "to abolish" the principle of hereditary debt as well as "write off" all government loans that could not be repaid<sup>339</sup>. The moot point though is not the Dalai Lama's good or honest intentions but the wherewithal he commanded to have his scheme of reforms implemented. The criticism that it was a case merely of "tinkering with" the existing system and that no "structural changes" as such were envisaged because the religious fraternity was opposed to all reform of the status quo, does not really wash. For even in the best of circumstances- and with the Red Chinese in the saddle at Lhasa, the Dalai Lama was by no means in an enviable position- social engineering or structural changes in the social setup may not have been easy to bring about anyway. Much more so in such a traditional, hidebound, conservative society as that of Tibet.

In the initial stages there was no end of enthusiasm for the Chinese way of doing things and as the monthly report of the Indian consul general in Lhasa (August 1952) testified: "the inroad of neo-Chinese culture" whether in music, ideology, dress or speech was "truly remarkable". With "not a home in Lhasa" where portraits of Mao and his colleagues did not find a place in the domestic shrine.<sup>340</sup> Dawa Norbu too has testified that after a delegation from his native Sakya returned from a visit to the mainland, it was "full of admiration" for all that they saw.<sup>341</sup>

It may be of interest to note that the Chinese Communist Party did not establish a branch in Tibet; its work there being carried out by the Tibet Work Committee and the Tibet Military Commission.

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<sup>337</sup> *Supra*, n. 335

<sup>338</sup> Shakya underlines the proposition that the few lay officials who would have welcomed the reforms were reluctant to demand change for fear they be accused of being Chinese agents. For details, *Shakya*, op cit, p. 117.

<sup>339</sup> Dalai Lama (1980), pp. 86-7.

<sup>340</sup> IMMR, dated 16 August 1952 in *PRO*, FO 371/99659.

<sup>341</sup> For details see Dawa Norbu, "Tibetan Response to Chinese Liberation", *Asian Affairs* (London), 62 (1975), pp. 266-78.

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the Seventh Dalai Lama was promptly withdrawn by the Eighth Dalai Lama, and that the Thirteenth Dalai Lama imposed higher taxes on all Tashilhunpo estates. In present circumstances, the Tibetan Government would be too happy to levy those taxes which were fixed by the Eighth Dalai Lama, ignoring the enhanced rates fixed by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama which led to the flight of the late Panchen to China. It is expected that a settlement on all the issues referred to the Joint Committee will be reached at an early date.

Even when the Chinese were busy with the Panchen, they did not lose sight of the 6 representatives of the People's Meetings (Village Assemblies), who came to Lhasa late in March to present a petition to the Kashag. They have now set up a Board of Enquiry with 2 Tibetan officials (Sambo Drasa and Khensung Lobsang Namgyal) on it to cross-examine the People's Representatives. The Board's proceedings are being closely followed by 2 Chinese officials as observers.

It is clear that the Chinese are now directing Tibetan affairs, but they are doing so through Tibetan agency. The Government of Tibet, as was feared earlier, has become a subsidiary organ of the Chinese Government.

INDIA, CHINA AND TIBET

The claims of the two Sikkim prisoners regarding their unpaid dues from the Tibetan Government has been taken up with the Tibetan Government. The matter will in due course be referred to the Chinese before a final decision is reached.

INDIA, CHINA AND TIBET

K. I. Singh and his followers arrived in Lhasa under Chinese escort sometime in the last week of May. They are being kept in strict seclusion at Pangdatsang house. Singh is reported to have launched his appeal for Chinese help on the specious ground that Americans are preparing to invade Nepal and converting the country into a base for future operations against the Chinese. He has thus emphasized the urgency of liberating Nepal. We understand that he asked for facilities to present his case personally to Mao.

The Nepalese Officer has not yet despaired of tilting his arms against windmill; he is still continuing to press for K. I. Singh's extradition. He was, however, informed by the Kashag that Chinese law does not allow the extradition of political prisoners.

A report has been received here that a hundred Chinese soldiers have been dispatched from Shigatse to Shekar Dzong.

INTERNAL

The present Tibetan Government resembles an army which has lost all its generals after a series of tactical defeats on the field; they are leaderless, without morale and rapidly disintegrating. Some time ago Lhadu Shapo was forced to resign. Now Katsap Thupton Rabyung has been allowed to go into voluntary retirement, and Katsap Tork has been granted long leave of absence on grounds of ill-health. Toubo's departure has converted the little Kashag (now with only Nyaphe and Shasur on it) into a willing instrument of the Chinese. With divergent views and incompatible interests, the 5 remaining Shapos in the Kashag manage to carry on by shirking and shifting responsibility. The dominant tendency among them is to escape responsibility, and ultimately to avoid public criticism, which, however, they are unable to do because situations which are highly embarrassing for them all. One such situation arose when the Chinese invited the Kashag to nominate one of the Shapos as Chairman of the Council of Education. None dared to accept the post and each in turn pressed a colleague to accept it. Finally a few got

/together

Document 20 / Excerpts from IMMR, June 1952  
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## India-China Agreement (1954)

Meantime the India-China agreement, officially designated, "Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India" (April 1954) created not a few ripples in the dull, humdrum life of the Tibetan capital. It was noted that both the Indian and Nepalese missions in Lhasa had hitherto enjoyed extraterritorial rights, at once a hangover from the Raj if also symbolic of the humiliation China had suffered at the hands of the Western powers. The Indian ambassador in Beijing (Sardar K M Panikkar) noted that the Premier, Zhou Enlai had "suggested" that New Delhi's "political agency" in Lhasa- which he (Panikkar) dubbed to be "an office of dubious legality"- be "regularised" by converting it into a Consulate General, in exchange for a corresponding Chinese office in Bombay.<sup>342</sup>

The agreement itself was "a major achievement" for Beijing for it "tacitly acknowledged" New Delhi's "unequivocal acceptance" of China's sovereignty over Tibet which the new compact referred to as "a region of China". Oddly, Prime Minister Nehru claimed that India had done "nothing better" in the realm of foreign policy and hailed the new arrangement as "not only good for our country but for the rest of Asia."<sup>343</sup>

Stoutly contesting arguments against a virtual "sellout" by New Delhi, Nehru's biographer (Gopal) has expressed the view that the recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet was "no new step"; in the event, the 1954 treaty involved only "a formalisation" of the developments of 1950. Again, the withdrawal of military escorts at the trade marts and the abandonment of extraterritorial privileges inherited from the British were "logical consequences" of the assertion of Chinese sovereignty in this region.<sup>344</sup> The Indian prime minister's intelligence chief has pointed out though that the "renunciation" of these rights was "not done" in favour of a "weak or friendly" Tibet but that of a "strong and belligerent" China which had not only committed aggression against the former but now held it "in a tight grip."<sup>345</sup>

Nor was that all. The people of Tibet and its government had not even been informed about the new Agreement; much less taken into confidence about its terms and conditions. Being helpless spectators to a deal which concerned them in some vital matters. In Kalimpong and Darjeeling however where the media were free to report, the emigre Tibetan population were "shocked and anguished" by the Agreement. Which they deemed an outrage and an affront, having been badly "let down" by New Delhi in whom they had reposed their utmost faith and trust. They were full of "misgivings" too. Thus, the Chinese Trade Agent to be stationed in Kalimpong, the Tibetans were strongly persuaded, would indulge in "espionage and intrigue". More, as they rightly anticipated, the entire pattern of Indo-Tibetan trade would now undergo a complete metamorphosis insofar as trade marts inside Tibet would become "ineffective" while all exchange of commodities and trade transactions would take place in Kalimpong itself.<sup>346</sup>

<sup>342</sup> K M Panikkar, *In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat*, London, 1955, p. 175.

<sup>343</sup> For a detailed discussion see "Observer" (Parshotam Mehra): "India, China & Tibet, 1950-54", *India Quarterly* (New Delhi), 12, 1, January-March 1956, pp. 3-22. Also see the same author's *Negotiating with the Chinese, 1846-1987: Problems & Perspectives*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 87-8

<sup>344</sup> S Gopal, *Nehru: A Biography*, 3 vols. New Delhi, 1977-84, II, 1979, p. 180

<sup>345</sup> B N Mullick, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*, Bombay, 1971, p. 155

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171-2.

Nonetheless Nehru's biographer heavily underlines the truism that the real difficulty about the 1954 Agreement was that the chance of securing a "clear and explicit" recognition of India's frontiers had been "lost". The fault here though lay not so much with Nehru's "unrealistic assessment" of China's "intent", much less in his "failure" to attach importance to this issue, but the fact that he had allowed his own views, and those of his senior foreign policy advisors, to be "set aside" by an overbearing ambassador. Contrary to a harsh ground reality which presently revealed itself, Nehru naively assumed that India had gained "a friendly frontier". And an "implicit acceptance" of that frontier.<sup>347</sup> More, he hoped that with the "last vestiges of suspicion" against India removed, China might adopt a reasonable attitude while Tibetan autonomy could yet be saved "in substance." And India's own interests "safeguarded."<sup>348</sup>

Nehru may have been somewhat naive in accepting Beijing's protestations at their face value but there could be little denying the Prime Minister's statement in Parliament that the 1954 Agreement was a recognition of the "existing situation" in Tibet<sup>349</sup>. For no government in China- least of all Mao's- would have accepted any dilution of its "sovereign" rights in Lhasa much less the continuation of extraterritorial privileges which the Raj had exercised for almost half a century. And had now bequeathed to its political legatees.

Apart from the principal agreement on Tibet concluded on 29 April 1954, there was also a "Trade Agreement" between New Delhi and Beijing signed later in October the same year.<sup>350</sup> It gave Beijing two important concessions: a) "reasonable facilities" for entry into the port of Calcutta and subsequent movement to Tibet, of such commercial goods as could not be obtained in India; and b) establishment of a branch of the People's Bank of China in India. The first enabled the Chinese to transport to Tibet a large volume of goods required for the maintenance of their troops (though these did not strictly fall within the purview of military supplies); the second forced Beijing's nationals to deal only with the Bank of China and thus keep many of their transactions under the wraps, secret.<sup>351</sup>

Whitehall too had felt "concerned" by the April agreement nor did New Delhi's assurance that its policy was no departure from previous practice, any comfort. It noted that its position was still "exactly the same" as had obtained at the time of the transfer of power in 1947. In sum, HMG recognised "only Chinese suzerainty over Tibet" and unless Beijing took action or made a declaration to the contrary, there was no change in that policy. The above notwithstanding, Whitehall was "not willing to voice publicly" its policy, much less "oppose" the April 1954 agreement<sup>352</sup>.

For China, the agreement was "a triumph in international relations." And a couple of years later, another agreement with Nepal (1956) - New Delhi, it would appear, had "even induced" Kathmandu to fall in line<sup>353</sup>- cited the Panch Sheel principles with some truly professional aplomb. Meantime, Beijing had embarked on a major road-building exercise.

<sup>347</sup> S Gopal. *op cit*, II, p. 181.

<sup>348</sup> Mullick. *op cit*, p. 157.

<sup>349</sup> Nehru's statement in Parliament, in Chanakya Sen, *Tibet Disappears*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 120

<sup>350</sup> For the text of the agreement see Parshotam Mehra, *The North-Eastern Frontier*, 2 vols. New Delhi, 1979-80, II (1914-54), pp. 165-71.

<sup>351</sup> Mullick, *op cit*, p. 153.

<sup>352</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, p. 153.

<sup>353</sup> Mullick, *op cit*, p. 625.

Excerpts from "Review: August 1945 to August 1948  
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seeking settlement of their long out-standing frontier dispute with China. Profiting by their example, and also perhaps by the flowing chaos in China, the Trade Delegation of 1948 avoided attendance at the next Assembly in Nanking.

Many Tibetans seem to regard the Tibetan Trade Delegation now in America with amusement, distrust, or a certain amount of jealousy, as a party of individuals out for their own and their friends' private profit, rather than a national delegation.

18. In Lhasa in 1945 the Chinese Representative, Mr. T.L. Shen, of his own motion opened talks with me, as he had the previous year with Sir Basil Gould. In 1944 he had told my predecessor that the Chinese had been on the point of taking forcible measures with Tibet. He now asked me to believe that the real obstacle to settlement was the likelihood of British aggression in Tibet, or Chinese fear of such aggression. The talks led nowhere, being merely "exploratory" so far as Mr. Shen was concerned; and Mr. Shen left Lhasa for India to further his effort to take exclusive possession of the Tibetan Good-will Mission.

To outsiders agreement between Tibet and China has for years seemed desirable. The Government of India have withdrawn their former objection to direct discussions between Tibet and China without their being consulted or informed. But it continues to be obvious that, in spite of liberal-sounding Chinese announcements, the sole obstacle to settlement is continued Chinese intransigence; ignoring the facts, they will accept nothing short of complete Tibetan surrender. Nor likewise has the change of regime in India induced them to tone down their claims on Indian territory in Assam.

19. Years ago Sir Charles Bell had prophesied that with the advent of Indian Independence Tibet might move away from India into a closer federal relationship with China; and during the period before the transfer of power the report was wide-spread both in Tibet and India that the future Government of Independent India intended to "sell out" to Chinese imperialism over Tibet, against this background the problem of the future relationship of India and Tibet here overshadowed one's day-to-day work and everything else throughout the greater part of 1946 and the first seven months of 1947. As before, only more than ever after an-all-too-brief sunshine interval Tibet had become the Cinderella of the then Indian Foreign Office, and the seeker could obtain no enlightenment from or through that quarter. In early 1947 the then Indian Foreign Office proposed that India's future role vis-a-vis Tibet should be that of a spectator (a benevolent spectator), and shortly afterwards transmitted instructions (issued in deference to a Chinese protest) to recall an invitation issued to Tibet to the Inter-Asian Relations Conference. A little later it issued an instruction, which would have smashed the apparatus on which Tibet depended for

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(Courtesy British Library)

For by December 1954, the Qinghai-Tibet highway had been completed as were roads linking Lhasa with Shigatse and Gyantse. Thanks to the new communications network, it was now possible to travel from Beijing to Lhasa in 20 days and from Xining to the Tibetan capital in 12. The roads were a strategic imperative for establishing effective Chinese control over Tibet and at the same time lessen the latter's dependence on the supply of goods and services from India. By 1954 it would thus be clear, China had managed to secure almost all its major objectives in Tibet while New Delhi's acceptance of Chinese sovereignty left little room for manoeuvre to the Western powers to raise the issue at international fora.

## The Lamas Visit China and India

### The Lamas Meet (1952); And visit China (1954-55)

The Dalai Lama first met the Panchen Lama when the latter arrived in Lhasa from his native Amdo (April 1952), accompanied by "yet another" detachment of Chinese troops, "his 'bodyguard'". The Dalai received the Panchen at the Potala at an "official" meeting followed by a private lunch. Despite being pushed around, the Dalai Lama did manage to be with the Panchen alone:

Being three years younger than me and not yet in a position of authority, he retained an air of innocence and struck me as a very happy and pleasant person. I felt quite close to him.<sup>354</sup>

A year later, the Panchen, now barely 14, again visited Lhasa. He was presented, the Dalai Lama noted, "as my junior not only in age but in position". During their one-to-one meeting, the Panchen's Tibetan advisors as well as his Chinese entourage showed themselves as none too happy with their Lama being seated on a lower pedestal. In the event, the first Dalai Lama - Panchen Lama encounter was at once "constrained and not very successful." In his autobiography, the Dalai Lama was to note that during their meeting, "a very pushy Chinese security officer" tried to barge in as the two Lamas were closeted together. When the Dalai Lama directed his ceremonial personal guard to restrain him, it was discovered that the Chinese security guard was armed!

Later, at an informal meeting, the two Lamas "got on well together". For the Panchen "showed genuine respect" for the Dalai's position and was "correct and pleasant in his manners". Here, the Dalai Lama noted, was "a true Tibetan." More

I had a firm impression of unforced goodwill. I felt sure that left to himself he would have whole heartedly supported Tibet against the inroads of China.

Later the Dalai Lama recorded his impressions

of a very honest and faithful young man ... (with) an air of innocence .... A very happy and pleasant person.<sup>355</sup>

On a subsequent occasion when the Dalai Lama noticed a certain "difference in his (Panchen's) attitude" he strongly advised the latter that the two of them "should forget" the unpleasant rivalries of their predecessors and "make a fresh start".

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<sup>354</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 84.

The above however was easier said than done. For Beijing, through "his continuous Chinese teaching", would not permit the Panchen to think, much less act independently. Back no doubt to its old game, it was

trying to do in our generation exactly what they had failed to do in the last, and this time, it has certainly been an advantage to them to have a religious leader in whose name they can make their proclamations.

Nor, the Dalai Lama reasoned, may the Panchen Lama be personally blamed. No boy who grew up under such concentrated, constant alien influence could possibly retain his own free will.<sup>355</sup>

The Dalai Lama's year-long visit to China (1954-5) accompanied by members of his family, the Kashag and a retinue of "about five hundred" was a major event. The Panchen Lama had left Shigatse a few months earlier; the two met at Chengdu whence they travelled together to Beijing. The Panchen Lama had made the trip to mainland China only too willingly; the Dalai Lama, somewhat reluctantly. For himself, the Tibetan ruler confessed, he would avail of the "opportunity" to see the world outside but there was almost insurmountable opposition from a lot of people who feared for him, and the country, the worst.<sup>356</sup> The Chinese gameplan to promote the two Lamas' "latent hostility and internecine rivalry" was worked out to perfection. For they took "infinite pains" to treat the two on a footing of complete equality and in the process elevated the Panchen Lama to a position of temporal parity with the master of the Potala.<sup>357</sup>

Availing of the two Lamas' enforced presence in the Chinese capital - they had been prevailed upon to continue to stay on long after the inaugural session of the NPC (September 1954)- they were persuaded to reach "an official agreement" (19 January 1955) setting at rest all their "historic and unsettled" problems, political as well as economic. At a three-hour one-to-one interview with Mao, the latter mentioned the "misgivings" between the Panchen and what the Chairman insisted on calling the "local government of Tibet." With the two of them present in Beijing, Mao wanted their differences sorted out. The Dalai Lama told the Chairman that the misperceptions were a "legacy of the past" and that "personally" he had no differences with the Panchen. But if there were any "lingering misunderstandings", he would be only too "happy" to clear them up. This was actually tantamount to guaranteeing and bolstering the status of the Panchen Lama vis-a-vis the Dalai Lama, and all this at the latter's expense. The creation of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region by the Chinese State Council, referred to in detail a little later in the narrative, followed in the wake of this agreement.<sup>358</sup>

Meantime the "apparent endorsement", by leading Tibetans attending the inaugural session of the National People's Congress of the key Art 3 of the Fundamental Law of the Chinese constitution was a matter of some concern. As noted earlier, the article in question had stipulated that China was a unitary state which, at the same time, was multinational, and allowed for regional autonomy in areas where national minorities resided in compact groups. At the same time, it was made abundantly clear that the regions constituted integral

<sup>355</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), pp. 97-8.

<sup>356</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 90

<sup>357</sup> George Ginsburgs & Michael Mathos, *Communist China & Tibet: the First Dozen Years*, The Hague, 1964, p. 78

<sup>358</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), p. 100

parts of the PRC. It may be recalled that Lhasa had always insisted that it was "not an organic portion of the Chinese body politic". In the event, it would thus appear that in the aftermath of the new statute that "pivotal point" could "no longer" be logically maintained. A "satisfactory" explanation for the Tibetans' seeming indifference to a matter of such cardinal, if crucial, importance may be found in the fact that the Dalai Lama's entourage, which included both the Kashag as well as the closest of his advisors, were much too worried that the Lama's hitherto exalted position stood in danger of being downgraded as a result of Chinese machinations.<sup>359</sup>

In the course of the two Lamas' nearly year long (1954-5) sojourn in China they met a number of Chinese functionaries including, among others, Liu Shaoqi. The Dalai Lama was to note later that the Chinese leader told the Panchen Lama that Tibet "was a big country and unoccupied and that China had a big population" (which could be) "settled" there.<sup>360</sup> Later in the year while the Dalai Lama was returning home after his visit, leaders of ethnic Tibetans in Amdo had gathered at Kumbum to present a petition requesting him that they be put under the authority of Lhasa (and consequently under the ambit of the 17-point agreement) so as to avoid the "reforms" then being vigorously propagated by Chinese authorities in Amdo. After the Dalai Lama had left for Lhasa, the signatories to the petition are said to have been rounded up and subjected to public criticism and "struggle" sessions. Earlier, the ethnic Amdowa Tibetans had stated that insofar as the late 13th Dalai Lama had denied them an audience during his exile (1904-9) in these parts, they had transferred their allegiance to the 9th Panchen who had spent several years of his forced absence from Tibet (after 1924) amidst them. Now that the 14th Dalai Lama had made amends by receiving them in audience they had transferred their allegiance back to him. The preceding episode helps to demonstrate, it has been suggested, how religion and politics were inseparable in traditional Tibet.<sup>361</sup>

Mao had told the Dalai Lama that "it was too early" to implement fully the clauses of the 17-Point Agreement which would be put into effect "as slowly as we ourselves judged necessary". This was especially true in the case of the establishment of the Military Affairs Committee in Tibet whereby the country would be "governed effectively" by the PLA; instead there would be a "Preparatory Committee" for the Autonomous Region which would ensure that the pace of reform would be dictated by the wishes of the Tibetan people themselves.<sup>362</sup>

The Dalai Lama was much impressed with Mao: a "remarkable man", a "great leader" and above all "a sincere person". He was "not deceitful". The Lama, it would thus appear, got along very well with the Chairman who had talked to him about the "true form of democracy" and advised him on how to become a leader of the people. And "take heed" of their suggestions. The Tibetan ruler for his part felt that the Chairman was "genuinely

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<sup>359</sup> For more details see Ginsburgs & Mathos, *op cit*, pp.79-82

<sup>360</sup> "Statement of the Dalai Lama to the Legal Inquiry Committee at Mussorie, India", 14 November 1959, *Tibet & the Chinese People's Republic*, Geneva, 1960.

<sup>361</sup> Later the signatories were arrested by the Chinese and subjected to public criticisms and "struggle" sessions. For details see Warren Smith, *op cit*, n. 115, p. 381

<sup>362</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 98



friendly and affectionate" towards him. So impressed was he with Mao's "outstanding personality", that he found it "hard to believe" that the later Chinese oppression of Tibet had his "approval and support".<sup>363</sup> In sharp, if striking contrast, Zhou Enlai was "full of smiles and charm and swift intelligence". He was "over-polite - a sign of someone not to be trusted". His tongue was "sharp too."<sup>364</sup>

The Lama's first impressions of Nehru were not too friendly. During their brief encounter in Beijing, the Dalai Lama noted, "his (Nehru's) eyes remained fixed in front of him and he was completely speechless". And spoke "in the most perfunctory manner."<sup>365</sup> It may be accepted that broadly the Dalai Lama got Mao and Zhou right in their perceptions of Tibet and its ruler but there is a singular inconsistency in his small observations. Thus the Lama's first book mentions that Mao's shoes looked as though these "had never been polished"; his second, that "the only part of his attire that looked well-kept were his shoes which were always well-polished!"<sup>366</sup>

At the celebration of the Tibetan New Year in Beijing (February 1955), both the Lamas were upbeat about the "greatness and splendour" and "might and power" of the Motherland! Earlier, in September (1954) the Panchen Lama was elected to the membership of the first NPC Standing Committee while the Dalai Lama was made its Vice Chairman.<sup>367</sup>

## And India (1956 – 1957)

Mao, it would appear, favoured the Dalai Lama's proposed visit to New Delhi against the advice of the CCP Central Committee arguing that the Lama having visited *socialist* China may be unimpressed by all that he saw in *capitalist* India. Reportedly, the Chinese leader was not greatly worried if the Tibetan ruler defected and stayed back following his year-long sojourn in the motherland, for he believed that the Dalai Lama was "not only not essential but was even an impediment" to Chinese plans in Tibet. Implying thereby that he thought the Lama would eventually have to be eliminated or his influence rendered insignificant if China's goals in Tibet were to be achieved. The Chairman was also convinced that the CCP would survive the Dalai Lama's defection.<sup>368</sup>

In the event, after much hesitation as we would notice presently, the Chinese let the Dalai Lama accept the Indian government's invitation to a visit briefing him on what he should say and insisting on an equal status being accorded to the Panchen Lama on all occasions. In retrospect, the treatment meted out to the Panchen "failed to meet the standard" demanded by the Chinese and was the subject of their protests. As the US Consul in Calcutta put it, Indians tended to regard the Panchen "as an imposter and stooge" of the Chinese communists and they gave the Dalai Lama "precedence" over him on all occasions.

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<sup>363</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), pp 101-3.

<sup>364</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 101.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid*, p. 102.

<sup>366</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), p. 102

See also *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 97.

<sup>367</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, p. 123.

<sup>368</sup> Personal communication from Jigme Ngabo, son of Ngawang Jigme Ngabo, cited in Warren Smith, *op cit*, n.59, p.412.

More, New Delhi treated its distinguished guests "as Tibetans rather than as subjects" of Communist China and kept the Panchen "well in the background" while holding "several private conversations" with the Dalai Lama. The latter conscious how piqued Beijing was noted inter alia, that while in Sikkim a Chinese official furtively removed the Tibetan flag from the car in which he was travelling and fixed his own country's in its place. At "Bagdora (sic) airport"<sup>369</sup> (West Bengal), the Panchen Lama's lower-based throne was raised by the Chinese to the level of the Dalai Lama's "by placing stones and logs under it."<sup>370</sup>

Zhou's inducements to the Dalai Lama to return home, referred to at length later in the narrative, included the promise to "alleviate food shortages" in Tibet by withdrawing some PLA personnel and to convey Tibet's complaints to Mao. At the same time, he warned the Dalai Lama against staying in India for this would be "harmful" to the Tibetan people. Inter alia, Zhou informed the Dalai Lama that his government had decided to postpone reforms in Tibet for 6 years (the period of China's next 5-year Plan) and "if after that we were still not ready, they could be postponed for fifty years, if necessary. China was only there to help us."<sup>371</sup> Whether the decision was a result of the Lama's protests or not "it came too late" in the day to have much effect "on the people's hostility."<sup>372</sup> The Dalai Lama would seem to indicate that Zhou's assurances about a substantial withdrawal of Chinese personnel, was to be authenticated by Nehru visiting Tibet in the following year. Later (1958) when Nehru was to express his intention to go to Tibet, the Chinese refused an invitation.<sup>373</sup> For the record, the Indian Prime Minister reportedly imagined that the substantial retrenchment policy in Tibet "was a concession (he had) won" for the Dalai Lama from the Chinese.<sup>374</sup>

The Dalai Lama had left Lhasa towards the end of November 1956 and he and his entourage halted at Shigatse to pick up the Panchen Lama. And the two Lamas then continued on their way to Chumbithang. The Panchen Lama who accompanied the Dalai Lama everywhere he went, the master of the Potala was to record years later, was a grim, if "constant reminder of our terrible situation." For "no longer was he the kind and humble boy I had known before"; "the constant pressure put upon his adolescent mind" by the Chinese had had "its inevitable effect."<sup>375</sup>

The Tibetan delegation from Lhasa included Ngabo, Shurkhang and Raghshar, the uncle of the Chogyal of Sikkim. A second Tibetan delegation, made up of the Panchen Lama and his group, had come from Shigatse. And there was "tense rivalry" between the two groups all through the visit. Keen observers of the political landscape noticed that while the Dalai Lama and his delegation were received with a great deal of ceremony and marked attention, the Panchen Lama and his entourage were treated like "minor officials". As a matter of fact, the Tibetan emigre community were "hostile" to the Shigatse delegation

<sup>369</sup> Actually Bagdogra (*not* Bagdora)

<sup>370</sup> American Consulate, Calcutta, to Department of State, 1 February 1957. National Archives. cited in Warren Smith, *op cit*, p. 413

<sup>371</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1980), p. 131

<sup>372</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), p. 142

<sup>373</sup> George Patterson, *Tibet in Revolt*, London, 1960, p. 139

<sup>374</sup> Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*. London, 1969. p. 229

<sup>375</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 130

whom they viewed as "pro-Chinese." New Delhi, it would appear, treated the Dalai Lama almost as head of state, a fact that annoyed the Chinese no end.<sup>376</sup>

For his part, the Panchen Lama and his officials had felt deeply hurt. The latter carried the clear impression that while they were treated "dismissively", a great deal of international attention was focused on the Dalai Lama. Keen students of Tibetan affairs noted that the Pachen Lama met the Indian Prime Minister only at public ceremonies; unlike the Dalai Lama, he had no private meetings with Nehru. Later he was to charge that some Indian officials had "discriminated" against him and that his entourage had "sometimes" to sleep on trains because they were not provided with adequate housing.<sup>377</sup>

The above may well have been "a minor indiscretion" on the part of some low level Indian functionary and "an overreaction" from the Panchen. Yet there was no denying "a deliberate attempts (sic) " on the part of Lhasa officials to denigrate the Panchen Lama. They had no doubt resented the fact that earlier in 1954 when the two Lamas had visited China, Beijing had bent over backwards to promote them as equals. In the event, among the Tibetan emigres in India there was now talk of "bringing down" the Panchen from his "high horse."<sup>378</sup>

The Panchen Lama's men did learn that the Dalai Lama's brothers had raised the question of his status with Zhou Enlai. It would also appear that Beijing did not want to antagonise the Lhasa authorities by actively promoting the Panchen Lama abroad or by seeming to favour him. Thus while Zhou made two visits to India (November-December 1956, January 1957) and met the Dalai Lama more than once (December 1956, January, 1957), he did not have any private meetings with the Panchen Lama. In the event, the Panchen's entourage had felt "slighted" from all quarters and concluded that it was better for them to return to Shigatse "as quickly as possible."<sup>379</sup> And they did by end-February while the Dalai Lama and his officials were to hang on for a while longer. And largely for lack of a firm decision on their part.

"To the great relief" of the Chinese, the Dalai Lama and his entourage did at long last return- a few weeks later. The party arrived at Gyantse to celebrate the Tibetan New Year when thousands of people flocked to welcome him. On 6 March, the Lama arrived at Shigatse where an enthusiastic crowd greeted him. Sadly, even as the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet, tensions between the two Lamas continued. Thus when the Dalai Lama visited Shigatse, on his way home, Tashilhunpo demonstrated its "coolness" towards him by failing to send out its monks to line the streets for greeting- "as protocol demanded." For his part, the Dalai Lama decided to stay at the dzong- once the stronghold of Tsangha Khan, a ruler of the province of Tsang who had declared war on the Gelugpa- not in Tashilhunpo. It was a decision, keen observers noted, "resonant with history". Nor did its significance escape anybody. The stately quarrel became public knowledge and people expressed their disapproval of the Panchen Lama by withholding their usual gestures of respect towards him.<sup>380</sup>

Earlier in New Delhi, the Dalai Lama's two brothers had called on the Chinese Premier and complained that Beijing had been supportive of the Panchen Lama in secular matters,

<sup>376</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, p. 151

<sup>377</sup> Concerning the Question of Tibet, *op cit*. p. 183

<sup>378</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, p. 157

<sup>379</sup> *Loc cit*.

<sup>380</sup> Isabel Hilton, *op cit*, p. 132

so as to reopen the old rivalry and rift between as the Dalai Lama was to put it between "his predecessor and mine." And thereby "undermine" the authority of the Tibetan government.<sup>381</sup> More, the Dalai Lama's powers had been "restricted" and "our religion ... persecuted." Zhou's assurances downplayed the "mistakes and misunderstandings" of the past which were "unavoidable at the beginning" of any great new undertaking. He pleaded that

It was the sincerest wish of the Chinese People's Republic to improve the conditions of life in Tibet.... and the Dalai Lama had a most important part to play in the fulfilment of these great plans, and that therefore his speedy return to Lhasa was essential.<sup>382</sup>

Thubten Norbu noted that even though he had parted from Zhou "on terms of the greatest politeness", quite clearly the Premier did not seem to relish the brothers' "plain-speaking". And yet remained as polite and suave as ever. Zhou assured the brothers that the Chinese government had no thought of using undesirable Tibetans, much less the Panchen Lama, to undermine the Dalai Lama's authority or cause dissension. Beijing, Zhou averred, did not want to interfere in Tibet's internal affairs nor yet be an economic burden on its people. These promises, the Chinese Premier further affirmed, were not mere verbal assurances. The Lama's brothers could stay on in India, if they so desired, to see for themselves whether these were fulfilled. And if these were not, they would be perfectly free to criticise the Chinese government.

Not unlike many others, Norbu too was powerfully struck by Zhou's personal charm of manner and outstanding personality. His "distinguished appearance and very real charm were fascinating", Norbu noted. More, he behaved "in a very conciliatory fashion" and his soft voice "positively caressed the air." While his "marked affability" combined with the "proverbial politeness" of the highly cultured Chinese of the old school was impressive.<sup>383</sup>

As a backdrop to the two Lamas' almost six-month odyssey, it may be recalled that by the time the Dalai Lama left for his pilgrimage to India (November 1956), things were getting pretty hot for him. And this not only by reason of the disturbing news about an incipient revolt against Chinese rule in East Tibet but also in the matter of his day-to-day dealings with his political masters, nearer home in Lhasa. The manner in which the invitation of the Mahabodhi Society was handled was eloquent of a mounting Chinese determination to curb the Lama's activities by restricting his movements even further. For a visit to India could- as it indeed did- pose serious problems.

To start with, the arrival of the Maharajkumar of Sikkim in Lhasa in his capacity as President of the Mahabodhi Society to extend a personal invitation to the Dalai Lama to participate in the 2,500th anniversary of the Mahaparinirvan of the Buddha did not cut much ice with the Chinese rulers of Tibet. And they told the Lama as much. After all, they argued, it was not an official invitation! More, India was so full of all categories of dangerous, even subversive elements that the Lama could easily be taken for a ride! The Dalai Lama reveals that Nehru had "personally intervened" on his behalf. And that the final permission came through only "under threat of harm" to Sino-Indian relations.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), p. 134

<sup>382</sup> Thubten Norbu. *op cit.* pp. 228-30 Also see *Dalai Lama* (1980), pp 123-5

<sup>383</sup> *Loc cit* Also *supra*, n. 382

<sup>384</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990) p. 125

It was only after Beijing reacted favourably to an official New Delhi invitation, did the Chinese relent. Grudgingly- and with ill grace. The Lama might go if he so chose but he must ward off all those spies and saboteurs who were out to do him- and China-down. In his interactions with Indians, and outsiders, he should assiduously toe the Beijing line: Tibet was on the threshold of a number of reforms and great progress was already being made towards improving the standard of living of its people. Only when hard-pressed, should he concede that the task China faced was really challenging. And yet despite heavy odds, Beijing was maintaining a steady go ahead.

A significant part of the Lama's brief, as noticed in a preceding paragraph, was that he should ensure that the Panchen Lama, and his entourage, received due respect and consideration. And were treated strictly on a par with him. After all, he was the Dalai Lama's equal; no less. It may be of interest to note that part of the Chinese decision to allow the Dalai Lama's visit was that the Panchen too had been invited. The latter would, they were sure, represent a pro-Beijing faction within the larger Tibetan group. And therefore to an extent neutralize the Dalai Lama's influence and enthusiasm.<sup>385</sup>

Even before he left Lhasa, the Dalai Lama's Chinese masters were less than sure about his bona fides, or even his steadfast loyalty to Beijing or its regime. And their worst suspicions would no doubt have been aroused when, in the course of his interactions with the Indian prime minister, he let it be known, in no uncertain terms, that he wanted to stay back. After all, the Chinese had not carried out their part of the deal: the Seventeen Point Agreement, so far as they were concerned, was already a dead letter. In the event, his people faced acute food shortages; their religion, their traditional way of life, were seriously threatened. For his part, the Lama declared, he too had felt suffocated.

While he may not have been unaware of much that was happening in Tibet, the Indian Prime Minister's was a counsel of patience, and restraint. Lest the Dalai Lama make a miscalculation, Nehru made it abundantly clear that India could render him little if any assistance. More, the Lama's absence from the Lhasa scene would make things much worse for his people. He alone could, the prime minister was convinced, stem the tide and endeavour to save what he may of the Tibetan way of life.<sup>386</sup>

A Tibetan scholar has expressed the view that Nehru's advice to the Dalai Lama could not be dismissed as "either naive or misleading". And that during his discussions with the Tibetan ruler he had pinpointed such clauses of the May 1951 Agreement where Tibet could challenge the Chinese. In any case, in Nehru's view, it would be the "height of folly" for the Dalai Lama to remain in India and thereby desert his own people during a difficult period.<sup>387</sup>

On what he did promise, the Indian Prime Minister was true to his word. He spoke to Zhou Enlai who was then on a visit to New Delhi. And Zhou in turn sought out the Tibetan ruler and, if words could help, tried to set at rest his worst fears. As noticed in a preceding paragraph, reforms in Tibet, Zhou declared, would be postponed for the present at any rate; their pace appreciably slowed down. Han personnel deployed in the land, thinned down and

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<sup>385</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, pp. 149-51.

<sup>386</sup> Nehru told the Dalai Lama as much: "that India could be of no assistance to Tibet." For details see *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 131.

See also Gopal, *Nehru*, III, p. 36.

<sup>387</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, p. 152

exhorted to be more responsive to Tibetan susceptibilities. In all this, Zhou further assured the Lama, he had sought and obtained Mao's imprimatur.

In return for all this, Zhou craved the Lama's full understanding and impressed upon him that his own, and his country's best interests demanded that he retrace his steps. And return home to his people.

For his part, the Dalai Lama was sorely tempted not to. His two elder brothers who, on the sly, have had assurances of covert US aid for Tibetan rebels, strongly urged him to stay back. So indeed did all members of his family and Lukhangwa, his ex-prime minister, then living in exile in India. And a host of others, all of whom sang the same song namely, that the Lama's return would be an invitation to disaster for himself- and his land.<sup>388</sup>

In the final count though, the Lama, a callow youth despite his years and lack of experience, decided to go back. Nehru's advice- and Zhou's assurances- and his own faith and hope sustained and steeled his determination to plough his lonely furrow thereby giving the Chinese another chance to prove their bona fides.

As noticed earlier Zhou had told the Dalai Lama that he should not be swayed by the Tibetan emigre community in India. And should refrain from meeting his former prime minister Lukhangwa who was then living in Kalimpong. The following day, the Tibetan ruler was visited by He Long- one of the architects of the 1950 invasion of Tibet and a forbidding reminder of Chinese might. His cryptic remarks: "The snow- lion looks dignified if he stays in his mountain abode, but if he comes down to the valleys, he is treated like a dog" may not have left the Lama unshaken.

Ngabo too threw his full weight behind Beijing's cause. Inter alia, he posed the all-important question as to "what purpose was likely to be achieved by remaining in India and what assistance were foreign governments going to provide?" There were no indications, as he saw it, that New Delhi or any other government was likely to come to Tibet's rescue. In the event, the best scenario for the Lama was of being treated as no better than a private citizen. In sum, in the absence of a definite plan, there was no alternative but to return.

Thubten Norhu, the Dalai Lama's brother, it is true, had told the Kashag about promises of "foreign support". Yet it was evident that the US offer of help was not considered likely to make any material difference to Tibet's forlorn cause. As the youthful Dalai Lama saw it, Washington was prepared to provide "limited assistance" to the Tibetan freedom fighters not because it cared about the country's independence but as part of its worldwide efforts to "destabilize" all Communist governments.<sup>389</sup>

The Chinese prime minister, Zhou Enlai is said to have told Nehru "airily" that the Dalai Lama could remain in India as long as he wished and abide by the law. Nehru, for his part, recognized Beijing's concern behind Zhou's seeming indifference and pressed the Lama to accept Chinese assurances. And return. "A decision to remain in India would be the height of folly", Nehru reportedly told the Lama. His place was in his own country and among his own people to whom he should give a lead. The Dalai Lama, it would thus appear, was finally persuaded that to precipitate matters at this stage would be to "make a Hungary of Tibet."<sup>390</sup> In the event, the Lama, as we have noticed in a preceding paragraph, did return home to his people.

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<sup>388</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), pp. 131-3

<sup>389</sup> *Loc cit*

<sup>390</sup> Gopal, *Nehru*, III, p. 36

A brief reference to Mao's speech "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (27 February 1957) may not be out of place. It was delivered while the Dalai Lama was still in India. Owing to some intra-party wrangles, it was not published at the time and later (June 1957) only in "a sanitised and altered version." In actual fact, the whole section on the minorities dealt with the situation in Tibet. There were to be, Mao announced, no reforms in Tibet in the Second Five Year Plan and in the Third only if the Tibetans so wished: "If you say no to reform, then we will continue not to reform. Why (do we have to be in) such a hurry?" Inter alia, Mao blamed Tibet's problems on "Han chauvinism."

The speech reiterated Beijing's policy on Tibet making it abundantly clear that there could be no independence for the country. It would be "better off" for the Dalai Lama to come back. And if he wanted to stay in India, Mao counselled, he might as well go to America.<sup>391</sup>

## The Interregnum, 1957-9

### The Preparatory Committee for Tibet Autonomous Region

A word here on the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region (PCTAR) may not be out of place. It may be recalled that during their year-long sojourn in China (1954-5), the two Lamas were prevailed upon by their hosts to reconcile and sort out their "historic and unsettled problems." The resultant compact was embodied in an official agreement (January 1955) which sought to take care of all their outstanding political as well as economic disputes. The clear objective here, as may be evident, was to guarantee and bolster the sphere of Beijing's protege, the Panchen Lama, no doubt at the expense of the Dalai Lama. A little later, the Chinese State Council created a PCTAR to which the two Lamas' prior assent had been obtained. Beijing's line of reasoning was seemingly straightforward. Insofar as Tibet constituted the motherland's "most backward" area which did not qualify for immediate regional autonomy, a transitional mechanism was called for. Hence the *Preparatory Committee* regulations which were eventually adopted at a meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC) of the Chinese People's Republic in September 1955.

It should follow that the "PC" formally inaugurated in April 1956 in Lhasa was "an intermediate status" in order to lay down the groundwork for an "eventual transition" to regional autonomy. This task, "despite efforts" to achieve it earlier, came eventually to be fulfilled between the years 1956-1959. While the transformation in Tibet's status was in progress, Beijing treated the PC "as the true repository", to all intents and purposes, of a supreme area-wide local public authority<sup>392</sup>.

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<sup>391</sup> Warren Smith has cited from Mao's secret speeches to make the point that he spoke "at greater length about Tibet and in a manner not revealed in the official version." For details see Warren Smith, *op cit*, pp. 415-6, and note 70 (p. 415).

The citation is from Roderick MacFarquhar et al. *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, Harvard University Press, 1989.

<sup>392</sup> Ginsburgs & Mathos, *op cit*, pp 83-5

All this while, the Chinese were going ahead with establishing the PCTAR on the ground. The broad outlines had been discussed, as noticed in a preceding paragraph, during the two Lamas' year-long visit to Beijing. As originally planned, the PC was to comprise 51 members: 15 from the "Tibetan Local Government"; 10 from the Chamdo Liberation Committee and another 10 from the Tashilhunpo administration. Here, it may be evident, by giving representation to the latter, Beijing was trying to give the Panchen secular authority "his predecessors had never possessed."

In addition to the above, there were 11 members drawn from the major monasteries, religious sects and mass organisations and 5 from among the personnel of the Chinese People's government stationed in Tibet. With the Dalai Lama as its ex-officio Chairman, the Panchen Lama and Gen Zhang Guahua, two vice-chairmen and Kalon Ngabo as its Secretary General, the PC membership in all totalled 55.<sup>393</sup> Later, the Dalai Lama was to point out that these separate, newly-invented regions which were "purely Chinese creations" and found representation in the PC were "an infringement" of the May 1951 agreement; for the latter had pledged "not to alter" the political system in Tibet or the status of the Dalai Lama.<sup>394</sup>

By September 1956, the earlier breakdown of the PC's membership was drastically revised. The three regional authorities were now given equal representation of 10 each; 5 were to be representatives from the central government in Beijing and the remaining 17 drawn from the religious and popular organizations. This put the Dalai Lama and his government on a footing of equality with the other two regions and further compromised his hitherto independent, and traditionally pre-eminent position. Nonetheless the committee, outwardly at any rate, still appeared "as exclusively Tibetan in make-up." This aspect had "admittedly" tempted the Dalai Lama to accept the PC at its face value. It soon dawned upon him though, that his government had been reduced to "a position of primus-inter pares, at best"; instead of being, as hitherto, "the only authority" on the Tibetan plateau. All the same, the Dalai Lama's hope was that his personal spiritual influence would doubtless play a leading role and eventually result in the emergence of a "bona fide Tibetan central authority."<sup>395</sup>

Sadly, for the Lama his hopes were soon belied. For apart from the Lhasa contingent, "nearly all the other delegates" soon revealed themselves "as creatures" of their Chinese masters. This was especially so in the case of its Shigatse component which behaved throughout "as more Chinese than the Chinese." The Dalai Lama noted that the Chamdo representatives on the Committee "did behave more reasonably" than did the Panchen Lama's. Another factor that militated against the PC was the harsh if unpleasant fact of its being singularly toothless. For "all basic policy" was actually decided, not by the PC, but by another body called the Committee of the CCP in Tibet which, as if by definition, had no Tibetan members. The PC, the Dalai Lama noted, was "allowed to discuss the minor points" and yet "could never" make any major changes. In the final count then, the PC only served to gather in the hands of Beijing's military and civilian representatives in Lhasa both

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<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8

<sup>394</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), p. 118

<sup>395</sup> Ginsburgs & Mathos. *op cit.*, pp. 88-9

Also see *Dalai Lama* (1962) pp. 117-8 and *Dalai Lama* (1990), pp. 116-7. In his second autobiography the Dalai Lama has called the PCART "tzuma"- Tibetan word for an eye-wash. *Dalai Lama* (1980), p. 119



"the elusive power "as well as the "legitimate authority" which the Chinese needed badly with a view to effectively ruling Tibet. The farce was highly convenient inasmuch as the PC was an instrument of Chinese influence even though its "overwhelmingly native membership" was designed to ensure its functioning as a body "genuinely oriented towards and attuned to local needs and conditions."

At the time of its inauguration, the Dalai Lama had viewed the PC as "the last and not impossible hope" for a peaceful evolution of Tibetan polity in the new scheme of things. Outwardly, at any rate, the scheme looked "sound and attractive" and might, he hoped, yield "a more efficient form of government" than Tibet had known hitherto.<sup>396</sup>

Presently though, the Lama was sadly disillusioned. The PC, he discovered, was "powerless- a mere facade". For effective power was, as we have noticed, exercised by another body - the Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet- which had "no Tibetan members." And though he was "nominally" Chairman of the PC, there was "nothing much" the Dalai Lama could do about it. In fact, it soon dawned upon him that the Chinese had given him this position so as to lend "an added appearance of Tibetan authority" to their schemes.<sup>397</sup>

Not long after the PC had been inaugurated, the Chinese general in command of the Chamdo area told a meeting of about 350 "leading Tibetan personalities" that while the Dalai Lama wanted that the reforms Beijing contemplated be introduced "gradually" and not "before a majority of Tibetans" approved of them, the Panchen Lama had demanded that these be introduced "at once."<sup>398</sup>

The setting up of the PC was, "on the surface" at any rate, an apparent triumph of Chinese "diplomacy and pragmatism" for it would give "legitimacy" to the transition from the Dalai Lama's rule to the "supremacy" of the Communist Party. "On paper", the Chinese could claim that they had established "a workable administrative structure" during the transitional period before "democratic reform" could be introduced in Tibet.

The Dalai Lama's acceptance of the scheme "confused" the Tibetans no end for any opposition would be tantamount to defying his authority<sup>399</sup>. The Chinese game plan that in a short span of five years or thereabouts, with the completion of their communications network, and the active support from within Tibet of groups opposed to the rule of the Dalai Lama, they could register large gains was clear enough. And with the powerful support of an emerging elite who viewed Beijing's approach as a modernising influence for an almost mediaeval polity; they would be able to consolidate their position beyond any possible challenge. Diehard Tibetan opposition would by then be ineffective, if also perhaps irrelevant.

The establishment of the PC and its related institutions aroused no end of anxiety among Lhasa's officials who rightly felt concerned that it would eventually take over the administration of the whole of Tibet. The original structure of the PC reduced the power and status of the Tibetan government while Beijing's policy of divide and rule managed, wittingly or otherwise, to disturb the traditional balance of power in the Tibetan polity. For many Tibetans, the threat to the Dalai Lama's rule did not emanate from the Chinese alone; the growing prominence of the Panchen Lama posed no less a challenge to Lhasa's

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<sup>396</sup> Ginsburgs & Mathos, *op cit*, p. 88

<sup>397</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), p.118

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid*, p. 121

<sup>399</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, p. 131

authority. Clearly the Dalai Lama's regime had to surrender such powers as it had been exercising in the Panchen's domain since the early 1920s when the 9th Panchen Lama fled. While now, after the new reincarnation's return almost thirty years later, his people were acting as though denizens of a virtually independent polity. And dealing directly with the Chinese. More importantly, Beijing now sought to break the monopoly of political power, hitherto exercised almost exclusively by the Gelugpa. And brought within the ambit of state power lamas belonging to the Sakya, Kagyupa and Nyingpa schools of thought who had hitherto been kept outside the pale. While the new policy broadened the Chinese support base, it did- understandably- arouse deep suspicion among the traditional Gelugpa hierarchy.

At the popular level, Tibetans were alarmed by the loss of Dalai Lama's power and prestige and blamed the aristocracy for feathering their own nest, while completely ignoring- if also undermining- the traditional power and authority of their ruler. Paradoxically while the elite were supposedly privy to Beijing's gameplan of downsizing the Dalai Lama, the former charged them with failure to counter, if not contend with, the mounting tide of anti-Chinese feeling that was visibly growing fast in Lhasa and the countryside around it.

After the establishment of the PC, the Chinese concentrated on building and buttressing their infrastructure. Social issues and internecine conflicts tended to be sidelined, if not altogether ignored. At the same time, the new policy of "reform from the top" tended to ignore the peasantry who were now viewed essentially as a source for cheap labour. Meantime from the mid-1950s onwards hundreds of Tibetans drawn from the bureaucracy as well as scions of the aristocracy and well-to-do traders were encouraged to go to China for better education, and training. On return, they would - as Beijing viewed it- form the hard core of Tibetan cadres in their homeland, thereby lending weight and strength to the new regime.<sup>400</sup>

At the administrative level, by 1956, Beijing had created a number of Tibetan autonomous districts in Kham as well as Amdo. Earlier (1955) it had abolished the Guomindang- sponsored province of Xikang (Sikang) and merged it into the larger whole of Sichuan. Beijing did however keep alive the Guomindang province of Qinghai even though six new autonomous zhou were created in parts of Amdo where ethnic Tibetans constituted a majority of the population<sup>401</sup>.

It may be of interest to note here if only in parenthesis that the Kanding rebellion in eastern Tibet which eventually snowballed into the March 1959 nation-wide Tibetan revolt against the Chinese was not an organised affair, much less did it have any cohesive leadership. As was soon evident, it was characterised by spontaneous, and localised, attacks on Chinese cadres and work places. Oddly, the people of Lhasa entertained strong prejudices against the Khampas and had always viewed them as both "unruly and troublesome."

The Tibetans saw the reforms first and foremost as an attack on their value system. Rich or poor, they were united in their belief in Buddhism and support for their religious institutions which constituted the heart and core of their world view. Despite the inequality, and exploitation, that existed in Tibetan society, no peasant uprising against the injustices that prevailed in the traditional system is ever known to have taken place.

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<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 132-4

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137

Sadly for the Chinese, despite repeated warnings from Tibetan leaders, they proceeded apace with their reforms despite known popular resentment, and opposition. Nonetheless once the revolt became widespread, the question, as they viewed it, was no longer whether they would postpone their reforms. The issue was how to eliminate counter revolutionaries. In Kham and Amdo where its hold was firm, Beijing had no hesitation in adopting coercive measures; in central Tibet where its power base was somewhat shaky, if fragile, it deferred action against the Khampa refugees who had flocked there in large numbers and strength.<sup>402</sup>

The PC which in Tibet's special case was viewed as an "intermediate status" was "seriously meant" to function as the sole agency for local centralised administration. Designed to exercise a decisive voice in every significant sector of the region's social/political/economic life, it was completely dependent on the State Council of the PRC. This was apparent from the fact that taking of any substantive decisions by the PC required the unanimous vote of its membership which, by implication, allowed the Chinese to hamstring its proceedings at will.<sup>403</sup>

For all practical purposes then, the PC served to gather all power and authority in the hands of Beijing's military and civilian representatives while the Dalai Lama's "modest hopes" that it would safeguard a modicum of Tibet's individuality came to naught.<sup>404</sup> It may be added that Tibetan failure to dislodge Han authority from the region was due largely, if not indeed entirely to the early (1951-4) Chinese build-up of an effective system of transportation and communications. Overall it was estimated that by November 1956, the Chinese "had finished" some 6,000 kms of motor roads on the Tibetan plateau. True, these were of widely varying types and degrees of suitability yet all the eight regional governorships had now been linked by road spurs "more or less suitable for truck passage."<sup>405</sup>

While the administrative and physical infrastructure claimed no end of attention, some ground realities seem to have completely escaped the new rulers. One such was the violent upset in Tibet's sale and purchase markets, its emporia. This space was hitherto occupied almost exclusively by India and Nepal. By abruptly ending their monopoly and drawing on Tibet's meager economic resources to meet China's extortionate demands needs meant the country's certain impoverishment. In the event, there were "chronic shortages even in staple items," while inflation continued unabated, shortages multiplied, costs rose and increasing hardships beset large sections of the local population, especially the latter's urban poor.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142-4.

<sup>403</sup> Ginsburg & Mathos, *op cit.*, pp. 83, 86

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-7.

## The Khampas & Amdowas move towards Lhasa & its environs And the March (1959) Rebellion

A few footnotes to the jam-packed events that crowded the years 1957-9 may help to explain a number of misconceptions about the roles of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen: of the Kashag and the Khampa rebels, of the irate Tibetan mob which precipitated events leading to the March (1959) rebellion and the resultant flight of the master of the Potala. Above all, the manner and mode of Chinese reaction to a fast-developing situation which though not unexpected, seems to have come to them as a surprise. And which, for a variety of reasons, Beijing's local functionaries let simmer and come to a boil before tackling it head-on.

As early as March 1957, on his return from a visit to India, the Dalai Lama was conscious that the situation in Tibet in general, and in Lhasa and its immediate neighbourhood in particular, was "slipping" not only from Chinese control but also "from my own."<sup>407</sup> Zhou Enlai's unambiguous if categorical assurances held out to him in New Delhi about the postponement of reforms, and a partial withdrawal of Chinese personnel, were seized upon by the Tibetan ruler on return home to insist that due regard be shown to Tibetan sensitivities. So also to Mao's exhortations to the cadres to be "self-critical."

Unfortunately, local reactions were none too helpful. For the Han officials in Lhasa felt "clearly uncomfortable" as the Lama drove the point home. And when he asked them to help - not hinder - Tibetan autonomy, they thought he was acting "under foreign influences."<sup>408</sup>

Nor was that all. The Tibetan ruler noticed that Chinese behaviour towards him was now "more aggressive" than it had hitherto been. For one, the generals who came to see him were armed; for another, their weekly visits were designed "to urge, cajole, abuse me."<sup>409</sup> He also realised that the meetings of the PCTAR had been reduced to a farce and "a facade" behind which the Chinese could carry out their "abominations" elsewhere in the country. And yet if he were to decide to quit, consequences could be "devastating."<sup>410</sup>

In brief, between the Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa from his Indian sojourn (March 1957) and his flight from near-captivity to seek refuge and asylum (March 1959), the traumatic couple of years that intervene presented a difficult if not an explosive situation. To start with, there was an unending stream of Khampa and kindred tribals pouring into Lhasa and its environs. In the process, they added considerably to, if not even outnumbered, the capital's small population. Food supplies, already under heavy strain due to the earlier Chinese influx, were now chronically short. The Khampas, not exactly known for orderly behaviour, made matters worse in that they were armed to the teeth. Thereby increasing the risks of confrontation, leading to unseemly violence.

And as the months rolled by, the Khampa-Golok-Amdowa spill-over showed no signs of abating. Kham, Beijing claimed, had long been an integral part of the province of Xining, as Amdo was of Qinghai. And thus administratively parts of the mainland while Chinese links with Lhasa may have been tenuous, at best. Hence the spirited zeal with which

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<sup>407</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 136.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135. Also see *Dalai Lama* (1962), p. 141.

<sup>409</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 140.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137

reforms for a socialist transformation were sought to be introduced there- as indeed elsewhere in the rest of China. The calculation was that resistance in these parts would be easy to contain; that, in contrast to the Dalai Lama's domain in central Tibet, Beijing had a firmer hold over the situation in Chamdo as well as Amdo. Sadly for it, when it came to brass tacks, the ground reality proved to be at considerable variance. For the Khampas, the Amdowas and other kindred tribes mustered strong local grass roots support and embarked on a campaign of stout, if also sustained resistance to the mainland's policies.<sup>411</sup>

There was the additional fact that these outsiders were desperate men who had left their hearths and homes to register an unmistakable protest against mounting Chinese onslaughts on their social, and economic, fabric. Which, thanks to Beijing's far-reaching reforms, was now completely breaking down. At the same time, the massive Khampa intrusion into Lhasa threatened to unsettle, if not completely disrupt, an already precarious balance of forces which had hitherto existed between Beijing's rulers, now fully entrenched in their strongholds, and a desperate Dalai Lama and his much harassed administration which found itself increasingly out of step with its political masters. More, it was no longer in a position to call the shots. To the contrary, its ability to administer was now clearly at a discount. In sum, badly outmanoeuvred and driven almost almost to the wall it was a "no win" situation either for the Lama or his people.

There was another aspect of this complex jigsaw puzzle. Even at the best of times, the blue-blooded Lhasans had shown no great love for their eastern Khampa cousins who were rated at once uncouth and prone to violence. For many people in the U-Tsang regions, broadly central Tibet, the Khampas were considered to be "bandits" who looted food from villagers.<sup>412</sup> In the prevailing scenario, with Lhasa and its administration completely paralysed if also alienated from its Chinese masters, there was however a streak of sympathy for the Khampa cause if not for the Khampas themselves. At the same time, it was plain as plain could be that an armed insurrection against Chinese rule would invite severe reprisals, with the end-result never in serious doubt. Here indeed would be an ideal opportunity for Beijing to crush the revolt and smother its henchmen with a heavy hand.

The revolt of the Tibetans in Lhasa for which the Khampas acted as powerful catalysts was, both for the Kashag as well as the Dalai Lama, a complete surprise. That there was widespread resentment against Beijing's rule was not unknown but with a complete absence of any organisation or leadership to channelise the popular disenchantment, it had lacked focus. The elite and the Kashag - Beijing's "upper class reactionaries" - who could have provided leadership and whom the Chinese later accused of staging the Lhasa demonstrations were, in reality, a broken reed. By and large they supped at the Chinese table in their military camp and had no reason to be part of the popular protest.<sup>413</sup>

Was it any wonder then that the mob distrusted the Kashag, convinced that the latter had betrayed both the Dalai Lama and his faith. And followed a policy of appeasement towards their Chinese rulers. The Kashag had its own difficulties. Notwithstanding any sympathy it may have had with the Khampa cause open, demonstrative support to it was not a practical proposition. For one, the Chinese continued to castigate the Dalai Lama's administration for its inability, or even refusal, to perform its elementary duty of ensuring a

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<sup>411</sup> The Dalai Lama mentions some "audacious raids" of the Khampa "freedom fighters" under the command of one Gompu Tashi. *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 136

<sup>412</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, p. 174.

<sup>413</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, pp. 193-4

modicum of civil peace and tranquillity. The Khampas, for their part, not fully conscious of, or even sensitive to, the Lama's mounting compulsions, would interpret his seeming lack of support to their cause as tantamount to his being a handmaid, if not a willing tool, of their- as well as his own- Chinese tormentors. Shakya underlines the fact that the ties between Lhasa and Kham had been far from friendly- their relationship, "at best, uneasy"- and but for the 10 March (1959) revolt in Lhasa, the possibility of a civil war between the two could not be ruled out.<sup>414</sup> As the Dalai Lama aptly put it, while the Chinese thought the Kashag was "in league" with the Khampas, the latter had an entirely different perception - that "it (the Kashag) was more or less in league" with the Chinese!<sup>415</sup>

It is also interesting to note that the Kashag whom the Chinese so very mistakenly accused of instigating the revolt, tried hard, until the very end, to disabuse them of this notion. As in all ruling elites, most of its members were unwilling to take risks, much less mortgage their future to what appeared to them to be a forlorn cause viz. restoration of any semblance of Tibetan rule. This is borne out by the fact that all through the crisis, the Kashag stayed put at the Norbulingka. Their repeated protestations that they were not involved in the revolt - which was factually correct - carried little or no conviction with the Chinese. At the same time, their credibility, their authority and standing, stood completely eroded among their own people. Who having wrested the political agenda from the ruling elite, which clearly included the Kashag, refused to pay any heed to its repeated exhortations. A Tibetan author underscores the position that the initial anger of the demonstrators was not so much against the Chinese as against the Tibetan aristocracy who, they thought, would sell the Dalai Lama "for a sack full of Da Yuan", the Chinese silver dollar. In other words, trade him for filthy lucre!

The Lhasa rebels' treatment of Khunchung Sonam Gyamtso, a member of the Chamdo Liberation Committee, with pronounced pro-Chinese leanings, was both symbolic as well as exemplary. They virtually lynched him and dragged his dead body all the way to the Barkor. His killing showed both "public defiance" of the Chinese and the extent to which the masses had grabbed the initiative and "taken control" of the explosive political situation from the Tibetan ruling classes. Sampho, a member of the Tibetan delegation to the negotiations leading to the 17-Point Agreement, who later became one of the highest ranking Tibetan officials in the Tibet Military Commission, was badly roughed up even though his life was spared. He was targeted for, in his dress and deportment, he betrayed pronounced pro-Chinese leanings while the mob held the Tibetan elite squarely responsible for what it viewed as a "betrayal" of the Dalai Lama and of their faith.<sup>416</sup>

Two aspects of the March rebellion deserve to be noted. One, both the Dalai Lama as well as his Chinese adversaries were strongly persuaded that the former needed protection from the stranglehold which the Khampas had succeeded in establishing over the Tibetan capital in general, and the Norbulingka in particular. The PLA general's "invitation" to the Lama to repair to his military camp may have been born out of a genuine concern for the Tibetan ruler's safety. The Chinese were convinced that the Lama was being held under duress, and against his will, by the "reactionaries." And as long as there was a chance to win him over, they refrained from attacking the palace. Equally clearly the Lama for his part

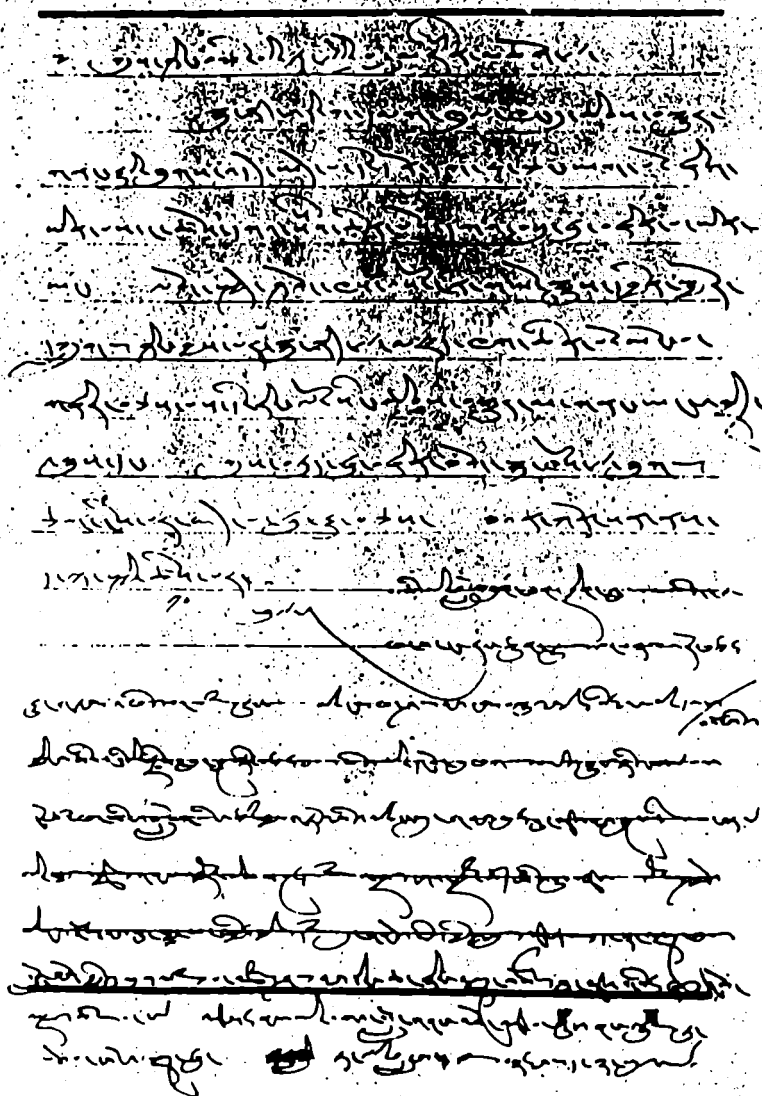
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<sup>414</sup> *Loc cit*

<sup>415</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), p. 148

<sup>416</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, pp. 192-4

The Khampas & Amdowas move towards Lhasa & its  
environs And the March (1959) Rebellion

A page of handwritten Tibetan script, likely a letter. The text is written in a cursive style on a page with horizontal lines. The script is dense and fills most of the page. There are some faint markings on the left side, possibly indicating line numbers or a margin.

The Dalai Lama's first letter to General Tan Kuan-san  
(in his own handwriting)

Document 22

Tan Guansan

Tan Guansan

(Courtesy Foreign Languages Press, Beijing)

may not have been averse to some modicum of protection or security for his person. His acceptance of the Chinese offer may have been tactical, but it was there.

Another factor that needs to be looked into relates to the reactions both of the Kashag and of those close to the Lama. One and all, not excluding the Lama himself, were now convinced that the battle had finally been joined. The Kashag had by now ceased to be "effective": it had neither been able to appease the Chinese nor yet succeed in suppressing the uprising. In the event, it devoted all its energy to secure the personal safety of the Dalai Lama.<sup>417</sup> For, should the Chinese be able to get hold of his person, it would be all over for Tibet and its people. That is where the mob now surrounding the Norbulingka played a crucial role. It made sure that neither the Chinese nor yet the Lama establish a liaison or work out a deal without its approval or imprimatur.

In the result, both for the Lama as well as the Chinese choices were scrupulously limited; severely narrow. For the Lama, a last, desperate bid to escape; for the Chinese, to establish control through the use of *force majeure*, whatever the human costs involved. It is revealing that Ngabo's letter to the Dalai Lama made no secret of the clear Chinese thinking that "I might try to escape."<sup>418</sup> He warned the Lama all the same, that it would be "very dangerous" to leave, for the Chinese had taken the "strictest measures" to prevent his doing so. The Dalai Lama underscores the point that Ngabo had not attended any meetings of the Kashag since the crisis began and had now warned him about the "hostile designs" of the reactionaries and of an "evil plan" to remove the Tibetan ruler from the Norbulingka.<sup>419</sup>

Ngabo's exhortations notwithstanding, possibly the Chinese were in no position to forestall the Lama's flight; more likely, they did not want to. With the Lama gone, and out of reckoning as it were, they would have a free run of the land. In any case, their armed strength and the infrastructure in terms of the network of roads, now in place, made sure that the rebellion would be crushed. It was only a question of time and posed no serious threat. Much less a challenge to their rule.

A word on the Dalai Lama and the role he played. Was he, not unlike the Kashag, an appeaser too? He alone could, it was clear to one and all, have influenced the mob. And yet for the record, he never stirred out of the palace, much less give any encouragement to the rebels either overtly, or covertly. Later, however, and anticipating events by a week or ten days the Lama, it may be recalled, was to make handsome amends for his earlier lapse. And, it is known that before he left one of the last Tibetan monasteries, Chongay Ruidechen, a stone's throw from the Indian frontier, the Dalai Lama had an opportunity to meet some of the Khampa leaders and thanked them for "their strength and bravery". And their determination to carry on the "grim battle" for Tibetan "freedom and culture and religion." He availed of the opportunity to apologise for his government having earlier branded them as "reactionaries and bandits" and confessed that the Chinese had "dictated" these proclamations and his government had "felt compelled" to issue them.<sup>420</sup>

To revert to Lhasa and the last few days before his escape. It is obvious that the Dalai Lama was only too willing to go to the Chinese camp for the dance performance! And even when it was clear that the mob that had surrounded the palace would not let him stir out, he wrote twice over to the Chinese commander that he would endeavour to: "I

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<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196-7

<sup>418</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 150

<sup>419</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), p. 167

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186



assured them that I still thought it a good idea that I should move to the sanctuary of the Chinese headquarters." The Tibetan ruler has argued that his best efforts were bent towards "anything to buy time". Convinced that the crowd could not "stay put indefinitely."<sup>421</sup>

The long litany of Chinese complaints against the Dalai Lama and his government makes for interesting reading. Inter alia, the latter were not combating the "reactionaries"; to the contrary, they had "secretly" armed the rebels and were now refusing to disarm them! Tibetan armouries had been left "unguarded"; in the event, Chinese casualty figures in Tibet had been multiplying. Tibetan emigres in India had "joined hands with the imperialists"; more, prominent among the nine listed was the former prime minister, Lukhangwa and the two elder brothers of the Dalai Lama! The Khampas had put up barricades on the road leading out of Lhasa- towards China, to forestall any fresh reinforcements reaching the Tibetan capital! The Chinese now demanded of the Tibetan administration that these be pulled down or dismantled: if this were not done "serious consequences would follow."<sup>422</sup>

## The Dalai Lama's Compulsions; Overtures to the Panchen

The Dalai Lama's own compulsions were "awesome, unending." Odd as it may appear, he "did not have the option" of declining an invitation to a social function his Chinese masters had sponsored, for fear it may invite reprisals.<sup>423</sup> And when, on his initiative, his ministers met the Chinese general for a pow-wow, the latter was "speechless" with rage; "very angry"; his appearance "intimidating."<sup>424</sup>

As he viewed it, the Lama found himself between the devil and the deep sea; between "two volcanoes", as he put it. On the one hand, there was the "vehement, unequivocal, unanimous" protest of his people; on the other, the armed might of "a powerful and aggressive" occupation force.<sup>425</sup> The stakes were high: to prevent a clash between his deeply agitated, yet unarmed and hapless people and a trigger-happy if also heavily accoutred Chinese army.

The Lama's strategy for survival, it would appear, was "to buy time".<sup>426</sup> So that he could make good his escape from a virtually impossible situation- secretly, and without arousing Chinese suspicions. This, it was clear to him, was the only exit route left. His surrender, or capture, would have extinguished all hope for himself and his people. Nor does he make any secret of the fact that the thought of being taken a captive, "terrified" him. For the first time in his life he was "truly afraid" - not so much for himself as for the millions of his people "who put their faith in me."<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 149

<sup>422</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), pp. 161-5

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159

<sup>426</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 147

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152

Handwritten Tibetan script, consisting of approximately 14 lines of text.

Tan Guan-san  
Tan Guan-san

Document 23

The Dalai Lama's second letter to General Tan-Kuan-san  
(in his own handwriting)

(Courtesy Foreign Languages Press, Beijing)

From the very outset, it should also perhaps have been a little too plain, that the rebels' was a lost cause. There was no way they could have worsted the Chinese: the latter, far too numerous and better-equipped; the rebels, far too few, ill-equipped, disorganised- to mount, much less sustain, any meaningful resistance. The much-hyped CIA role was minor, if marginal; the indirect help the US agency rendered in training or equipping some Khampa rebels did not, indeed could not, make any dent. The Dalai Lama was sure that even their dropping of weapons was "mostly useless." Much the same held for the Kalimpong-based refugee group. Despite all the hullabaloo and the noises made, their contribution to the ground reality inside Tibet was virtually nil. As a matter of fact "neither the CIA nor the emigre group" in Kalimpong were involved either with the revolt or the Dalai Lama's flight from Lhasa.<sup>428</sup> It is not without significance that the rebels were soon on the run, being unable to secure a base, inside Tibet, from which to operate.

For much the same reason, the Dalai Lama's plans to set up a new, "temporary government" of Tibet which could negotiate afresh with the Chinese were a non-starter. At Lhüntse Dzong, "a vast building on a rock, rather like a smaller Potala", a proclamation on the "establishment of a temporary government" was read out and copies of it sent to all places in Tibet. This was a reaction to an earlier Chinese pronouncement in Lhasa that the Tibetan government stood dissolved. The Dalai Lama was strongly persuaded that the Chinese action was tantamount to a breach of the "only one of their promises" in the 17-Point Agreement which had "nominally" remained "unbroken." Hence the decision to create a new temporary government. Here, it appeared to the Lama, was "something positive" that he was doing for his country.

Presently though, the "unwelcome truth" dawned that wherever he and his ministers tried to stop, the Chinese would "hunt us out", leading to a heavy toll: "more fighting" and "more deaths".<sup>429</sup> In the event, the Tibetan ruler and his ministers thought it wiser to cross the border and seek asylum than pursue the receding chimera of a new government inside Tibet!

Two other moves by the Dalai Lama came to naught. One, appointing the ousted former prime minister, Lobsang Tashi, as Regent and charging him with the task of negotiating *de novo* with the Chinese. Two, persuading the Panchen Lama to leave Tashilhunpo and join him in his exile in India. What were Lobsang Tashi or the Panchen's respective reactions to the Lama's exhortations is not known, in the unlikely event that they did receive his letters. Incidentally while the Dalai Lama does make a mention of his own "hurried letter" to the Panchen Lama which he now composed at Ra-Me (Rame) he does not allude to the ones he had written to Lobsang Tashi or the two remaining Kalons- Ngabo and Sampho- in Lhasa. Again, his first autobiography (1962) is silent on the letter which the Panchen had written to him earlier or the contents of the one he (Dalai Lama) had now composed.<sup>430</sup>

A word on the revolt. Kham as well as Amdo, though largely ethnic Tibetan, had long been administratively a part of the Chinese mainland, however loose and tenuous the ties. For nearly all the time, they were ruled by local warlords whose allegiance to the central Chinese government was proforma; nominal, at best. Lhasa's hold here was much stronger through the innumerable gompas which dotted the landscape and had close linkages with

<sup>428</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, 201-2

<sup>429</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1962), pp. 188-90

<sup>430</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit*, p.204

Handwritten text in Tibetan script, consisting of approximately 12 lines of dense cursive writing.

Guansar  
| Ton

The Dalai Lama's third letter to General Tan Kuan-san  
(in his own handwriting)

(Courtesy Foreign Languages Press, Beijing)

the Dalai Lama and Tibet's three major seats of learning. Administratively, the Chinese had in the 1920s, incorporated Amdo into the province of Qinghai and Kham into Xining and, however shadowy their rule viewed these as integral parts of "China Proper". By 1951-2, as Mao's unstoppable, unrelenting juggernaut moved in and the reins of his government tightened, all China felt the tremors. And little anticipating the popular reaction these may provoke, Beijing decided to implement its new policies of social transformation both in Kham as well as Amdo as indeed elsewhere in China. And with a heavy hand. The results were there for all to see.

The nature of the reforms apart, the brazen ruthlessness with which these were sought to be implemented, provoked violent protests. According to the Dalai Lama there were as many as eight divisions, an odd 150,000 trained men, "with sophisticated battlefield technology" face to face with "an irregular band of horsemen and mountain warriors".<sup>431</sup> With monasteries "systematically destroyed and razed to the ground", the popular upsurge was unprecedented. And was sought to be put down with such barbaric practices as beheading, burning, beating the rebels to death, burying them alive! Worse, dragging people behind galloping horses until they were dead or throwing them into water after binding them hand and foot.<sup>432</sup>

In the event, nearly 10,000 Khampas, Goloks and Amdowas are said to have left their homes and moved on to Central Tibet to lodge their protest and seek assurances that their Chinese rulers would refrain from further action in their homeland. And they did have a bitter experience of putting any trust in Chinese promises. What made the rebels even more desperate was that there were no homes left where they could return!

In Tibet's recent history, the revolt marked a watershed of sorts. In less than a decade (1951-9), the fond if seemingly impossible hope that an autonomous Buddhist Tibet, under the Dalai Lama's rule, could co-habit with a Maoist China had turned to dust. For the Lama's flight symbolised the demise of Tibet as a distinct political, and religious, entity within the larger whole of the PRC.

It is worth recalling that the signing of the 17-Point Agreement had raised some modicum of hope among the Tibetan people. They may not have welcomed the Chinese and in fact remained largely passive. And yet ceased resistance. The ruling elite, however, lent a helping hand and did cooperate fully with their new masters. The Chinese, in turn, gave them positions of responsibility in their new setup and even monetary rewards with a view to fortifying Beijing's own hold over the land.

The revolt was a strong political act in defence of Tibet's independent status which, for the record, had been irretrievably lost with the signing of the 17-Point Agreement. Nor was there any "realistic chance" of the PLA being driven out by the uprising. The latter essentially was a powerful political statement in support of the value system of ordinary Tibetan men and women to whom the Lama was the central, if pivotal, hub around which their lives revolved. The catalyst for the revolt was the thousands of Khampa refugees from East Tibet whom Chinese reforms, and a campaign of ruthless suppression, had driven out

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<sup>431</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 137

<sup>432</sup> The 1959 report of the International Commission of Jurists furnishes gruesome details of the vivisection, disembowelling and dismemberment of all the rebels the Chinese could lay their hands upon. For details, *Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic*, a Report to the International Commission of Jurists by the Legal Inquiry Committee on Tibet, Geneva, 1960. op cit

of their hearths and homes. They had sought refuge in Central Tibet making it thereby the principal theatre of conflict.<sup>433</sup>

Even before the Dalai Lama formally denounced the 17- Point Agreement, prior to his arrival in India, the Tibetan people had unmistakably come out against it. For at their meeting at Shol (below the Potala) prior to the Lama's flight, they had not only denounced the Agreement but also proclaimed Tibet's independence. Shakya refers to the setting up of a new group- the "People's Assembly"- which, at the "largest ever" public demonstration in Lhasa on 13 March, had demanded "restoration" of Tibet's independence and denounced the 17-Point Agreement. Interestingly, both the demand, and the denunciation however, were not made at the Norbulingka nor yet by a member of the Kashag. In the event, the Tibetan government "could always dissociate" itself from what was an "unofficial" declaration.<sup>434</sup> To the uninitiated observer, thanks to the Chinese defiance of it, the Agreement had, both in letter and in spirit, already become a dead letter. And this long before it was formally denounced. Why did it fail and become a subject of such contumely.

Initially, when concluded, the Tibetans had naively if also foolishly enough taken it at its face value. It had promised them autonomy- independence, in all but name. No whit different from what they had known for the preceding hundred odd years, and earlier. And the measure of their autonomy had been the untrammelled power and authority of the Dalai Lama. For the Chinese though, the picture was different. The return of a reluctant, if not defiant Tibet to the embrace of the Motherland signified, so Beijing argued, that the land was now to be governed, as indeed all China was, by the Chairman and his Communist Party. The Dalai Lama was thus only a minor cog in the larger wheel; no more, no less. The two perceptions were so diametrically different, for each party saw in the Agreement only that which it wanted to see. And there was no meeting ground between the two perceptions. No wonder, the Agreement was doomed to failure from the very start.

The induction of the PCTAR (1955) was another hassle. To the Tibetans, it meant undoing the power and authority of the Dalai Lama, the pivot of Tibetan faith, of its society as well as polity. In the event, the Chinese appeared as real ogres; not only political foes but also "enemies" of their religion. For the Han chauvinists failed to see Tibet as a homogeneous culture, a civilisation embracing the holistic world of Tibetan-speaking people. Inheriting the faults and failings of the Guomindang, Mao's China viewed Central Tibet under the Dalai Lama as a *de facto* independent state while Kham and Amdo were rated as integral parts of the mainland. This was to prove to be Beijing's major undoing. It is true that the Lhasa regime did not exercise any political authority in these parts, yet its cultural- read religious- sway was paramount, unquestioned. Beijing's new socialist reforms made a head-on assault on this bastion.

As has been remarked earlier too, the March rebellion (1959) was foredoomed to failure. The Dalai Lama apart, Tibet had lacked any credible leadership. And, after the dismissal of Lokhangwa and Lobsang Tashi (1952), the Kashag was virtually bankrupt of any sense of direction. The Lama was young and inexperienced, his advisors' one-point agenda, their own and the Lama's safety. The revolt isolated them; leaving them pretty high

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<sup>433</sup> The Dalai Lama's estimate is of "at least" 10,000 Khampas in Lhasa; some permanent residents, "most" of them refugees. *Dalai Lama* (1962), p. 144

By March 1959, Lhasa's population, the Lama computed, must have been "about double" the usual number. *Dalai Lama* (1990), p. 141

<sup>434</sup> Tsering Shakya, *op cit.* pp. 197-8.

and dry. To the very end, they tried to appease the Chinese and kept themselves aloof from the rebels and their cause. And when it came to the crunch, they abandoned their land and its people and sought refuge in a foreign country. The plea that they had neither the time nor the power to protest does not really wash. The harsh truth is that they did not measure up to the challenge of leading a popular revolt.

Two long-neglected but fascinating facets of the Dalai Lama's escape need to be mentioned. To start with, while on the run his plans to establish a new government on Tibetan soil in close proximity to the Indian frontier. This was to be at Lhuntse Dzong, "just this side" of the border. And the new regime was to negotiate a fresh deal with the Chinese in place of the much-abused 17-Point Agreement. Earlier, while at Ganden, end-1958, his advisors had strongly urged the Tibetan ruler to head south- where "much of the country" was under the sway of the Khampa rebels- denounce the May (1951) Agreement and reinstate "my own" government. The Lama confesses that after giving "serious thought" to the proposition, he had concluded that "nothing positive" would be achieved by this exercise. For it would "only provoke" the Chinese.<sup>435</sup>

At Lhuntse Dzong, as earlier at Ganden, after a day or two the Lama has had second thoughts. Realising no doubt that inside of Tibet, the Chinese would overtake him, and his new government, before long. What dissuaded him further was the news of the Chinese shelling in Lhasa. It would be "impossible", the Lama concluded, to negotiate with people who behaved in this "cruel and criminal" fashion. The thought that just "over forty-eight hours" after his departure, the Chinese had begun "to shell" the Norbulingka and "machinegun" the defenceless Tibetan crowd outside, "horrified" him.<sup>436</sup> In retrospect, an independent government inside Tibet was not a practical proposition. And would have been a disaster, if not a fiasco from the word go. It is to the Lama's credit that he had the good sense not to give it a trial.

Just before he crossed over into India, the Dalai Lama wrote to a number of people, including the Abbot of Tashilhunpo. Here he counselled the Panchen to join him in the escape, "if he could". There is no knowing whether he would have heeded this advice should the Panchen have been a free agent - which he clearly was not. The Dalai Lama reveals that earlier, "in the middle of winter" (November-December 1958?), the Panchen had written to him to offer his good wishes for the new year ahead (Monlam, February 1959?). And in a "separate, secret note" alluded to the "deteriorating" situation throughout the country. And stressed the need "to formulate "a strategy for the future." "This was", the Dalai Lama noted, "the first indication" that the Panchen was no longer "in the thrall of our Chinese masters".<sup>437</sup> One would suspect that even though it took another three to four years to come out in the open, the Panchen's honeymoon with Mao and his men was already over.

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<sup>435</sup> *Dalai Lama* (1990), pp. 141-2.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>437</sup> The Dalai Lama noted that "unfortunately" his message never reached the Panchen Lama and he "remained in Tibet." *Ibid.*, p. 154.

## The Aftermath of the Rebellion

### The Dalai Lama's flight into exile

The Dalai Lama left Lhasa secretly on the night of 17 March exactly a week after the outbreak of the Rebellion which both he and his government had found difficult, if not indeed impossible, to contain, much less control. The Chinese had stayed their hand and for two good reasons. *One*, the hope that they may yet be able to win over the Lama, thereby isolating the rebels: the fevered exchange of letters between the parties was testimony both to Beijing's keenness, and the Dalai Lama's apparent willingness, to play ball. *Two*, to avoid artillery fire and thereby certain destruction of the Norbulingka as long as the Dalai Lama was known to be occupying the palace. Thus Ngabo's last communication to the Lama had asked him where precisely, inside the palace, was he located.<sup>438</sup>

Once however it was clear that the Dalai Lama had fled, the Chinese lost no time in getting to grips with the prevailing chaos. By 22 March, almost within forty-eight hours of its taking the offensive, the PLA had "gained control" over the capital. Events now moved thick and fast, and in rapid succession. On 28 March, the Chinese State Council announced that the 17-Point Agreement (May 1951) stood "torn up" and the "Local Government" of Tibet dissolved, non-existent. The abolition of the Lhasa government implied that the eighteen officials who had accompanied the fugitive Dalai Lama stood discharged and were to face execution / life imprisonment, should they return. The charade that the Dalai Lama was held hostage by the rebels, against his will, was to be kept alive for some more time to come.

Beijing's decision to dissolve the "Local Government" of Tibet and thereby repudiate the 17-Point Agreement of May 1951 which had enshrined the inviolability of that government calls for comment. Especially as to the nature of the Chinese state and the place therein of autonomous regions. To be sure, the CCP's views on the subject had undergone several changes. At the Second National Congress of the CCP (1922), China was viewed as a federal state with Tibet, Mongolia, Xinjiang enjoying the status of republics, as in the Soviet Union. A decade later, in the constitution agreed to at the Jiangxi Soviet Republic (1931), the constituent republics were vested with the right to secede from the Union and form their own independent entities. Actually, all the five nationalities- the Han, Manchus, Mongols, Moslems, and Tibetans- living in China were "to be equal before the Soviet law and shall be citizens of the Soviet Republic." They were to enjoy full rights of self-determination i.e. "they may either join the Union of Chinese Soviets or secede from it and form their own state as they may prefer."

Almost a quarter century later, the new constitution (1954) ruled out any possibility of the minority groups seceding from China. For while its Art 4 provided for "regional autonomy" in areas where "people of minority nationalities live in concentrated

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<sup>438</sup> For the Dalai Lama's epistolary exchanges with General Tan Guansan and Ngabo see *Dalai Lama* (1962), pp. 162- 71.

The Lama makes it clear that he had written "under an urgent moral compulsion" to prevent a "totally disastrous clash" between his unarmed people and the Chinese army: that his objective was "to disguise my real intentions" and that the sole purpose of his last letter was "to conciliate" the Chinese general.



communities", the "Autonomous Regions" were to remain integral parts of the PRC. Earlier, Mao talking to Edgar Snow (1936) had expressed the hope that the Outer Mongolian republic "will automatically become part" of the Chinese federation "at their own will" while Mohammedan and Tibetan peoples, "likewise will form autonomous republics attached to the Chinese federation." Ten years later, on the eve of the birth of the PRC, Mao talked (1947) of "first" recognising Outer Mongolia "as a natural entity" and then organising a sort of United States of China to meet Mongol aspirations. "The same", he added, "is true of Tibet."<sup>439</sup>

As for the Guomindang, to start with, Sun Yatsen had underscored the oneness of the Chinese people by stressing the need for the assimilation and absorption of all non-Han minorities, including the Tibetans. Later, under Soviet Russian influence, the National Conference of the Guomindang (1924) not only accepted the "equality" of all national minorities but also "recognise (d)" their "right of self-determination... in a free and united Chinese Republic." Guomindang actions, however, both in Tibet and Outer Mongolia, belied these professions while in *China's Destiny* (1947) Chiang Kaishek talked unambiguously of ethnic minorities constituting various "stocks" emanating from a common bloodline. Or, as one commentator put it, tribes springing from a single race, the Han!<sup>440</sup>

Three years to the day when the PRC was established, the *People's Daily* made it clear (2 October 1952) that "at this juncture any national movement which sought separation from the Chinese People's Republic for independence" must be branded as reactionary. For this would be tantamount to undermining Han "interests" and would only accrue to the "advantage of imperialism." As if this were not clear enough, Art 2 of the "Common Programme" of the PRC for the "Implementation of the Regional Autonomy for Nationalities" underlined the proposition that each national autonomous region was "an integral part" of the territory of the People's Republic. It followed that its government was only "a local government" which, while competent to draw up "special regulations", must submit these to the higher echelons of the PRC in Beijing for approval.

Later, Art 3 of the 1954 constitution declared China to be "a single (viz. unitary) multinational state" of which the national autonomous regions were "inalienable parts."<sup>441</sup> It followed that the Tibetans were one of the nationalities living in an autonomous region. This position has remained unchanged in the constitutions of 1975 and 1982.

Various explanations have been proffered for this shift in Chinese position from the first decade of Sun's Republic to the CCP in the early 1930s and later. The growing uncertainty of China's borders is emphasised; as also its seeming humiliation in having to

<sup>439</sup> For a more detailed analysis see Parshotam Mehra, "The Elusive Triangle: Tibet in India-China Relations", *China Report*, 26, 2, April-June 1990, pp. 145-56.

See also Dawa Norbu, "Analysis of Sino-Tibetan Relationship, 1245-1911: Imperial Power, Non-coercive Regime and Military Dependency" in Barbara Aziz and Mathew Kapstein (ed), *Soundings in Tibetan Civilisation*, New Delhi, 1985. And Michael C. Walt Van Praag, *The Status of Tibet: History, Rights and Prospects in International Law*, Boulder (Colorado), 1987.

<sup>440</sup> Chiang Kai-shek, *China's Destiny And Chinese Economic Theory*, London, 1947, pp 47-8.

See also "commentary" by Philip Jaffe in *Ibid.*, pp 307-8.

<sup>441</sup> The Dalai Lama with ten more "delegates" had attended a meeting of the National People's Congress in Beijing where the constitution was adopted. The Lama has argued that by not attending, Tibet "might lose" whatever chance of autonomy it might possess while his presence might "possibly help" in persuading Beijing to keep its "promises". *Dalai Lama* (1990), pp. 99-100.

accept the independence of Outer Mongolia in its different incarnations, first as the Mongolian People's Republic (1924) and later Mongolia (1992). There were also known Soviet designs on Xinjiang and Manchuria, amply demonstrated in the decades preceding World War II and its immediate aftermath. Again, in the 1930s there was Japan's successful weaning away both of Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, as well as its virtual stranglehold over Korea for almost four decades following the Russo-Japanese war (1904-5). The outbreak of the Korean War (June 1950), followed by a stern refusal of the US, and the UN, to recognise the PRC was bad enough. Worse still was Washington's overt as well as covert support to the runaway Guomindang regime in Taiwan which, under the discredited Chiang Kaishek, had established its rival, the Republic of China.

Nor was that all. Washington had lent powerful support to France's post World War II return to Vietnam where later it was to mount its own massive onslaught. In the 1950s, the US also launched its suspect cloak and dagger offensives all the way from Tibet to Laos on China's southern flank. Faced with this grim scenario, was it any wonder that the PRC reacted the way it did?

At the 1954 session of the NPC in Beijing, ten seats were allotted to Tibetan "delegates" and their presence widely publicised both in the national as well as international media. Nothing could be better proof of Tibetan acquiescence in Chinese rule!

During the Dalai Lama's 1955 visit to China, Mao had repeatedly underlined that his objective was to "bring progress" to Tibet and that he was glad Lhasa had "come back" to the fold of the Motherland. The latter's progress in varied fields- shipyards, factories, steel plants- was so clearly demonstrated to the visitor by taking him on an extended tour of various parts of China.<sup>442</sup>

The main function of the PCART, which has been called "a shameless confidence trick intended to propagate the lie that Tibet had chosen the socialist path",<sup>443</sup> was to serve as an "authoritative body" for "consultation and planning" during the transitional period before the establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

The idea was "to integrate" Tibet "within the administrative structure" of China. As Beijing viewed it, its problems arose from big nation chauvinism and failure to grasp local conditions in Tibet while mechanically applying there the work experience gained in areas inhabited predominantly by the Han. The need of the hour was to develop a spirit of "democratic consultation" and to ensure that things were done only after "conditions have ripened and agreement reached" by all.<sup>444</sup>

## Lhasa, Post-March 1959

Two interesting facets of the March 1959 situation in Tibet were clearly discernible. To start with, both Shigatse as well as Tashilhunpo had remained unaffected by the taint of the rebellion in Lhasa. And, to underline his own loyalty, the Panchen had telegraphed Mao to lend support to its quelling. On 30 March (1959), Xinhua released a telegram purportedly

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<sup>442</sup> For a first-hand account of the Dalai Lama's meetings and discussions with Mao and Zhou Enlai as well as other Chinese leaders see *Dalai Lama* (1962), pp. 99- 103.

<sup>443</sup> Mary Craig, *Kundun*, p. 186.

<sup>444</sup> For more details see *supra*, Chapter 23, pp. 127-31.

sent by the Panchen to Mao pledging to work for the unity of the motherland and help build a new Tibet. The objective, it appeared, was to ensure that local Chinese officials did not accuse those under the jurisdiction of Shigatse for siding with the rebellion in Lhasa. Later at a meeting of the PCTAR it was decided that reforms in Tibet would be introduced "in accordance with the specific conditions" that prevailed and "through peaceful consultation" among the Tibetan people and public leaders. A few weeks later, the Panchen arrived in Lhasa (April) and was, in the absence of the Dalai Lama, appointed Acting Chairman of the Preparatory Committee. Still later, in September, he travelled to Beijing to attend the National Day celebrations of the CPR and met the Chairman to discuss the situation in Tibet.<sup>445</sup>

To start with, most Tibetans looked upon the Panchen as "their (Chinese) own tame puppet"<sup>446</sup> while his supporters appeared to be keen to reestablish his pre-1923 status and position in the Tsang province. By 1957, thanks to the active assistance of the local communists and the personnel of the North-West Military Region, Shigatse did manage to project that image. As may be evident, it had always viewed Lhasa, *not* the Chinese, to be posing a major threat to its autonomy.

With the departure of the Dalai Lama, in the aftermath of the March Rebellion, the Panchen slipped into his position; the Chinese no longer needed him as they had earlier. And since the Lhasa government stood dissolved, the PCTAR was no longer the three-legged stool, Lhasa-Shigatse-Chamdo, the Chinese had intended. It was now a unitary body with individual members. In the event, Beijing need no longer prop Shigatse, much less make concessions to it. And from its limited viewpoint, Tashilhunpo need no longer enjoy autonomy, much less a separate identity. Presently, the Chinese made bold to round up such of the Panchen's followers, including his tutor, who had fled Kham or Amdo. And this despite the Panchen's active intercession on their behalf and loud protests that they had no role to play in the Lhasa rebellion. For the Chinese, the fact that they had fled their homes was evidence enough that they harboured reactionary designs- and sympathized with the rebel cause.<sup>447</sup>

Between April 1959 and March 1962, the Panchen Lama appeared to be supportive of Beijing's policies, in public at any rate. And is known to have lent full throated backing to Beijing at the meetings of the PCTAR as well as the NPC. Inwardly however he was much

<sup>445</sup> The Panchen's visit to Beijing had coincided with a critical domestic as well as international situation. In China there was the launch of The Great Leap Forward (1959-62) which was to result in a "drastic decline" in industrial and agricultural production; and abroad, a split with the Soviet Union (1960) that had proved disastrous in terms of isolating the PRC.

As a result of the Panchen's meeting with Mao, the Chairman is said to have given "instructions" for a closer working relationship between the Tibet Work Committee and the Panchen Lama. He is also said to have encouraged the Panchen to express his views openly and to tender advice to cadres working in Tibet. *Tsering Shakya*, pp. 262-3.

<sup>446</sup> Mary Craig, *Kundun*, p. 187.

<sup>447</sup> A number of people from Amdo and Kham had fled in the wake of the 1956 revolt and sought the Panchen's protection. They included the Panchen's religious tutor and other important incarnate lamas. The Chinese arrested them, despite the Panchen's protests, on the ground that the fact they had fled their homes was "sufficient evidence" of their reactionary sympathies. Needless to add the Panchen though outwardly supportive of the reform policies in public, and his speeches at the PCTAR and the NPC were clearly demonstrative of this stance, was deeply frustrated by the harshness of the anti-Rebellion campaign and the indiscriminate application of the reforms. *Tsering Shakya*, pp. 261-2.

affected by the harshness of the anti-Rebellion campaign as well as an indiscriminate, and outright, enforcement of the reforms. Hurt too that his attempts to curb the excesses of the local Chinese cadres had been met with indifference.<sup>448</sup>

A young man under the powerful impact of Chinese influence all the way from his early childhood, the Panchen envisioned a future Tibet free of its regressive past. Of serfdom and feudal practices, especially cruel punishments and large 'armies' of lazy, unproductive lamas. All of which made him see "no contradiction" between the ideals the CCP proclaimed and his own religious and national convictions. In the event, he assured his Chinese protectors that he would do his best to maintain peace and thereby keep the situation "under control." Nor need Beijing be apprehensive for his principal aide, Chen Jigme, was known for his pronouncedly pro-Chinese leanings.<sup>449</sup>

For its part, Beijing had always projected the Panchen as a "national leader" whose importance spread beyond Tibet and its Autonomous Region. On an average, the Lama spent about six months, September-April, in the Chinese capital; took part in the 1 October National Day celebrations and attended meetings of the NPC as its Vice-chairman. Here, to all appearances, he got on very well with Li Wei-han, head of the "United Front" and the Nationalities Affairs Bureau.<sup>450</sup>

It may be recalled that in the years immediately following the March (1959) Rebellion, China was in the throes of a major crisis of confidence. On the international plane, there was a split with the Soviet Union (1962) and, nearer home, the disastrous aftermath of the Great Leap Forward (1958-64) which presaged a conflict within the CCP. Failure of crops and a precipitate decline in industrial production meant a famine of "proportions unprecedented in the 20th century" which is said to have claimed the lives of close to forty million people (1953-62). In the event, the Party approach towards the minority question appeared somewhat relaxed; such intractable problems, it was argued, could best be solved on a long-term basis.

While Li Wei-han had initiated a mild criticism of the Party within the larger framework of the Hundred Flowers movement, it had little or no impact on Chinese cadres in Tibet where the primary task was still viewed as a fight against the "reactionary rebels." In Beijing, in 1960-1, the Panchen who had participated in the 1 October celebrations was encouraged to express his views on the situation in Tibet and despatched on an extensive tour of southern China; his objective, to investigate the post-March 1959 situation in what were largely ethnic Tibetan areas. While out there, accompanied by Li Wei-han and Yang Jingren, a Muslim of the Hui nationality who was vice-chairman of the Nationality Affairs Commission, the Lama voiced detailed criticisms of the Party's work in Tibet in the course

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<sup>448</sup> Panchen Erdeni, "Tibet in 1960", *Peking Review*, 13 June 1961, pp. 16-7 cited in Warren Smith, *op.cit.*

The Panchen had also praised the Han "Big Brother" whose continual assistance was essential to make Tibet progress. *Ibid*, p. 523.

<sup>449</sup> Isabel Hilton, *The Search for the Panchen Lama*. Pelican Books, London, 2000, pp. 137-40.

<sup>450</sup> Li Wei-han (1897-1984) : Chairman of the Nationalities Affairs Commission from October 1949 through September 1959; a signatory and head of the negotiations from the Chinese side, for the 17-Point Agreement of May 1951 and Director of the United Front Work Department from April 1950 to March 1965. He is father of the current leader, Li Tieying.

of its anti-Rebellion campaign. Both Li and his deputy took the Panchen's observations seriously. His views, it would appear, were later relayed to Mao.

## **The Panchen Lama's Seventy Thousand Character "Petition"**

The Panchen's "verbal report" of what he saw was processed by Li whom he had authorized "to add to or amend" the written record of their long *tete-a-tetes*. The report later travelled to Premier Zhou Enlai who among others is said to have summoned Zhang Jingwu, the first secretary of the Tibet Work Committee and Zhang Guohua, the Chinese military commander in Lhasa, and asked them to "govern with benevolence"; more, to endeavour to "set people's minds at rest."

In January 1961, the Panchen met with Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Zhou Enlai when the Chairman is said to have agreed to address the alleged "leftist deviation" in the Party's work and issued a new six-point directive on its orientation in the Tibet region.<sup>451</sup>

Earlier, in 1960, on his way back from Beijing the Panchen made an inspection tour of the Tibetan-speaking areas of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan, the traditional Amdo and Kham regions with a sizeable ethnic Tibetan majority. And told the Communist Party cadres that conditions in these areas were now "worse" than in pre-Liberation days. Later, at a "Symposium on Nationality Work", Li Weihan urged non-party members to speak without any inhibitions. This invited some outspoken comments by *Geshe* Sherab,<sup>452</sup> Vice-Chairman of the Qinghai National People's Congress, who criticized leftist errors which had been made in undertaking nationality work.<sup>453</sup>

Tsering Shakya gives a detailed account of the gradual transformation between January 1961 when Yang Jingren, whom we have met earlier, had reported to Deng Xiaoping, then Party secretary, broadly supporting the criticisms made by the Panchen Lama about the situation in Tibet. Mao too appeared to accept Yang Jingren's findings and is said to have decided, as noticed in a preceding paragraph, to redress the alleged "leftist deviation" in policy. It was apparent too when the Panchen left the Chinese capital and arrived in Lhasa (February 1961) that he enjoyed the backing of senior Party leaders and that there would be a revision of strategy and a temporary postponement of reforms in Tibet.

The Panchen's tour of Tibetan-dominated areas in Kham and Amdo (early 1961) on his way back home had disenchanted him no end and he was strongly persuaded that central Tibet would also undergo similar disastrous "economic and social changes" if radical reforms were not "shelved indefinitely." Above all there was a head-on, no-holds-barred clash between the Tibetan desire for "greater autonomy", especially in managing their religious institutions, and Beijing's "abhorrence" for any such concessions.

When the Panchen returned to Beijing (April 1962) he was determined to demand "further concessions" from the Chinese leadership, convinced that the situation in eastern

<sup>451</sup> For more details, *Tsering Shakya*, pp. 264-5.

<sup>452</sup> *Geshe* : A scholar with a doctorate in traditional Buddhist studies. The degree which normally takes 15-20 years of rigorous study is the highest obtainable in the monastic education system within the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism.

<sup>453</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, pp. 270-1.

Tibet and other Tibetan areas had not been "accurately reported" to the senior leaders. And that the Party secretaries were "frightened" to report the truth to Chairman Mao.

Not surprisingly, the Party hierarchy were now arrayed in battle against the Panchen while its month-long meeting (April-May 1962) discussed at considerable length the nationalities policy. It was at this meeting that Mao and the Party leadership decided that enough was enough and that the Party's ideology had to be purified and its revolutionary enthusiasm revitalised. This shift in the ideological slant was to have serious implications for Tibet- and the Panchen Lama.<sup>454</sup>

Earlier, the Panchen had begun drafting his oral submission into a written "petition." The document is said to have been compiled over a three-year (1960-2) period as a result of observations made during inspection tours through Xinjiang as well as southern China and Tibet. It was the end-result of a long series of meetings in which representatives from other parts of China described the situation in their areas in most of which famine was rife. Some of the Panchen's friends, including his elderly tutor Ngulchu Rimpoche and a close confidante, Chen Jigme, had tried to dissuade him from pursuing this course. Ngabo too had, inter alia, suggested that the Panchen confine himself to "verbal criticisms". The Lama however was in no mood to listen to their counsels, except in that some highly critical passages in his report were deleted and a preamble in praise of the Party and its work added. For his part, the Panchen was strongly persuaded that the Chinese leadership may yet realise the consequences of their ill- conceived policies and reverse them. The "petition" bears the imprint of 18 May (1962); in June it was printed and distributed among senior Party leaders.<sup>455</sup>

It is necessary to underline that the Panchen Lama's tours of 1960-1 were made against the backdrop of the disastrous Great Leap Forward (1958-64), a massive industrial development programme designed to transform Chinese economy overnight. The examples it presented were taken from events which took place in Tibetan areas between 1959 and 1962, but the case it made was relevant to the whole of China.<sup>456</sup> The GLF, as is well-known, resulted in large-scale famine and intense deprivation, especially in the case of the rural masses. There had also been domestic repercussions of the growing ideological rift with the Soviet Union (1961) which had led to a gradual drying up of all Russian aid and later technological assistance. The Panchen Lama's persecution (1964-78), in retrospect, may thus be said to synchronise with the worst phases of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-74), a massive upheaval launched by Mao to purge the Chinese revolution of all liberal elements. Who, he was powerfully persuaded, had led to a derailment of all that the great helmsman and his comrades in arms had initially promised.

The Panchen's report was formally submitted to Premier Zhou at a meeting attended among others by Ulanfu, Li Weihan and the top Chinese functionaries in Lhasa, Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua. Understandably, Chinese cadres in Gansu did not take kindly to the Panchen's criticism of their work and between them there is said to have been "an acrid debate."<sup>457</sup>

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 262-74.

<sup>455</sup> *A Poisoned Arrow: The Secret Report of the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama*. Tibetan Information Network. London, 1997, Preface, p. ix.

<sup>456</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>457</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, p. 273.

这些缺点给武装了脱离群众的条件，也是逃亡国外的叛乱分子和分散在西藏境内的残余叛乱分子对我们更加疑虑、惧怕，但不肯来投降，而且成为反革命到底的思想更趋坚定的主要因素。同时，西藏的上层关押犯中，原西藏地方政府的许多官吏虽被列入叛乱罪名的行列，但是，大多数是1959年在拉萨叛乱时，从3月10日在罗布赤卡叛乱首领宣布反动的口号以后到19日之间，在罗布赤卡等处召集原西藏地方政府僧俗官员开了各种关于叛乱的金边的参加者，其中凡在平叛时被俘的，都能高效率地作叛乱首领或罪寇而被关押的。但是，若问这些人是否全是叛乱首领或罪寇？很难说“是”。当时召开叛乱会议时叛乱罪寇说：“若未就无话可说，若不杀，不问任何人包括家属在内全部杀光”。就如谚语所说“虫不吐吐，交要杀头”一样，由于受到所感到的难以忍受的压力，和以恃权强制的方式进行严重的威胁，在保全自己的思想支配下，为了解救自己和家属的危险，不得已而听从敌人的摆布，此其一。在叛乱首领的宗教和民族利益的借口下，对宗教、民族具有深刻的信仰、热爱和自尊心而又不了解实际的好人，上了敌人的当，此其二。由于西藏是封建制度，地方政府官吏们从祖先时起，受“具喜芒”（原西藏地方政府之名，一一译注）之恩惠而生存，且自身亦为地方政府之官吏，所以差不多人人都行“在哪里吃食就在

Document 25. Excerpt from  
Panchen Lama's "A Poisoned Arrow"

(zhaxie)

imprisoned. Therefore, these errors and mistakes created conditions where we were cut off from the masses, and those rebels who had fled abroad and those remnants of the rebels scattered in Tibet had even more doubts and fears about us. Not only did they not come forward to surrender, but also this was the principal factor creating the tendency for die-hard counter-revolutionary thought to become stronger. At the same time, among those of the upper strata in Tibet who were imprisoned, there were many officials of the official Tibetan local government who had been ranked as chief criminals of the rebellion (*panluan zuiku*). On 10<sup>th</sup> March 1959, the leaders of the rebellion made their reactionary announcement in the Luobuliinka (Norbu Linka). Between that date and 19<sup>th</sup> March, they convened various types of meetings of the monastic and secular officials of the original Tibetan local government on the subject of the rebellion, in the Luobuliinka and other places. Most of those officials who had been ranked as chief criminals of the rebellion were, at the time of the rebellion in Lhasa in 1959, simply participants in those meetings. All those who were captured at the time of suppression of the rebellion were perfunctorily swept together, regarded as chief criminals of the rebellion and imprisoned. However, what if we ask whether or not these people were all leaders and/or chief criminals of the rebellion? It is very difficult to say that this is the case. At the time when the meetings relating to the rebellion were convened, the chief criminals of the rebellion said: "If you come, nothing will happen to you; if you do not, then you and your entire families will be killed." Just like the saying "[f insects do not produce oil, then cut their heads off] (*chong bu tu you, jiu yao sha tou*), due to the unbearable pressure exerted on them, and to serious threats made by means of special power and force, and driven by thoughts of self-preservation, in order to save themselves and their families from danger, they had no choice but to be ordered about by the enemy. This is the first point. The second point is that the leaders of the rebellion used the pretxts (*jiexou*) of religion and the national interest, and so good people who had deep faith, love and respect for their religion and nationality, and who did not understand the actual situation, were deceived by the enemy. The third point is that because Tibet has a feudal system, and the officials of the local government received favours from and derived their living from the "Juxigong"<sup>25</sup> (the original Tibetan local Government - Chinese translator's note) since the time of their ancestors, and furthermore since they themselves were officials of the local government, the situation was more or less that they all thought along the lines of "act as the watchdog at the gate of those who feed

<sup>25</sup> "Juxigong" literally means Palace of Happiness; a literal translation of the Tibetan word *Gaden Phodrang*, or *dge 'khan pho brang*, the building in Drepung /bras srongtsi monastery near Lhasa after which the Dalai Lama's government was named.

Courtesy Tibetan Information Network

The Panchen Lama's "petition", "the most detailed and informed attack... ever written" on Chinese policies in Tibet,<sup>458</sup> retails the sufferings of his people in the TAR and the four contiguous areas of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan. His objective, the Lama had concluded, was "to benefit the Party and the people", a matter of "great significance" in his life. Nor did he want to bring "any trace of dishonour" to his own "industrious and courageous" Tibetan nationality.<sup>459</sup>

Meantime in June (1962) the petition was accepted as a "valued criticism" of the Party and senior cadres from Tibet were summoned to discuss it. The petition apart, four draft documents were issued on the subject of how to rectify the mistakes identified therein. The subjects covered related to achieving "cooperation" between traditional Tibetan leaders and Chinese cadres; implementing the Party's policy on religion, rehabilitating senior (Tibetan) leaders falsely accused of involvement in the March (1959) rebellion and plans for the education and recruitment of cadres.<sup>460</sup>

In Tibet while there was no disagreement among Chinese cadres over the central issue of eradicating reactionaries, there was nonetheless growing tension between the cadres and the military. And between military personnel rushed to quell the March (1959) Rebellion and those who had been there since the early 1950s.

The Panchen's Seventy Thousand Character Petition (STCP) to the Central Committee of the CCP has never been officially published but a summary of its contents was available from the Red Guard publications in the course of the Cultural Revolution and in a biography of the Panchen Lama published after his death (1989). Broadly, the Panchen was highly critical of Chinese policies in Tibet and regions with large ethnic Tibetan populations. He pointed out that social and economic changes were endangering Tibetan nationality and that the latter had felt increasingly threatened. Its numbers had dwindled and their Buddhist faith virtually annihilated. Relentlessly pursued, this policy would make the community extinct through assimilation into other groups. The petition furnished details of areas where all young people had been detained leaving out only the old and the infirm.

The petition had also made suggestions for correcting past mistakes. Inter alia, that the Tashilhunpo monastery function as it had earlier and the strength of its monks restored; that innocent people arrested after the March (1959) rebellion, be set free, and an apology tendered to them; that Chinese cadres guilty of wrong-doing be punished. Not surprisingly, the latter suggestion earned the Panchen the inveterate hostility of the cadres working in Tibet and, as briefly mentioned earlier, even his spiritual guru as well as personal confidant had counselled him against these views being aired.<sup>461</sup>

A brief digression may be in order. London-based Tibet Information Network published the full text of the STCP under the title *A Poisoned Arrow* (1997). Embellished by a Preface (Robert Barnett) and an "Historical Introduction" (Dawa Norbu), the 'petition', entitled "A Report on the sufferings of the masses in Tibet and other Tibetan regions and suggestions for future work to the Central Committee through the respected Premier Zhou", is dated 18 May 1962 and runs into 123 pages in Chinese print. It may be noted that the report was originally written in Tibetan and its Chinese version translated therefrom. The

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<sup>458</sup> Isabel Hilton, p. 156.

<sup>459</sup> *Loc cit.*

Also see *A Poisoned Arrow*, op. cit. p.123

<sup>460</sup> Tsering Shakya, p. 273.

<sup>461</sup> *A Poisoned Arrow*, Preface, p. xix.



任何道理的。凡是一个勤劳勇敢的民族，不仅一定会对自己的宗教和民族有大的信仰、热爱和自尊心，而且会以牺牲生命来保护此二者的利益。

(2) 在民族、复查时，由于干部当中的左倾分子和积极分子当中不明事理的人们的所作所为，使民族的权利和特点受到了一些损害。把必须受到尊重的藏族的语文、服饰、好的风俗习惯等主要的民族特点，也在所谓革命工作中大破坏、大暴露、大践踏的三大之下，认为一切旧的都是落后的、肮脏的和无用的，不区别其实际上善恶与否，全都混清在一起，而刮起要予毁灭的风，忽视藏文，破坏藏族，并且说什么“须费了材料，穿起来不方便”；对妇女的首饰、男人的辫子表现出不喜欢的态度，致使无法继续穿戴和留下去；对屋檐外的粉刷、屋顶的旗杆、塔式屋顶、庙宇装饰、节日娱乐和民间体育等也看作无益多余的，致使大部分停顿了等，诸如此类，难以一一叙述，也没有全讲的必要，不再讲了。对民族文字、服饰、好的风俗习惯等主要民族特点的重要性可以在下面未谈。

(3) 民主生活不健全，对于应受法律保护的各项民族权利，未能依法严格执行，因而干部中有大民族主义思想的人，自以为了不起，骄傲自满，傲慢自居，偏爱(自己的)民族，忽视藏族特点，侵犯藏族的权利，甚至给得到藏族权利和利益的人强行扣上地方民族主义者的帽子等。在藏族中也有一些滑头巧语，随说应变，私利熏心之辈，在大民族主义者面前，逢迎恭维。上述这两流不同人物，

Document 26/ Excerpt from Panchen Lama's<sup>65</sup>  
"A Poisoned Arrow"

Irenhel

and hardworking nationality will not only have a great belief, love and respect for their religion and nationality, but also they will sacrifice their lives to protect the interests of these two.

(2) At the time of democratic reform and re-investigation, owing to certain things done by a sub-group of the leftists and activists among the cadres, who did not understand the situation, some damage was done to the rights and characteristics of the nationality. The Tibetan language, dress and personal adornment (*ushu*), good customs and habits and other such important national characteristics which should have been respected were also included in the "Three Greats" revolutionary work of "great destruction, great exposure, great construction". They thought that everything old was backward, filthy and useless; they made no distinction between what was in fact needed and what was not, everything was mixed up, and a wind of destruction blew up (*guaqi yao yu pohuai de feng*). They neglected the Tibetan language, laughed at Tibetan dress, and said things like "what a waste of material, how inconvenient to wear"; they showed an attitude of dislike towards women's head dresses (*shoushi*) and men's queues, with the result that it was impossible to wear a headdress or keep a queue. They regarded whitewashing the outer walls, flagpoles on the roofs, marriage and funeral ceremonial gifts, monastery gatherings and worshipping the gods, festival entertainments and traditional sports as useless and superfluous, so that most of these practices stopped. It would be difficult to describe all of these things individually, and there is no need to talk about everything, so I will say no more. I will speak some other time about the importance of the national language, dress and personal adornment, good customs and habits and other principal national characteristics.

(2) Democratic life is not fully established; as regards the various nationality rights which should be protected by law, these have not been implemented strictly in accordance with the law. There are, among the cadres, people who are "big nationalists". They think that they are terrific, they are proud, complacent and opinionated, they favour their own nationality and ignore the characteristics of the Tibetan nationality, they violate the rights of the Tibetans, and even forcefully label those who mention the rights and interests of the Tibetans as "local nationalists" (*difang minzuzhuyizhe*). Among Tibetan people there are also some who are artful and cunning, who adapt to changing circumstances, and who are only concerned with their own interests. They put on a pretence and curry favour with the "big nationalists". The two different types of people

(Courtesy Tibetan Information Network)

English translation is well annotated and includes such useful appendices as a complete chronology on the Panchen Lama (1938-89), texts of Xinhua reports of 28 March (1959) on the Lhasa Rebellion and another entitled "Facts on the Khamba Rebellion" (26 April 1959); the "crimes" of the Panchen Lama, reproduced from the *Peking Review* (September 1965) and an extract from the Panchen Lama's Address to the TAR Standing Committee Meeting of the NPC, 28 March 1987. There is also a bibliographic note listing relevant publications in Chinese, Tibetan and English.<sup>462</sup>

## The Panchen Lama's decline- and fall

While all seemed to be going well, there was soon a spanner in the wheels. For, in the summer of 1962, at a meeting at Beidaihe, a famous seaside resort not far from Shanghai, Chairman Mao is said to have criticized Li Weihai insisting that the United Front, which Li headed, had not correctly grasped the meaning of class struggle but worked on "capitulation". He allegedly criticized the Panchen Lama too indicating that in terms of class analysis, the Panchen's interpretation was tantamount to an attempt by a feudal ruler "to regain his class position." It was at this meeting that Mao is reported to have criticised Li for his links with the Panchen Lama and characterised the latter's 'petition' as "a poisoned arrow aimed at the Party by a reactionary feudal overlord."<sup>463</sup>

Earlier when the petition was discussed with Premier Zhou Enlai, both Zhang Guohua and Zhang Jingwu vehemently criticised it, insisting that the PLA cadres had made tremendous strides. The result, as has been pointed out, was an acrimonious debate between the Panchen and the cadres. Later as briefly alluded to earlier, the report was printed and circulated among leading members of the Party Central Committee with the Panchen having a meeting with the Chairman himself. In its aftermath, Beijing is said to have made concessions in regard to the number of monks at Tashilhunpo (2,000) and other monasteries in Tibet (3,000), and sanctioned stipends by the state. A number of Tibetan officials detained in 1959 were also set at liberty (1962).<sup>464</sup>

It should be obvious that to start with, the CCP seemed to welcome the Panchen's criticisms and his forthright comments on the shortcomings of their policy in Tibet. Barnett concedes that the "initial response" to the Panchen's petition was "positive" and Chinese officials accepted the fact that "reforms" had been initiated without due regard to local conditions. More, that there had been "leftist deviations" in carrying out the Party policy. These findings were also relayed to Deng Xiaoping who had earlier been closely associated with the Party policy; as a matter of fact, he had master-minded the 1950 events leading to the "liberation".<sup>465</sup>

In his "preface" Barnett sets out at length the Panchen's "second account" of his observations in central Tibet after his return from Beijing (October 1961). The Chinese leadership was however much too preoccupied to give any serious thought to his findings. In the event, Zhou arranged that the Panchen visit Xinjiang. On the way back, he stopped at

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<sup>462</sup> *A Poisoned Arrow*, supra, n. 455.

<sup>463</sup> *A Poisoned Arrow*, Preface, p. xx

<sup>464</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, p. 273

<sup>465</sup> *A Poisoned Arrow*, Preface, p. xix

这种实际情况的行径，搞得轰轰烈烈，所以就起了猛烈的瞎指挥之风。(7)由于这些地区的一部分负责人造成的后果，使民主生活只剩虚名。若对他们向下面讲的话如投出扬善防恶的意见时，就以各种借口给以严厉打击，把对方接二连三地压服下去，这就象水往低处流不住高处置一样，下级只能按干部所想的，唯命是从，而陷入别无出路的境地。由此可见，各方面强迫命令之风刮得很猛烈。另外，由于诸如此类的许多缺点错误，不仅使农牧业生产受到严重的损害和破坏；而且在基层为了完成上级交给的指标任务，甚至不仔细考虑群众的口粮就征购粮食；虽然完成了指标任务，而广大劳动人民群众，每人每月就仅有十斤左右口粮，有的地方连这一点也没有如数得到。公共食堂建立后，由于不管群众愿意与否就强迫加入食堂，因而就是标准很低的那点口粮是否夠数，群众也不知道。由于口粮减少使最低限度的生活也不得勉强一饱，人们的饥饿痛苦之火燃烧起来，所以使我们藏区以前作为马、骡、牛、黄牛饲料的油渣、麦糠等，也成为人的难得的有养分的香的食物了。还有食堂负责人为了使民食看起来分量多和消除一天的饥饿痛苦起见，别说稍微能吃的一切草类，就是不能吃的树皮、树叶、草根草籽也采集了许多，加工后和那点粮食掺合起来作成猪食一样的稀糊糊给人们吃，其实这也还有限，不能果腹。由于这种藏族历史上从来没有过的、人们作梦也想不到会有如此严重的饥饿之痛苦，人民群众抵抗不住这种残酷地折磨，群众的体质日益衰弱，所以一些地方感冒等一些

Document 27 / Excerpt from *Paricheh Lamras*  
"A Poisoned Arrow"

[wei/fan]

late, and stuffed the gaps in their time full of meetings. Because of numerous such activities which discouraged the masses, damaged production, ran counter to the actual situation and were done on a grand and spectacular scale, there blew up a fierce wind of foolish [xia] commands.

(7) Because of the results created by some of the responsible people in these areas, only the empty name of democratic life was left. When beneath them opinions are voiced as if to publicise what is good and prevent what is bad,<sup>111</sup> they will use all types of excuse to make severe attacks, and constantly force their opponents to submit. This is just like water flowing downwards and not upwards; the lower levels can only be absolutely obedient to what the cadres think and say, and sink into a plight with no way out.

From the above, the wind of forceful orders blew fiercely in every area. In addition, because of many errors and mistakes of this type, not only was serious harm done to agricultural and animal herding production, but also the lower levels collected up grain without giving detailed consideration to what the masses needed to eat, so that they could attain the targets given to them by the upper levels. Although the targets were attained, it was said that each person in the broad masses of the working people only had about five kilos [ten jin] of grain per month, but some places did not even have this amount. After public canteens were set up, they did not pay attention to the wishes of the people but forced them to join in, and so the masses did not even know whether the amount of grain provided actually reached this standard, which was already very low. Because the amount of grain was not enough to feed even those with the lowest requirements, the fire of bitterness and hunger was ignited, and so dogs of fat, grain husks and so on which formerly in Tibet were fodder for horses and donkeys, bulls and oxen, became hard to get and were considered nourishing and fragrant foods. Also, in order to make the food appear more and to dispel one day's hunger and bitterness, the responsible people in the canteens, apart from gathering together a lot of grass, which was more or less edible, even gathered together tree bark, leaves, grass roots and grass seeds, which really were not edible. After processing this, they mixed it with a bit of foodstuffs, made it into a thin gruel like pig food and gave it to people to eat, and even this was limited in amount and could not fill their stomachs. Because the anguish of such severe hunger had never been experienced in Tibetan history and was such that people could not imagine it even in their dreams, the masses could not resist this kind of cruel torment, and their condition declined daily. Therefore, in some places,

<sup>111</sup> "Ruo shi renmen shiying qianxin sheng de hua ru ichu yang shen fang o de yian shi".

Courtesy Tibetan Information Network

his hometown in Qinghai and saw for himself the harsh reality of the GLF, the drive to establish the communes and common kitchens. He is also said to have visited some villages in neighbouring Gansu and discovered to his horror that in Mao's socialist paradise- unlike a backward feudal polity such as that of Tibet- beggars did not even have a begging bowl!<sup>466</sup>

Understandably, while Chinese cadres in Tibet were unhappy with the Panchen, the central party leadership in Beijing continued to back him if only as a matter of expediency. And this largely because, with the Dalai Lama in flight, it wanted to retain a figurehead to whom the Tibetan people could relate. For obvious reasons, Beijing was deeply concerned that should the Panchen flee the country - and join the Dalai Lama in India - it would spell a virtual disaster for its policy. Moreover, the Panchen's criticisms came at a time when, as noted earlier, the Chinese were facing serious crises both in their external relations as well as on the domestic front. In the event, to the political leadership in Beijing, the Tibetan issue represented only "a minor concession."<sup>467</sup>

Mao's later criticism of the Panchen Lama may be viewed in retrospect as the beginning of the end; for the tide now turned against the Lama with "astonishing rapidity". The implementation of the Four Documents was stopped and the Panchen and his tutor, Geshe Sherab Gyatso, criticised and effectively excluded from participation at official meetings in Tibet. Soon another supporter of the Panchen, Xi Zhongxun was the subject of a diatribe, while Li Weihan's place as head of the United Front Department was taken by Xu Bing. The new chief called an enlarged meeting "to expose and criticize" Li's work, the latter now having been labelled a "capitulationist and revisionist."<sup>468</sup>

In October (1962) - the Central Committee of the CPP had convened in September to endorse Mao's call for the primacy of class struggle - the Tibet Work Committee ruled that the Panchen Lama had made serious mistakes. On the ground however, while the Lama was allowed to retain his posts in the PCTAR, he was not to attend any of its meetings. Worse was to follow; all through 1962-63, the Panchen was not permitted to move out of Shigatse.

Earlier (1962), the Panchen Lama had been asked to move to the Potala, denounce the Dalai Lama and take his place as Chairman of the PCTAR. Sadly for his political bosses, he refused to fall in line and instead exhorted his people to preserve their cultural heritage at all costs. His punishment: to keep away from all public appearances for almost two years. One day, in 1964, he was given what may be viewed as his "last chance" to come clean. To his detractors' utter shock, and disbelief, he failed the test. For addressing a gathering of almost ten thousand people in Lhasa, instead of denouncing the Dalai Lama, the Panchen affirmed that the latter's survival was a sign of hope for Tibet! And made no bones about his conviction that the country would soon regain its earlier position and His Holiness "will return to the Golden Throne."<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> *A Poisoned Arrow*, Preface, p. xvii

Also see *Tsering Shakya*, p. 264

<sup>467</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, p. 274

<sup>468</sup> Initially, Mao himself had identified Li as being "soft" on nationally issues and as having adopted "revisionist" policies. And although Li fell from grace he was soon "rehabilitated". All the same. Li never regained his earlier power and influence, occupying only a minor "ceremonial" post in the government. *Tsering Shakya*, p. 291

<sup>469</sup> "How the Panchen Lama was Tortured?", *Tibetan Review*, 1- III, I, No. 6, 15 May 1970. 6-7.

Also see *Isabel Hilton*, pp. 160-1.

That his "petition" had attracted attention was evident from the savagery of the attacks to which the Panchen was now exposed. All the same in Tibet itself, it was accepted that the 29-year old Panchen was by no means an immature young lama, but a keen observer who rubbed shoulders with the tallest leaders of the Party, and government, in China.

As briefly noted earlier, on the mainland the Great Leap Forward had proved to be a disaster; it had brought no end of human misery and discontent to the countryside. If partly to contain the damage, Mao decided to return to his hardcore ideological basics. The shift had serious implications for Tibet where the mounting border tension with India made Beijing abandon its earlier attempts to win the people over by persuasion and seek instead a more rapid integration of the land.

By September (1962) Mao was advocating renewal of the class struggle while in Tibet the Party was gearing up to scuttle its earlier stance of implementing change from the top and soliciting the cooperation of the traditional ruling classes. On a theoretical level therefore, the new orientation was to furnish an ideal pretext for an attack on the Panchen Lama as a "capitalist roader." This was grist to the mill of many a party cadre in Qinghai, Sichuan and Gansu who were only too keen to expose the Panchen as a "reactionary" and a "revisionist" whose principal interest, they reasoned, was to hold fast to his feudal privileges.

## The Panchen Lama's "Trial" & Punishment

Event now moved thick and fast. In October 1962, the Panchen was not invited for the National Day celebrations in Beijing while his friend Li Wei-han, architect of the policy for minority nationalities, was also conspicuous by his absence. As noticed, Mao had denounced Li for being "soft" on nationality issues and for adopting "revisionist" tendencies in his United Front work. He was soon stripped of his important party positions. Even though it was later announced that he had "corrected his mistakes", Li was never to regain his earlier power and influence. The gravamen of the charge against him was that he had allowed the Panchen and his supporters to carry unrestrained attacks on the Party and encouraged their criticisms.<sup>470</sup>

With Li's fall from grace, the Panchen's guilt by association was fully established. The Lama was accused of following the revisionist path and obstructing the implementation of socialist reform. In retrospect, it may be noted that this was to coincide with Mao's attack on Soviet revisionism and his now clear dictum that the latter had been one of the cardinal sins in revolutionary China. To all appearances, the Lama's real crime had been to describe the consequences of ill-conceived Chinese policies in Tibet. Initially, the Panchen refused to recant, much less admit that he had made mistakes. The fact was that during 1960-2, he had been very close to the top leadership of the CPP and had, not unoften, talked to Mao himself. Not surprisingly, he termed the accusations against him to be "preposterous."<sup>471</sup>

By end-1962, Mao launched his Socialist Education Movement (1962-5) against what he perceived to be a trend towards capitalism and revisionism in the PRC. In Tibet's case it translated itself into "Four Clean Ups", which stood for the key ingredients of a full-scale

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<sup>470</sup> *Supra*, n. 468

<sup>471</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, p. 292.

佛“善僧”能夠依教行非。保證可以做到寺廟的主教歸多教“善僧”僧眾所有且進行名實相符的民主管理；并保證能夠激到寺廟的宗教歸多數“善僧”僧眾所有且進行名實相符的民主管理。保證寺廟可以是名實俱全的宗教機構；并保證寺廟能夠是名實俱全的宗教機構。保證一部分主要寺廟可以執行依教義和佛言所規定的組織、紀律、規例等；并保證一部分主要寺廟能夠執行依教義和佛言所規定的組織紀律、規例等。保證可以培養宗教的繼承人；并保證能夠培養宗教的繼承人。并對從事于梵如知海的宗教理論的“講辯若”和“聞思修”的“善僧”的生活由國家賦予等，請中央予以承諾并能指示下級予以執行，這是百分之九十以上的藏族人民的希望。因此，請中央寬懷考慮而予以不小的蔭賜。

第二，大部分藏族地區的具有民族性的叛亂，是由各種原因而引起的；所以在平叛戰爭中，同一大家庭的兄弟民族的人之間，不得已而互相殘殺，流了不幸之血；因此不僅使兄弟民族互相產生了壞的看法和認識，而且，平叛期間，一些地區的負責人搞的結果，使平叛的做法不合實際，不均正而英明；其後又未合情地區分黑白，卻予以打擊，許多藏人無故花罪，此其一；干部搞的結果，把藏族人民愛如生命的自己的宗教和信教搞得僅有其名，此其二；干部搞的結果，使藏族人民愛如生命的自己的民族利益受到嚴重損害，此其三；這三者使得人們的看法上，認為是對藏族進行惡意打擊的態度；從而在該族各階層人民不少人的思想上產生了懷疑

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with their religion, and that they are really able to do so. We must ensure that authority in the monasteries can belong to the majority of the "good monks" and that they carry out democratic management in which reality accords with the name, and that such authority really belongs to the majority of the "good monks" and that they will really be able to carry out democratic management in which reality accords with the name. We must ensure that monasteries can be religious institutions both in name and in reality, and that they really are religious institutions both in name and in reality. We must ensure that some of the principal monasteries can implement organisation, discipline and regulations stipulated on the basis of doctrine and Buddhist decrees, and that they will really be able to implement organisation, discipline and regulations stipulated on the basis of doctrine and Buddhist decrees. We must ensure that they can nurture their religious successors, and that they are really able to do so. The livelihood of the "good monks" who engage in "teaching, debating, writing" and "listening, thinking and contemplating" of the theories of religion, which are as vast as the ocean, should be granted by the State, and I ask the central authorities to promise this and to give instructions to the lower levels to implement it. This is the wish of more than 90% of the Tibetan people. Therefore, I ask the central authorities for their generous consideration and for their great patronage [Living ci].

Second, the rebellion in the majority of the Tibetan areas, which was strongly nationalistic in nature, arose due to various factors; therefore, in the battle to suppress the rebellion, we were compelled to kill one another, and blood was tragically shed. This created harmful viewpoints and misunderstandings between brother nationalities. In addition, during the period of suppression of the rebellion, the actions of responsible personnel in some areas resulted in the methods of suppression being inconsistent with reality and not being sufficiently correct and wise; afterwards, they did not make reasonable distinctions between black and white, they attacked everything, and many Tibetans suffered losses without cause. This is the first point. Second: the result of the cadres' actions was that religious belief and religion, which Tibetans love as their own lives, existed in name only. Third: the result of the cadres' actions was that the interests of the nationality, which Tibetans love as their own lives, were severely damaged. Due to these three points, many people thought that the Tibetan nationality was being viciously attacked; therefore, doubts, panic, anxiety, fear and great hatred arose in the minds

(Courtesy Tibetan Information Network)

purge in politics, the economy, ideology and Party organisation. In essence, the SEM was intended to remove corruption among party cadres in the key areas of granaries, property and the work points awarded to peasants. Later, in December (1966), the SEM was officially merged into the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR). All through the years 1963-4, the Chinese intensified their political campaign in Tibet with a more direct ideological orientation. The objective was to steer the Tibetan masses into overthrowing their old society and embracing the new led by the Party which in Tibet's its case was synonymous with its Chinese version. It was plain that, thanks to the in-fighting in the Party itself, Tibet was to be treated as no different from the rest of China. And no concession would therefore be made to its distinctive identity.<sup>472</sup>

The admonishing of the Panchen Lama was to mark the end of Beijing's attempt to achieve some modicum of consensus between itself and Tibet's ruling elite. The argument was that as long as its rule in Tibet was weak, the Party needed the support of the rinpoches, lamas and other traditional leaders but now that it had achieved total control (1964), the latter were expendable and had consequently become redundant.<sup>473</sup>

The Panchen was soon to emerge as the principal target of attack. To start with, as noted earlier, between 1963-4, he had been kept out of various meetings of the PCTAR and the TWC. Presently, the Tashilhunpo faction which had survived the anti-March (1959) Rebellion campaign, attracted notice as the "Panchen clique" with veiled yet unambiguous pointers to the Panchen as the country's "biggest capitalist serf-owner."<sup>474</sup> It was emphasised that poor peasants should oppose their real enemies; in other words, landlords and rich farmers should be subjected to "struggle sessions". By the exploited, with a good class background, against the exploiters, with a bad class background.<sup>475</sup>

At an "enlarged" meeting (18 September 1964) of the PCTAR, representatives of "all progressive and patriotic elements" from the Tibetan masses were invited. There were some 300 delegates who had been carefully screened and handpicked by the Chinese and included peoples' deputies, Tibetan cadres and Party members selected from all over Tibet. Here, Zhang Guohua obliquely referred to "certain leading reactionaries" who allegedly were plotting to raise armed insurrections in a bid "to restore serfdom and oppose socialism." Without naming names he hinted at the the Panchen as "a big rock obstructing the path of socialism."

For the meeting itself though the Chinese observed due protocol, with the Panchen, still Vice-Chairman of the PCTAR, and Acting Chairman in place of the Dalai Lama, taking his customary seat at the head of the table. Zhang Jingwu, Beijing's special representative, was seated to his right while Zhang Guohua was placed on his left. As noted earlier, the latter threw clear enough hints about leading reactionaries occupying high positions and plotting to raise armed insurrections so as to oppose socialism and restore feudalism. Other speakers dutifully echoed his veiled references, and threats. The meeting resolved to break into sub-committees to "study and expose" the criminals and their evil plots. On the third day, the Panchen was formally accused of plotting to launch an armed rebellion and even as he denied the accusations, Chinese hirelings began to "slap, punch and kick" him. There

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<sup>472</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, p. 293.

<sup>473</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>474</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, p. 294.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 294-295.

were not a few who feebly repeated the charges and began to avert their gaze from the Panchen Lama.

In the weeks that followed- the meeting lasted for over a month- the 'crimes' the Panchen and his 'clique' had committed, were brought out into the open, day after day after day. The 'clique' for the record, included Chen Jigme, the architect of his pro-China policy; his elderly tutor, Ngulchu and Enge Palden, the former head of his Beijing office. The Panchen's aged parents and some of his household staff and close associates were hauled up too. And accused, and roughed up. And their varied sins of omission and commission against the motherland, the Party, the people, socialism, duly highlighted. Inter alia, the Panchen was accused of raising "fighting dogs" and "training cavalry" to stage an armed counter-revolution. One of the most "damning" charges came from one of his closest assistants. This was one Chape Lhamo Sonam, who produced a number of "documents" to prove that his master was planning to stage a revolt; that he was harbouring counter-revolutionary sentiments and contemplating an escape to India!<sup>476</sup>

Broadly, the charges against the Panchen were of two kinds. One, that he had attempted an armed rebellion; two, that his less than honest character, both as a person and as a lama, had brought disgrace to the institution. Beijing's clear perception was that the charge of "traitorous activities" would damn him among his Chinese and foreign votaries while his alleged depravity and duplicity degrade and condemn him among his own people. The flimsier the charge, the more "irrefutable" the proof and the more "damning" the evidence. Among the "witnesses" was Ngabo who alleged that long ago, the Panchen had given him a pistol and 100 rounds of ammunition!

The 'trial' by itself was not all. An exhibition was mounted in Lhasa, as well as Shigatse, showing the Tibetan people the 'crimes' the Panchen and his 'clique' had committed. The clear objective was to urge them to destroy his popular image and denounce him as a counter-revolutionary. The 'trial' itself soon degenerated into a "struggle session" in which the Panchen was subjected to physical abuse, some hitting him with their fists, others pulling down his hair and even spitting on him! For his part, the Lama remained as defiant as ever and refused to admit that he had been guilty of any "crimes". At one stage, he was so outraged as to bang the table in front of him. And tore up the "documents". This was later held against him as "bad" behaviour, tantamount to the heinous crime of resisting criticism from the masses!<sup>477</sup>

In retrospect, there was little hard evidence that the Panchen had planned an armed rebellion. An alleged "underground factory" manufacturing arms and ammunition related to the students and workshop of an Industrial Training School which, with the knowledge of his Chinese masters, the Lama had established at Shigatse. This was done by converting an institute set up earlier by Beijing for training officials for the Panchen Lama's administration. The harsh truth about the Panchen Lama was that he had remained highly critical of Chinese policies and attracted a great deal of support from his people who naturally turned to him as their leader. All the same, there had been rumblings of resentment, both in Lhasa as well as Shigatse, against the life-style of some of his coterie to whom Chinese officials often referred as the "little Panchens". It was alleged that the

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<sup>476</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, pp. 296-7.

<sup>477</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, p. 298.

According to Barnet, the struggle session lasted for 50 days of "interrogation, abuse, humiliation".  
*A Poisoned Arrow*, Preface, p. xx.



Panchen's dogs were fed on fresh meat (later they were to be stoned to death!); that a splittist, he was both anti-Party and anti-people. In the event, there was no question of keeping him as his people's leader.<sup>478</sup>

The nearest thing to a piece of "real evidence" against the Panchen was two foreign vehicles fitted with special storage for extra fuel. Allegedly, the Lama wanted to escape by road. Across pathways choked with Chinese convoys and heavy patrols. And dotted with check posts!

There were accusations galore; of greed, gluttony, of duping people under the cloak of religion. Interestingly though, all through the decade 1951-62, when his own people suspected him of being no better than a Chinese protege, there had not been the faintest of whispers about the Panchen's personal life. Much less of his role, and reputation, as a learned lama.<sup>479</sup>

At the end of it all, amid shouts that the Panchen's was a fit case for execution or for being placed in a correction camp in Lhasa, the Lama, his parents and other retinue who had survived the ordeal were bound and chained. And taken away in closed trucks. Not long after, these high security risks surfaced in Beijing.

In November (1964) Beijing awarded the Panchen three labels or "hats" - anti-Party, anti-People, and anti-Socialist. A few weeks later, at the Third National People's Congress, Zhou Enlai while announcing the dismissal of the Dalai Lama from his post as Chairman of the PCTAR added that the Panchen Lama too stood relieved - "at the people's request" - both as Acting Chairman of the PCTAR as well as of his membership of that body. The Lama was also removed as Vice Chairman of the CPPCC but allowed to remain a member of its Standing Committee. And "directed" to remain "permanently" in the Chinese capital.<sup>480</sup>

The Panchen Lama's trial, and subsequent punishment, would appear to be a sequel to his public espousal of the cause of the Dalai Lama at the beginning of 1964. As noted in a preceding paragraph, when called upon to address a gathering in the course of the one-day Monlam festival in Lhasa, the Panchen Lama had affirmed that the Dalai Lama was the "true leader" of his people and wished him a long lease of years. This raised the Chinese hackles no end. A fact that goes far to explain the Panchen Lama's later trial and punishment. During his long years in jail, he is said to have attempted suicide "more than once".

Apart from his 50-day "trial" in Tibet where he was denounced as the "biggest reactionary serf owner" and the "biggest parasite and bloodsucker in Tibet", there were "struggle sessions" in Beijing. In 1966, in the first such session, the Lama was brought to the National Minorities Institute in the Chinese capital with a chain around his neck to hear the Institute's students unleash a barrage of criticism.

Later in the year, a troupe of Red Guards from the Red Flag Aeronautical Institute dragged him to another struggle session, this time in a sports stadium reverberating with shouts of "ten thousand years to Chairman Mao". Here a young woman, his sister-in-law, with his brother standing nearby, charged the Panchen of having had sexual relations with her. Which was the signal for the Red Guards to beat the Panchen with their fists!

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<sup>478</sup> Mary Craig, *Kundun*, p. 178.

<sup>479</sup> For more details see "How the Panchen Lama Was Tortured", *Supra*, n. 469

<sup>480</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, p. 299.

According to the author the Lhasa meeting lasted from the "middle of September to the end of November", *ibid*, pp 297-8.

These "shows" in the worst days of the Cultural Revolution were revolting to the eye. For in the mandatory "struggle" victim position, the Panchen would have a chain around his neck and bend over with his hands on his knees. With his head bowed low.

Zhou rescued him and, despite protests, transferred him to the custody of the PLA. The latter took him to an artillery camp in the eastern suburbs of Beijing and kept him under house arrest for another year.

In the summer of 1968, the Panchen was arrested again- and placed in solitary confinement. Unknown to him, he shared his prison, in the College of Politics and Law, with such other veterans as Peng Dehuai who was later to die there, having refused to acknowledge his "errors."<sup>481</sup>

It has been suggested that the reason why the Chinese went to such extremes to do the Panchen down was their being seriously alarmed at his growing popularity among his own people. In the event, he had to be painted in the, blackest of colours as a "monster of duplicity and depravity."

An eminent Tibetan scholar concludes that irrespective of what the public thought of him, the Chinese leadership - had it so desired - could have kept the Lama in power. But clearly they were not prepared to see him emerge as a popular leader. In the event, the official line was that even though his "crimes" were serious, the Party and the people had dealt with him "leniently" and it was now upto him to repent, make a fresh start and undertake reform.<sup>482</sup>

For Beijing the reasoning was clear. With its success in eliminating the only effective Tibetan leader after the Dalai Lama, nobody would now dare raise his ugly head. Expectedly, Ngabo whom the Tibetans rated "a traitor" remained cautious and did not deviate from the Party line. Just about this time, the formal establishment of the TAR (1965), brought Tibet even closer to the motherland. It legally buried the 17-Point Agreement which had been denounced in the wake of the March Rebellion (1959). More, it confirmed that Tibet was no different from the rest of the country; no longer a distinct or unique area within the PRC.<sup>483</sup>

In the final count, both Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua succeeded in destroying the Panchen, his family and his followers. It was at once a brutal and premeditated purge which met the demands of Maoist dogma that during the transformation from capitalism to communism some feudal leaders who cherished the dream of reviving the old system would make an attempt at its restoration. It was also evident that top Chinese functionaries in Tibet relished carrying out the purge. Almost a quarter century was to elapse before the NPC recanted, reversed the gears and formally decided (1988) on the Panchen's rehabilitation!

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<sup>481</sup> Tsering Shakya, "The Man who was not allowed to tell the truth: the 7th Panchen Lama", *Lives of the Panchen Lamas*, *Lungta* (Dharamsala), Winter 1996, pp. 24-9.

The visitor, Ratne Deshpriya, wrote of the Lhasa exhibition in his book, *The Inside Story of Tibet*.

Also see, *Isabel Hilton*, pp. 162-3.

<sup>482</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, pp. 299-300.

<sup>483</sup> *Loc cit.*

## The Panchen Lama: a sum up

The objective of the "barbaric" Cultural Revolution (1966-76) was to erase the past by destroying the "four olds". These were listed as old culture, old customs, old habits, old ways of thinking; the definition of "the old" being left to the Red Guards who were allowed to rampage at will. For Tibet, the bastion of "the old", this period of collective insanity meant an orgy of undiluted terror: nearly 4,000 monasteries are said to have been destroyed; sacred scriptures burned or used as toilet paper for latrines; statues stripped of their gold or silver mutilated, and beheaded. The lamas - and not the lamas alone- were forced to throw their prayer wheels into the river and replace their mantras with the "Thoughts of Chairman Mao." Celibate monks were made to copulate in public; abbots of great monasteries, crowned with dunce caps, ritually humiliated.<sup>484</sup>

Years later, the heavy toll claimed by the Cultural Revolution was witnessed by the three Dharamsala delegations (1979-82); the first included a brother of the Dalai Lama (Lobsang Samten) while the third was led by his sister (Jetsun Pema). Very broadly, they computed that one-fifth of the Tibetan population had died of starvation; that over 6,000 of its monasteries and nunneries were destroyed and sixty per cent of its sacred literature burnt. Amdo (Qinghai) - the birthplace of both the 14th Dalai Lama and the 10th Panchen- had become the world's biggest gulag, with one in every ten Tibetans in prison. A hundred thousand had been moved into labour camps. A large percentage of Tibet's wildlife had disappeared, its forests decimated.<sup>485</sup>

The Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping who was eventually to succeed Mao bore a fair share of responsibility for the repressions, murders and massacres which had long predated the Gang of Four. Yet thanks to his hounding by the latter he was hailed in China as a "a moderate" - and, in the West, "a Great Liberaliser."<sup>486</sup> Actually the years 1979-83, under the impact of Deng's "Four Modernisations" and Hu Yaobang's "reforms", brought some "modest" economic benefits to Tibet and a "gradual relaxation" of Beijing's social and political control.<sup>487</sup>

It may be recalled that 1976 was witness to the deaths of both Zhou Enlai (January) and Mao Zedong (September). Soon thereafter, with the "Gang of Four" exposed, Deng began to emerge from the shadows as it were. In 1977, the Panchen was released from detention and the following year made his first public appearance, since 1965.

His rehabilitation did not take long. In March 1978, the Panchen was elected a member of the Standing Committee of the 5th CPPCC; the year following (1979) saw him chosen a deputy of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) to the 5th NPC. And a month later (August), its Vice Chairman. In 1980, the Panchen Lama met the post-Mao supreme leader, Deng Xiaoping; for the first time since 1962.

In July 1982 the Panchen was to return to Tibet, again for the first time since 1965. To the utter amazement of the Chinese, the Lama was accorded a very warm if not indeed grandiose welcome. It was clear that his people's faith in him was still burning bright and that he enjoyed their confidence, if also devotion- and respect. Among some of the most

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<sup>484</sup> *Kundun*, p. 271.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>487</sup> *Tsering Shakya*, p. 393.

astute observations he made were that in the community at large he encountered lamas "who did not know religion"; teachers, who were "illiterate"; and cadres, "who did not know" the Party policy. Three years later (1985), he was to return to Lhasa to participate in celebrations marking the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the TAR.<sup>488</sup>

In January 1986, after a brief visit to Lhasa, the Panchen headed a NPC delegation to Australia (April) and later attended a session of the World Buddhist Association in Kathmandu (November). In 1987, the Lama was to be present at a session of the TAR People's Congress where he demanded that Tibetan be used as the principal language of education in the region. In May (1988), the three labels or "hats" awarded to the Panchen in 1964 - anti-Party, anti-people and anti-Socialism - were revoked. This would seem to mark the Lama's virtual rehabilitation after almost a quarter century of ostracism, having been kept outside the pale all the years from 1964 to 1988.

In January (1989), the official Chinese news agency, Xinhua, quoted the Panchen telling officials in Shigatse that while there had "certainly" been development in Tibet since the "Liberation", "the price paid for this development has been greater than the gains". Three days later, under the most mysterious of circumstances, the Panchen died at Tashilhunpo, reportedly of a heart attack.<sup>489</sup>

The 10th Panchen continues to remain one of the most "enigmatic and misunderstood"<sup>490</sup> religious leaders, with strong political overtones, in recent Tibetan history. In actual fact, his experience may be said to reflect its most brutal and tragic phase when more than any other Tibetan leader, the Lama tried to shelter his people from the "ravenous brutality" of Mao and his men. While the precise contours that made up this mountain of a man remain somewhat faint and elusive, two facts need to be stated without fear of contradiction. To start with, there need be neither any misunderstanding nor yet much of a mystery about the way the Panchen clambered on to the Guomindang, and later the Communist bandwagon, so as to rehabilitate himself and reclaim his lost patrimony.

To start with, his selection made him, wittingly or otherwise, a protege of the Guomindang which tried to use him, even as it had his predecessor the 9th Panchen Lama, to endorse Chiang's own fast-crumbling regime. Sadly, the civil war and his own humiliating defeat, at the hands of Mao and his men, made the Guomindang leader quit the mainland (1949). That is where the new Beijing regime took over. Their game plan was no different: to use the Panchen Lama for their own partisan ends. And project him as a torch-bearer, if also a frontrunner for their policies in Tibet. As the stalemate in the negotiations for the 17-Point Agreement revealed, the Panchen was in fact "already being used as a pawn" by the Communists. It must be noted though that in fighting Beijing's battles against the Dalai Lama, the Panchen was not oblivious of his own high stakes. For he was keen to build up his personal- as well as Tashilhunpo's- lost power and prestige. In this endeavour, the Chinese were more than willing to lend him a hand for the extent to which Lhasa, and its Dalai Lama, lost their strength, and shine, Tibetan polity as an integral whole stood weakened and exposed to intense faction-fighting. While one of the factions, as Beijing's protege, enjoyed its strong support and backing.

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<sup>488</sup> For more details see Appendix A. Chronology, in *A Poisoned Arrow*, pp. 129-44.

Also see Lungta, *op cit* n. 481

<sup>489</sup> "Chronology", in *A Poisoned Arrow*.

<sup>490</sup> Dawa Norbu, "Historical Introduction", *Ibid*, p. xxv.

For the Chinese, the Panchen was a useful tool in their plans for Tibet's "liberation" and subsequent dealings with the Dalai Lama's government. To no one's surprise they sought to build him up as a rival or at the very least a separate political and ecclesiastical entity *outside* the pale of the Lhasa government. Here his age-old religious, and spiritual, status as the second highest-ranking Lama in the Gelugpa hierarchy came handy too. And generous investments of Chinese gold and glitz lent the Panchen Lama's office unrivalled pomp and pageantry. A circumstance that was of immense help in his political dealings with the Lhasa government in the decade preceding the March (1959) rebellion. And later in the wake of the Dalai Lama's flight, and eclipse of his government, a useful prop for Beijing's propaganda mills concerning the aftermath of the revolt in Tibet.

Once however the Panchen displayed a modicum of independence- viz., the STCP with its implied criticism of the working of the Party cadres- Beijing saw him as an embarrassment, if not a liability. The more so, as the news of the "petition" made him correspondingly popular among his own people.

Initially, the battle was joined for the best part of a decade, from the time of the Panchen Lama's arrival in Lhasa, in April 1952, to the March 1959 rebellion. Both while in Tibet and outside, in 1954-5 in China and in 1956-7 in India, the two Lamas and their coteries worked at cross- purposes. With their mutual jealousies and rivalries barely hidden from the public gaze. In many ways, this was no different from the ten years that separated the departure from Tashilhunpo of the estranged 9th Panchen Lama (1923) and the death of the overbearing 13th Dalai Lama (1933) in Lhasa. The game was played to perfection: the Dalai Lama had driven the Panchen to desperation, and exile. And, noises to the contrary notwithstanding, would not have him back except on his own terms. No wonder, the stalemate persisted and was about to be broken (end-1937) through a massive Guomindang intervention by *force majeure*. Sadly for the Panchen and his sponsors, powerful extraneous factors, principally the Japanese frontal onslaught on the mainland, intervened with the result that the Lama was halted in his tracks. The 9th Panchen's own death shortly thereafter brought matters almost back to square one!

A word on the much-hyped STCP. In essence, it was largely a muted criticism of Chinese Communist Party cadres and local activists who were in charge of the mainland's campaigns in the Tibet region. The emphasis on a popular endorsement of the Lama's criticisms is brought out by repeated references to "more than 90% of Tibetans" refusing to accept the elimination of Buddhism. Or, for that matter, "over 90% of Tibetan people" not accepting the fact that monks were leaving the gompas. It was the Chinese occupation, despite all its boasts, that had brought about "such a shortage of grain" as was unprecedented in Tibet's history. The measures to alleviate it by introducing community kitchens, serving a "thin gruel like pig food", did not do much to reduce starvation. On the other hand, they increased the "anguish of severe hunger."

The Panchen was also distressed by the fact that Tibet's national identity was being neutralised if not completely washed out. He voiced a deep concern that the people's "language, costume, customs and other important characteristics" were in the process of disappearing. Over the past several hundred years, this identity had been distinct for while the people had strongly preserved "themselves as being Tibetans", they had "only a weak perception" of the mainland. Understandably, therefore, his petition laid repeated emphasis on "Tibetan characteristics and realities".

The Abbot of Tashilhunpo was shocked too by some glaring revelations. To start with, by the fact that 10-15 per cent of the population had been imprisoned and tortured because

of their alleged involvement in the March (1959) Rebellion. This was two to three times higher than the figure he had mentioned in his petition - 5 per cent. And he had deliberately suppressed the truth: "I did not have the courage (in 1962) to state such a huge figure", he was to confess years later. For he "would have died under Thamzing if I had stated the real figure."

Another lie that he nailed to the ground was the allegedly nefarious role of the much-reviled aristocracy who, the Panchen heavily underlined, had served the Tibetan government "for generations". And had always been loyal to the Dalai Lama and the masses and shown them "deep respect and devotion". In the event, it was "absolutely wrong" to accuse them of being "leaders of the Rebellion" or/and therefore liable to persecution.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> Dawa Norbu. "Historical Introduction", *A Poisoned Arrow*, p. xxv.

## Epilogue

In Tibetan polity it is axiomatic for an incumbent Dalai Lama to help in the search for identification, and installation, of a new Panchen Lama, should there be a vacancy at Tashilhunpo. The reverse also holds true- for an incumbent Panchen Lama to help the processes whereby a new Dalai Lama is found and installed at the Potala. It should follow that the 14th Dalai Lama had his role cut out for him after the 10th Panchen Lama, then barely 50, died at his seat of authority at Tashilhunpo in January 1989, under the most mysterious of circumstances.

The exercise itself is a complex one, nor does it fall exclusively within the province of the Dalai Lama or the Panchen Lama as the case may be. The Panchen's close associates as well as senior abbots of Tashilhunpo are intimately associated with the search. Nor is the latter confined to any particular area or region. Again, the blue-blooded Tibetans in the major provinces of U and Tsang are not the only ones eligible. For also included are the vast reservoirs of Tibetans in the mainland's predominantly ethnic Tibetan areas of Qinghai and Kham, now part of Sichuan. It may be of interest to note that both Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the Dalai Lama's choice for the 11th Panchen Lama, as well as Gyaltzen Choekyi Norbu, whom Beijing has invested with its official seal of authority, hail from the same county of Lhari in the district of Nagchu. This is situated in central Tibet to the northeast of Tashilhunpo. Between the two, Beijing's choice, Gyaltzen Norbu, has an ideological edge, being the offspring of two Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members.

Nor does the comparison end there for in his search for Choekyi Nyima, and his identification, the Dalai Lama was helped, and for good reason, by a top Tibetan monk official at Tashilhunpo, Chadrel Rinpoche. Whom, incidentally, Beijing too had charged with the same mission. The Dalai Lama at Dharamsala had much hoped, as indeed did Chadrel Rinpoche at Tashilhunpo, that Choekyi Nyima would elicit the combined approval both of the authorities in Beijing as well as Dharamsala. Sadly, owing to an unfortunate gap in communications and exchange of messages, there was a rift in the lute. And eventually two, in place of one, contenders emerged for the highest office at Tashilhunpo.

There was one more procedural hassle. Both the Dalai Lama as well as Chadrel Rinpoche had veered round to identifying the same boy who seemed to answer to all that they were seeking. Each in his own way was satisfied that none of the other eligible candidates stood on the same pedestal as he did. In the event, the use of the golden urn for the identity of the new incarnation was deemed superfluous, uncalled for.

Beijing was up in arms. Tradition, it ruled, made the use of the urn a necessary precondition as also the affixation of its seal of approval for the final choice. In the event, it insisted on the strictest observance of protocol. More, there were, it ruled, three candidates and the drawing of lots from the urn had thrown up Gyaltzen Norbu who accordingly received Beijing's official nod of approval as the new Panchen Lama. By implication, the Dalai Lama's "false" choice of Choekyi Nyima was repudiated. And the man who allegedly had colluded with the Lama- and, in the bargain, betrayed Beijing's trust- received his due deserts. Chadrel Rinpoche was sacked, and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

Nor was Chadrel Rinpoche the only one to vanish from the public gaze. Choekyi Nyima too was spirited away, as were his parents. A ban was placed on his photographs. The world's youngest political prisoner was held as a hostage by Beijing. While its own choice, which had been less than enthusiastically received both at Tashilhunpo as well as

among the vast and widespread Tibetan diaspora, and the world community at large, was being brought up under the strictest surveillance. Not indeed at Tashilhunpo, where he belonged, but in far away Beijing where his life and limb could be rated secure.

Even at the best of times, the Dalai Lama has a complex role to play both as the temporal and spiritual head of his people. In the difficult, if dicey, post-1959 scenario, he has not only to manage the varied factions, sects and groups that make up the Tibetan community world-wide but to hold them together under his own hitherto unchallenged leadership. Which lately though has been coming under some strain.

The Dalai Lama was to reveal that even before he was born, Nyima had recited a mantra "inside" his mother's womb and later announced his birth. In other words, he had "talked" both before, and immediately after, he was born.

The Tibetan leader was keen to demonstrate that he had indeed made the choice before the Chinese government acknowledged the child. His gameplan- to endorse his candidate in secret after which the boy's name was to be presented to the Chinese who would then acknowledge him as the latest incarnation of the Panchen Lama. Only then would the Dalai Lama make his approval public. But in a game of one-upmanship, and determined that his endorsement preceded Beijing's, the Lama had, for the record, his own secret ceremony covered by an English freelance journalist who had shown a great deal of interest in the subject. As a matter of fact, the whole exercise with the exception of the private meditation and the divination by which the final choice would be made, was filmed. So that, in the last resort, there would be no gainsaying the authenticity of the child. Nothing could be better for the secular and religious balancing act that is the Dalai Lama's government.

Sadly for him, and the young boy, things did not go aright. There was a hiatus, a gap in communications. Fearful, the Dalai Lama announced his choice- before Beijing had nodded its head in approval. Refusing to be outdone, the Chinese picked up a rival. In the final count, their authority even in matters of divine rebirth had to be final. And seen to be paramount.

Earlier Beijing had made amends to whitewash its recent record. Relentlessly persecuted when alive- with almost twelve years spent in solitary confinement- the Chinese hastened to partially rehabilitate the 10th Panchen Lama towards the end of his days. And almost fully after his sad, and sudden, death. In retrospect, he was to be viewed as an outstanding example of "a spiritual master" in Tibetan Buddhism, "a great patriot", an "outstanding statesman."

The tragic paradox of the current scenario is that the Beijing regime insists on following in the footsteps of the Qing emperor in only one respect. Thus, whereas the latter was, by and large, non-interfering, the emperor's political legates poke their nose in the minutest of details. For the Reds impose their will, and their views, wherever they can; the abduction of Choekyi Nyima, the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, is an indication that this condition persists. The harsh truth is that Beijing dictates a peace that everybody must accept, ever so often under a physical, moral, and even economic threat. This applies with added relevance to its fiat in the choice of Gyaltzen Norbu as the 11th Panchen Lama. Insofar as few turn up to pay him homage whenever he is in Tashilhunpo, the boy Lama wants to be allowed to live away, in or outside of Beijing.

China insists that in May 1995 when the Dalai Lama "suddenly" announced his choice of Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama, he "did not report" to the Chinese



government for "official confirmation." This, Beijing contends, violates both "religious rituals" as well as "historical precedents." The Lama's peremptory announcement was tantamount to his using religion as a political tool. This, Beijing has warned, would prove to be counter-productive. And the Dalai Lama's alleged attempt to seize control of the Tashilhunpo monastery through the backdoor as it were abortive, if not counter-productive.

Beijing contends that it was the Qing emperor Shunzhi (1644-61) who in 1653 conferred the title of Dalai Lama on the fifth in the line and it was this fact that "officially" established the title and rule of the Dalai Lamas in Tibet. Insofar as the fifth Dalai Lama and the fifth Panchen Lama- the title was conferred upon the latter by the Kangxi emperor (1662-1722) in 1713- had received official titles from the Qing dynasty, it followed that the reincarnations of the various Dalai Lamas, and of the Panchens, were subject to confirmation by the central Chinese government. More, in 1792, the emperor Qianlong (1736-95) adopted the system of drawing of lots from the golden urn; the urn itself, first presented to the Jokhang temple in Lhasa, was later transferred to the Potala palace. And the drawing of lots was to be followed by a confirmation of the final choice by the emperor.

According to Tibetan tradition, the confirmation of either the Dalai or the Panchen "must be mutually recognized." The doctrine of the Gelugpa postulates that the Dalai Lama or the Panchen, as the case may be, should accept one or the other who is older and has therefore a better command of Buddhist teachings. Eight of the fourteen Dalai Lamas to date accepted the Panchens as their teachers; two of the ten Panchens, namely the 7th and the 9<sup>th</sup>, made the corresponding Dalai Lamas their preceptors.

Being older to the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama rated himself as his guru. So did the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai in respect of the 10th Panchen Lama. And, by implication, the incumbent Dalai Lama vis-à-vis the newly discovered 11th Panchen Lama..

The central government of the Guomindang's Republic of China (1912-49) issued a decree in February 1940 stating that Lhamo Dhondup (the 14th Dalai Lama's original name) be installed directly as the 14th Dalai Lama without having to go through the normal rule of the drawing of lots. Without this decree, Beijing insists, the 14th Dalai Lama would not enjoy his official legal status.

For the record, the 9th, 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas were *not* chosen through the use of the golden urn; the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12th were. So also the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Panchens. It may be of interest to note that the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama was identified without a cosmic lottery.

While the Dalai Lama insists that the selection of the Panchen is a religious matter and should therefore be left to him, the supreme spiritual leader of his people, Beijing maintains as doggedly that Tibet is an integral part of China and that the Dalai Lama's action "runs counter" to the dignified and deeply religious rituals of Buddhism. And is therefore tantamount to being a disaster for Tibet and its righteous people.

It is important to bear in mind the fact that the Panchen Lama is not just a religious leader, he has historically been Tibet's second most powerful political leader as well. And if the new Panchen Lama is to play any role in a religious position as head of a major monastery, he must be acceptable to his people- and to his lamas. Even by the standards of autonomy Chinese leaders profess the TAR enjoys, the choice of rival Panchen Lamas must be rated a matter of embarrassment for both sides. And patently unjust.

Political manipulation of religion is an ancient tradition in all societies. Nor has Tibet been an exception. For, long before the Chinese occupation (1951), many a Dalai Lama was a

puppet in the hands of shrewd Tibetan regents. Beijing is prepared to endorse lamaist rituals it has long ridiculed, now that it has decided to manipulate these to its own ends. And justified its act by validating outdated Manchu practices that seemed increasingly irrelevant. The objective is to demonstrate that Mao and his men were better Buddhists than the Dalai Lama himself. In the process, the Chinese have hit the Tibetans where it hurts most- in the heart of their belief. And unwittingly highlighted their contempt for the faith itself.

The significance of the Dalai Lama's choice of a candidate from Nagchu, in central Tibet and not from the worldwide Tibetan diaspora- underlines his conviction that the struggle for his homeland's future rests in the hands of Tibetans living there.

As may be evident, the relationship between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama in the recent past has been at odds since the early 1920s, when the 13th Dalai Lama sought to impose a new tax system and the Panchen, protesting the imposition, fled from his seat of authority in Tashilhunpo. And yet the hiatus of two lifetimes notwithstanding, seemingly the Lamas' mutual respect and public veneration continues undiminished. For the present, the harsh truth is that nobody may accept a Panchen Lama who lacks the blessings of the Dalai Lama- except perhaps the Chinese government. Which, its critics aver, is a godless, atheistic regime rediscovering for convenience the unique historical and religious traditions of Tibet! And point to the harsh fact that the return of Beijing's Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu, to Tashilhunpo in 1998 demonstrated the dismal failure of Chinese efforts to destroy the legitimacy of the Dalai Lama in Tibet.

Dharamsala's choice, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, born 25 April 1989 in Lari district in Nagchu, is said to have declared as soon as he was able to speak : "I am the Panchen, my monastery is Tashilhunpo. I sit on a high throne. My monasteries are in Tsang, in Lhasa, and in China."

Later, in a letter to President Jiang Zemin in October 1995, the Dalai Lama acknowledged that he was privileged "to honour and uphold the unique historical relationship" between the Dalai Lamas and the Panchen Lamas; that in his own case he was "personally greatly indebted" to the 9<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama who took "special interest and responsibility" in his search. In the event, he reiterated the position that his recognition of the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama was "in no way intended to challenge" the authority of Beijing.

To no one's surprise though, both Jiang Zemin and his government saw it differently. For, in November 1995, Beijing announced its own candidate and later enthroned him at an impressive ceremony in Lhasa. The whereabouts of the Dalai Lama's choice for Panchen Lama were not known until Beijing confirmed (November 1996) that he had been held in detention in the Chinese capital.

To underline its total rejection of the Dalai Lama, Beijing sentenced Chadrel Rinpoche to six years' imprisonment for allegedly revealing information relating to his search for the new Panchen Lama. More, the Chinese have charged, that the Rinpoche grossly abused his position and betrayed the trust of his masters.

In juxtaposition to the use of the golden urn, there is the age-old Tibetan tradition of encasing the names of eligible candidates in kneaded tsampa dough balls of equal size which are then put in a container and rotated until one of the balls falls. It should bear mention though that this method was not used for selecting each and every reincarnate lama. Tibetan authorities have also strongly repudiated Beijing's claims about the mandatory nature of the 1792 Qing decree of twenty-nine propositions concerning the governance of Tibet in general and the use of the urn in particular. It was, they claim by no

means a *diktat* from a ruler to his subjects. For, inter alia the Qing imperial envoy had intimated that the Tibetans may "decide for themselves what is in their favour and what is not ... and make the choice of their own."

Of the six Dalai Lamas since the urn was presented, it was used for only three. Tibetan scholars further claim that the Qing ruler's priest-patron relationship vis-à-vis the master of the Potala was unique in the sense that the Manchus were a distinct Asian Buddhist people, an alien dynasty ruling China. Besides, in the selection of the Dalai as well as the Panchen Lamas, the Chinese government's approval was neither sought nor needed.

Beijing has dubbed the Dalai Lama's announcement of the discovery of the new Panchen Lama as "a political plot" of the "Dalai clique" in its continuous splittist activities. Dharamsala, on the other hand, continues to insist that the reincarnation is a Mahayana Buddhist concept prevailing in Tibet and that the Panchen Lama is a religious leader. More, the exchange of complimentary titles in the form of certificates and seals was part of diplomatic culture prevailing in Central Asia at the time; it did not by any stretch of the imagination signify the superiority of one party over the other.

While Tibetan scholars heavily underline the fact that the authenticity of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama was never challenged and that he grew up to be a leader worthy of his office, the controversy surrounding the Karmapa (who escaped to India early in 2000) was evidence of the potential for mischief in the search for the reincarnate lamas. The truth is that a compound of religious belief, esoteric mystery and conflicting political interests, the process for the selection of the high Lamas is not free from malpractices. And as is not unusual in such cases, in the search for the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, the stakes were indeed high.

Since his exit in 1959, the Dalai Lama for obvious reasons has no longer served as Tibet's secular ruler, yet his role as a continuing focus of Tibetan identity and culture remains undoubtedly much more crucial. As the Lama has advanced in years a new generation in Tibet has grown to maturity which has no memory, much less linkages with the old society. In the event, the new Panchen would appear to represent a vital stake, for he is the one to carry forward the question of Tibetan identity and culture if it were not to perish entirely.

Chadrel, it would appear, had maintained two clear objectives throughout. Firstly, that it would be the Dalai Lama who made the final selection; secondly, that the new Panchen would take up his residence at Tashilhunpto in Tibet. In the event, he had to contend with two conflicting, if perhaps mutually exclusive loyalties. One, his "political and patriotic" duty to Beijing to conduct the search according to the rules it had laid down; two, his spiritual conscience that the child chosen be the authentic reincarnation selected by the Dalai Lama.

He conjured an innocent subterfuge, which came almost within an ace of success. While the Dalai Lama would identify the child and convey the result to Chadrel, his choice and the fact that he had made a choice would be kept a closely guarded secret. This would ensure that the right choice of reincarnation would be accepted by the Chinese while the new Panchen Lama, by virtue of the Dalai Lama's endorsement, would enjoy the allegiance of the exiled community, the vast and increasingly vocal, Tibetan diaspora.

The various search parties for the Panchen Lama had drawn up a preliminary list of twenty eight candidates. Earlier practice had suggested that the use of the golden urn, if at all, was to be made only in the final stages of the search. And as the Qianlong emperor had

suggested only if there was a disputes that could not otherwise be resolved. Chadrel's entire strategy was to avoid a dispute, and he almost succeeded.

Chadrel had claimed that he made his own divination through a well-worn Tibetan practice referred to earlier of placing identical balls from kneaded tsampa, each with a slip on which the candidate's name was written, into a bowl which is rotated until one of the balls drops out. And insofar as Nyima's name had been clearly indicated, the use of the golden urn was not called for.

The Chinese and their proteges repudiated Chadrel. Nyima's birth, alleged to have taken place in April 1989, was a problem. The date itself was later disputed as false, suggesting that he had been born earlier, even before the death of the Panchen Lama! This argument is no longer accepted as valid; the 7<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama is known to have been born before the death of the 6th! Besides, even as the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama had indicated, from the point of view of Tibetan spiritual tradition there was no need for a year to pass before the incarnation is born again. For "premature and belated birth of reincarnation" is possible in Buddhism.\*

Insofar as there have been severe strictures against party members observing any religious beliefs, there is the odd fact that, as noticed in a preceding paragraph, both the parents of Beijing's Norbu swear by the Party. In the event, their son's recognition as a reincarnate lama sounds not a little intriguing. To counter this, Beijing has charged that the young Nyima had once drowned a dog, that his parents were "notorious for speculation, deceit, and scrambling for fame and profit." And lo and behold, now they were attempting to cheat the Buddha himself!

Norbu, the Chinese Panchen Lama, is said to have been lodged in the outskirts of Beijing. With the intent, his detractors charge, of removing him from the influence of the Tashilhunpo monks who might talk to him of old Tibet and its traditions no less than of its Dalai and Panchen Lamas. The Dalai Lama's choice, Nyima too, far removed from his land and its people, is believed to be growing up anonymously in the province of Gansu. To all appearances, Norbu has little or no freedom but much higher visibility; Nyima has neither.

\*For details see Appendix 8

## Appendices

### *Appendix 1: Panchen Lama's instructions to his followers: 26 December 1923\**

Be it known to all the Abbots and Assistants of the four colleges and also to the Acting Prime Minister and the Monk and Lay officials of the Tashi-Lhunpo Government:

With regard to the troubles of the Tashi-Lhunpo Government and their subjects I have submitted representations to His Holiness the Dalai Lama on several occasions, but my requests have not been granted. At the same time His Holiness has always shown me kindness. The investigating officers listened to the advice of evil-minded persons and made it very difficult for His Holiness to grant my requests. In consequence orders were issued to all Jongpens of the Tsang province that they must supply free transport etc. to the officials of the Lhasa Government, against the prevailing custom. Moreover I have been asked to make contributions for the upkeep of the Tibetan Army, but the nobles and subjects were unable to take the responsibility of meeting these demands. For these reasons the subjects of the Tashi-Lhunpo Government were disappointed and became dissatisfied. You are all aware of these facts and these things have made it quite impossible for us to live in peace. I should have made further representation, but it would have created a difficult position for His Holiness. I am therefore leaving Tashi-Lhunpo for a short period to make it easier for His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I am going to see whether I can secure anyone to mediate between us, with the assistance of the dispenser of gifts in Kham and Mongolia whither I have despatched messengers. It is quite impossible for me to make the annual contributions to meet the Military expenses and I am compelled to proceed to an unknown destination to try to raise funds from the Buddhists who may be inclined to help me voluntarily. I may state here once and for all that I have no desire to do anything against the wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama or that will be injurious to our prestige. The letter which I have addressed to His Holiness would be at once forwarded so as to make matters clear to him. After due consideration I have appointed Acting Prime Minister (of Tashi-Lhunpo) and the Abbots of the four Colleges (of Tashilhunpo) to carry on the administration during my absence. First of all, you should see that the customary ceremonies are performed in the Tashi-Lhunpo and other monasteries as usual. You should also see that the Lamas of the different monasteries receive their rations, and that the monks study all the religious books and preach the religion, and that they do not neglect the subject of disputation; and above all you should see that all the monastic rules are duly observed. Finally you should discharge your duties faithfully and treat the poor subjects and monks with all consideration and help them in every way possible. You should keep careful accounts of all receipts and expenditures from land revenue, etc. and apply the balance for the observance of religious ceremonies.. You should carry on your duties appertaining to the spiritual and temporal powers after due consultation; but if you cannot decide any big question, you should refer the matter to me for orders. You should discharge the duties of your responsible position without fail and leave nothing undone. I hereby command all the monks and laymen, who are subjects of the Tashi-Lhunpo Government, to obey the orders of the Acting Prime Minister and Council and discharge their duties faithfully. Let all noblemen and peasants bear these instructions in mind and act accordingly. I will issue necessary orders in the future according to circumstances. Let all the animate beings bear this in mind. I have

issued these orders on the auspicious date- the 18<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month of the Water-Pig Year (26 December 1923).

\*

India to Secretary of State, January 5 & 9 1924 in *IOR/L/P&S/12/580*, External Collection, 36/16

Appendix 2: *Dalai Lama's Message to the Panchen Lama, 26 January 1924* \*\*

Having heard of your secret departure I have been deeply grieved at the news because our relations had been friendly and I was your teacher. Remembering the fact that you and I were born as a father and son (i.e., teacher and disciple), it is not right for me to treat you just as I pleased; but there is a custom prevailing among the high class people that the elder should advise the younger. You did not consult me in the matter and I do not know the real reasons for your departure and what the end will be. I myself had to visit China, Mongolia and India, owing to the British and Chinese troops having come to the Tibetan Capital. in order to save the spiritual and temporal powers. I suffered great hardships to secure happiness and to safeguard our religion. By adopting wise means, it is known to all that the Buddhist religion is spreading and that the temporal powers of Tibet are in our hand and that we are enjoying power and prosperity. But you must have been misled by your followers who had previously caused mischief. As sins cannot be washed away with water and mental sorrow cannot be removed by the hands, why are you disappointed. Moreover since I have assumed both the spiritual and temporal powers, I have treated all the subjects of the Tashi-Lhunpo Government with the greatest consideration, rewarding those who observed the laws of religion and the customs of the country in greater measure and it is lawful to punish a few evil doers. With regard to trifling matters, I have taken no steps and left everything in peace. These cannot be described here in detail. I request you to think over the conversation we had at our previous meeting; and if you read the correspondence that has passed between us, you will understand everything. You have written to me frequently saying that there is no other protector to whom you can go for assistance and protection. In view of the correspondence and the conversation we had at our meeting, it is not understood why you departed secretly unless you have found yourself at fault. By going to Mongolia, great dangers will beset you. At the time I visited China and Mongolia, it was peaceful everywhere, but the political situation is quite different now and this fact is well known to you. It is not known why you left your monastery in which you should now be sitting in meditation. You seem to have forgotten the sacred history of your predecessors and wandered away to a desert where there are no people- like a butterfly that is attracted by the lamp light- and thus bringing trouble to yourself. Such conduct does not do credit to your predecessors and if you had only taken the trouble to consult your teacher 'Lhopa', he would have given you sound advice. But you did not consult him and ran away with your sinful companions who resembled mad elephants and followed the wrong path. Although you are a holy person, if the fruits of your deeds ripen, there is no doubt you will suffer great hardships. As I feel the separation from you, I dispatched Tsipon Lungshar to persuade you and your followers to return to your monastery for the sake of the Buddhist religion and the good government of the country and chiefly for your happiness and prosperity, at a time when religion has reached a stage like a lamp in which the oil has become nearly consumed. It is mentioned in many religious books that you and I and all the holy persons would strive to work for the benefit of all living beings. It is difficult to

believe that a person who thinks of himself only and who is not freed from the three sins (i.e., anger, pride and ignorance) should be regarded as a Lama or Buddha. As selfishness is a great evil in this world, the wisest course to adopt is to repent and turn back from the wrong path. What I have said above is perfectly true. You have written to me on many occasions asking me to appoint a Dzasa Lama (Prime Minister) at Tashi-Lhunpo and I could have done so; but as you enjoyed both the spiritual and temporal powers, I agreed to your proposal to carry on the administration with the assistance of four Ministers appointed by you. But as you and your ministers have left Shigatse and gone to a foreign country the Tibetan Government will appoint a Dzasa Lama and send him to Tashi-Lhunpo without delay to manage the internal and external affairs for the benefit of all the subjects. This notice is issued to all the all the monks and subjects in order that they may understand everything that has taken places and act accordingly without making any mistake to attain happiness in this life as well as in the next. Dated the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the Water-Pig year (26 January 1924).

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Encl in PO in Sikkim to India, 20 February 1924, *IOR, L/P&S/12/4174*

Appendix 3: *The Panchen Lama's Rejoinder, July 1924\**

Although it is impossible .... for your Holiness to entertain any ill intentions towards me, being teacher and pupil, yet as I had written to Your Holiness many times before, some of the ignorant and mischievous officials of Your Holiness who have an axe to grind have been creating estrangement and inconvenience between us .... Owing to many regulations contrary to the laws and usage set forth by the previous Dalai Lamas, Tashi Lhunpo and the lesser monasteries which are under my jurisdiction have greatly suffered and the few poor peasants working on the lands belonging to these monasteries have become destitute owing to the new taxes and unprecedented call for free labour. Again to pay the enormous tax known as the quarter of the army expenditure with no land as a means from which the money could be obtained and which none of the other subjects had to pay, caused us great anxiety. Moreover my poor and unsophisticated servants had to endure great hardship and cruelty so that there was no peace of mind either regards externally or internally and (they) suffered great indignity. Although I tried many times to obtain a personal interview so as to lay before Your Holiness the real state of affairs as it is in my mind and obtain Your Holiness's true advice as to what is the best thing to be done to help towards paying the new army expenditure tax. This again the above mentioned ill minded officials of Your Holiness with the purpose of frustrating amicable settlement concocted many difficulties in the way and Your Holiness even informed me that even to have just a personal interview would place both the teacher and the pupil in an awkward position. Therefore not knowing what to do, leaving a note to Your Holiness asking for permission to be transmitted by the Shigatse-Chizong, I set forth and I did not ask for permission before hand as it might again make things awkward and this is the real reason and please do not be offended with me .... Despatched from Langchowfu on 13th of 5<sup>th</sup> month of the Wood-Mouse Year (July 1924)

\*

Encl in P O, Sikkim to India, 19 October 1932, *IOR, L/P&S/12/4174*

Appendix 4 : *Dalai Lama to Panchen Lama, 12 June 1926 \*\**

I am writing this privately without standing on any ceremony.

Recently, on the 6<sup>th</sup> intercalary day of the fourth month of the Fire-Tiger year I received your kind letter along with its accompaniment .... through Jampa Thog me.

You say, and I think so too, that some evil minded subordinate, who did not wish that the teacher and pupil .... should remain on good terms, must have reported against and caused trouble for Labrang, that it was not convenient for you to come and lay your grievances before me in person, to clear my mind and take my advice ..... In order to make permanent the secular and religious rule of Tibet, it was found expedient to assess and collect extra taxes. This measure has affected all the landlords, the Government and the monasteries\_ a fact which is well known to you\_ and it was not especially adopted to put the Labrang into trouble. It is no new thing for a Government to call for reports from its subordinates with regard to new taxation. These reports the subordinates base on their experience. If anyone has said anything untoward between the teacher ... and the pupil ... I would not have taken notice of it. Whatever cause for complaint the Labrang might have, we could have gone into it at our leisure. But instead you have left suddenly without any reason. It is not possible that you .... could have become disloyal to me. In all probability you have been swayed by the reports of one or two servants, who do not understand things. I view your long stay on that side with pessimism, as I do not know what will happen to you. Here I am offering prayers to the precious trinity and am performing other holy ceremonies on a big scale for your well-being. Therefore taking into consideration the secular and religious interests of Tibet, and more particularly of the monks of the Tashi Lhunpo monastery, it would be a good thing if you would come back immediately. If you would kindly do this, I would render all necessary help. I am issuing strict orders to Dzasa Lama Lobzang Tenzing and his assistants to see that the Tashi Lhunpo monastery and its branch monasteries are not put to any inconvenience. Dispatched on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the Iron-Tiger Year (12 June 1926).

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PO in Sikkim to India, 1 October 1932, in *IOR*, L/P&S/12/4174

Appendix 5 : *Dalai Lama's letter to the Panchen Lama, 9 October 1932\**

I wrote you twice, once in the Water-Hog Year (1923), when Your Serenity left your monastery for China and Mongolia ... and once again on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the Fire-Tiger Year (12 June 1926) .... I hope you have received both the letters. I have had no reply to either of them. From the very beginning the relations between us, the father and the son, have been loving and affectionate. .... It cannot therefore be possible that you are now acting in a way calculated to rupture this relationship. The extent of the harm which has been done by the conspiracy of some of the conscience-stricken servants is well-known to everyone. But you, naturally would not for a moment think of plunging Tibet into war, the country which is administered by the father and the son; and yet rumours are rife in Lhasa to that effect. In these days respect for religion is decreasing. It is a time when following the example of foreigners, every one is fond of black deeds (i.e., war). Nearly ten



years have elapsed since you left Tibet and while matters remain in this state I am full of anxiety as to what might happen to your life. Moreover, if you could come back to U (Central Tibet), the relations between the teacher and the pupil would be like those between fire and the smoke. The noble tradition of our predecessors will also be maintained. Please therefore consider the matter and let me have a reply on which I can act.

Despatched on the 10th day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month of the Water-Monkey Year (9 October 1932)

\*

PO in Sikkim to India, 11 October 1932, in *IOR, L/P&S/12/4175*

Appendix 6: *The Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, Beijing 23 May 1951\*\**

The Tibetan nationality is one of the nationalities with a long history living within the boundaries of China and, like many other nationalities it has performed its glorious duty in the course of the creation and development of our great motherland. But over the last hundred years or more, imperialist forces penetrated China, and in consequence also penetrated the Tibetan region and carried out all kinds of deceptions and provocations. Like previous reactionary governments, the Kuomintang reactionary government continued to carry out a policy oppressing and sowing dissension among the nationalities, causing division among the Tibetan people. And the Local Government of Tibet did not oppose the imperialist deceptions and provocations, and adopted an unpatriotic attitude towards our motherland. Under such conditions, the Tibetan nationality and people were plunged into the depths of enslavement and suffering.

In 1949, basic victory was achieved on a nationwide scale in the Chinese People's War of Liberation, the common domestic enemy of all nationalities\_ the Kuomintang reactionary government \_ was overthrown; and the common foreign enemy of all nationalities\_ the aggressive imperialist forces\_ was driven out. On this basis, the founding of the People's Republic of China and the Central People's Government was announced. In accordance with the Common Programme passed by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the Central People's Government declared that all nationalities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China are equal, and that they shall establish unity and mutual aid and oppose imperialism and their public enemies, so that the PRC will become one fraternal and cooperative family, composed of all the nationalities; that within the big family of all nationalities of the PRC, national regional autonomy shall be exercised in areas where national minorities shall have the freedom to develop their spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their customs, habits and religious beliefs, while the Central People's Government shall assist all national minorities to develop their political, economic, cultural and educational construction work. Since then, all nationalities within the country, with the exception of those in the areas of Tibet and Taiwan have gained liberation. Under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government and the direct leadership of higher levels of people's government, all national minorities are fully enjoying the right of national equality and have established, or are establishing, national regional autonomy.

In order that the influences of aggressive forces in Tibet might be successfully eliminated, the unification of the territory and sovereignty of the People's Republic of China accomplished, and national defence safeguarded: in order that the Tibetan nationality

and people might be freed and return to the family of the People's Republic of China to enjoy the same rights of national equality as well as all the other nationalities in the country and develop their political, economic, cultural and educational work, the Central People's Government, when it ordered the People's Liberation Army to march into Tibet, notified the Local Government of Tibet to send delegates to the central authorities to conduct talks for the conclusion of an agreement on measures for the peaceful liberation of Tibet.

In the latter part of April 1951, the delegates with the full powers of the Local Government of Tibet arrived in Beijing. The Central People's Government appointed representatives with full powers to conduct talks on a friendly basis with the delegates of the Local Government of Tibet. As a result of these talks, both parties agreed to conclude this agreement and guarantee that it will be carried in effect.

- (1) The Tibetan people shall unite and drive out imperialist aggressive forces from Tibet, the Tibetan people shall return to the family of the motherland- the People's Republic of China.
- (2) The Local Government of Tibet shall actively assist the People's Liberation Army to enter Tibet and consolidate the national defence.
- (3) In accordance with the policy towards national minorities laid down in the Common Programme of the Chinese Political Consultative Conference, the Tibetan people have the right to exercise national regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government.
- (4) The central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet. The central authorities also will not alter the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama. Officials of various rank shall hold office as usual.
- (5) The established status, functions and powers of the Bainqen Erdi shall be maintained.
- (6) By the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama and the Bainqen Erdini are meant the status, functions and powers of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and the 9<sup>th</sup> Bainqen when they were in friendly and amicable relation with each other.
- (7) The policy of freedom of religious belief laid down in the *Common Programme of the Chinese Political Consultative Conference* shall be carried out. The religious beliefs, customs and habits of the Tibetan people shall be respected, and lama monasteries shall be protected. The central authorities will not effect a change in the income of the monasteries.
- (8) Tibetan troops shall be reorganized by stages into the People's Liberation Army, and become a part of the national defence forces of the People's Republic of China.
- (9) The spoken and written language and school education of the Tibetan nationality shall be developed step by step in accordance with the actual conditions in Tibet.
- (10) Tibetan agriculture, livestock raising, industry and commerce shall be developed step by step, and the people's livelihood shall be improved step by step in accordance with the actual conditions in Tibet.
- (11) In matters related to various reforms in Tibet there will be no compulsion on the part of the central authorities. The Local Government of Tibet shall carry out reforms of its own accord, and demands for reforms raised by the people shall be settled by means of consultation with the leading personnel of Tibet.

- (12) Insofar as former pro-imperialist and pro-Kuomintang officials resolutely sever relations with imperialism and the Kuomintang, and do not engage in sabotage or resistance, they may continue to hold office irrespective of their past.
- (13) The People's Liberation Army entering Tibet shall abide by all the above mentioned policies and shall also be fair in buying and selling and shall not arbitrarily take a single needle or thread from the people.
- (14) The Central People's Government shall conduct the centralized handling of all external affairs of Tibet and there will be peaceful coexistence with neighbouring countries and the establishment and development of fair commercial and trading relations with them on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect for territory and sovereignty.
- (15) In order to ensure the implementation of this agreement, the Central People's Government shall set up a military and administrative committee and a military area headquarters in Tibet, and apart from the personnel sent there by the Central People's Government, shall absorb as many local Tibetan personnel as possible to take part in the work.

Local Tibetan personnel taking part in the military and administrative committee may include patriotic elements from the Local Government of Tibet, various districts and leading monasteries, the name-list shall be drawn up after consultation between the representatives designated by the Central People's Government and the various quarters concerned, and shall be submitted to the Central People's Government for appointment.

- (16) Funds needed by the military and administrative committee, the military area headquarters and the People's Liberation Army entering Tibet shall be provided by the Central People's Government. The Local Government of Tibet will assist the People's Liberation Army in the purchase and transport of food, fodder and other daily necessities.
- (17) This agreement shall come into force immediately after signatures and seals are affixed to it.

Signed in Beijing on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1951.

Chinese Representatives: Li Weihan, Zhang Jingwu, Zhang Guohua and Sun Zhiyuan.

Tibetan Representatives: Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, Khame Sonam Wangdu, Lhawutara Thupten Tenther, Thupten Lekmon and Sampho Tenzin Dhundup.

\*\* Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, *op cit*, Appendix I, pp. 449-52

## Appendix 7: Dalai Lama's Letters to General Tan \*

*Between March 11 and 16 the Dalai Lama wrote three letters to "Dear Comrade Political Commissar Tan" (General Tan Guansun, acting representative of the Chinese Government and Political Commissar of the Military Area Command). The Tibetan text has been produced in facsimile; the English translation follows.*

### *March 11*

I intended to go to the Military Area Command to see the theatrical performance yesterday, but I was unable to do so, because of people, lamas and laymen who did not know the facts; this has put me to indescribable shame. I am greatly upset and worried and at a loss what to do. I was immediately greatly delighted by your letter (Gen Tan's letter of 10<sup>th</sup> March) appeared before me – you do not mind at all.

Reactionary evil elements are carrying out activities endangering me under the pretext of ensuring my safety. I am taking measures to calm things down. In a few days when the situation becomes stable, I will certainly meet you. If you have any internal directions please communicate them to me frankly through this messenger (Ngapo Ngawang-Jigme).

### *March 12*

I suppose you have received my letter of yesterday forwarded to you by Ngapo. I have received the letter you sent me this morning. The unlawful activities of the reactionary clique cause me endless worry and sorrow. Yesterday I told the *kasha* to order the immediate dissolution of the illegal people's conference and the immediate withdrawal of the reactionaries who arrogantly moved into the Norbulingka under the pretext of protecting me. As to the incidents of yesterday and the day before which were brought about under the pretext of ensuring my safety and have seriously estranged relations between the Central People's Government and the local government, I am making every possible effort to deal with them. At eight thirty Peking time this morning a few Tibetan army men suddenly fired several shots near the Chinghai-Tibet highway. Fortunately no serious disturbances occurred. I am planning to persuade a few subordinates and give them instructions.

Please communicate to me frankly any instructive opinions you have for me.

### *March 16*

Your letter dated the 15<sup>th</sup> has been received at three o'clock. I am very glad you are very concerned about my safety and hereby express my thanks.

The day before yesterday the fifth day of the second month according to the Tibetan calendar, I made a speech to more than seventy representatives of the government officials, instructing them from various angles, calling on them to consider seriously present and long term interests and to calm them down, otherwise my life would be in danger. After these severe reproaches, things took a slight turn for the better. Though the conditions here and outside are still very difficult to handle at present, I am trying tactfully to draw a line separating the progressive people among the government officials from those opposing the revolution. In a few days from now when there are enough forces that I can trust I shall make my way secretly to the Military Area Command. When that time comes, I shall send you a letter. I request you to adopt reliable measures. What are your views? Please write me often.

\*

For the text, *Concerning the Question of Tibet*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1959, pp. 37-40

See also Stuart & Roma Gelder, *The Timely Rain*, op cit as well as Ling Nai-min, *Tibetan Source Book*. Union Research Institute, Hong Kong, 1964, Document 80, pp. 369-74.

#### Appendix 8: Reincarnations of the Panchen Lama\*\*

The number of Tulkus (reincarnate lamas) need not be too large. The quality should be good. In keeping with the age-old tradition, I have been given the full authority to confirm tulkus .....

Now historical precedents must change. Everybody asks for an authentic reincarnation. In the past most of the reincarnates were confirmed by Father and Son Aryas. Many of the people requesting the recognition of tulkus insist on authentic reincarnations. They mean to say that the reincarnate should be the one in whom the consciousness of the previous body has entered. ....

To elaborate this point further, the Seventh Dalai Lama was born before the death of the Sixth. From the point of view of our spiritual tradition, there is no need for a year to pass before the reincarnation is born. A realized being can manifest himself in many forms at the same time. He need not rely on the passage of his previous body's consciousness. Premature and belated birth of reincarnations is possible in Buddhism. It is not impossible. ....

Secondly, by and large it is appropriate to recognize a child, who is about ten years old. If the lama has passed away recently, the child could be younger. However if the lama had passed away quite some time back, the reincarnation should be about ten years old. Only then we will be able to understand the child's character, faculties and spiritual propensity. We will be able to gauge how good or bad the child's character is. If the idea behind the recognition of tulkus is to protect, nurture and promote the dharma, as well as to manage the monasteries well, then merely putting someone on top, as the authentic reincarnation will not do. I request everyone to keep this in mind. ....

In the past, the Gelugpa tulkus were recognized by the Arya Father and Son. There are no problems in this. But there are other factors involved when it comes to other schools of Buddhism. ....

\*\*Excerpts from the Panchen Lama's Address at Tashilhunpo, a few days before his death. *Tibetan Bulletin*, January-April 2002, p. 34

## Bibliographic note

### Primary Sources

For most part this study is based on the archives of the British Foreign Office housed in the Public Record Office in London. Of great use and perhaps the easiest of access, have been Foreign Office Confidential Prints, entitled "Affairs of Tibet" and "Affairs of Mongolia" listed as FO/535 and, for China, the much more ponderous, if fulsome, series marked FO/371.

The Whitehall end of the picture emerges mostly through records in the India Office Library and Records (now India Office Records, of the Oriental & India Office Collections, of the British Library) also in London. The principal collections used here are the Political and Secret Department Subject files. These are mostly distinguished by the year (indicated by a stroke at the end) in which the compilation was made. Lately however a new system of cataloguing designated as L/P&S/10- has taken their place. Apart from the subject files, there are the very valuable External Collections now listed as L/P&S/12-, most of these in facsimile.

Also useful in this context are the PRO files containing the monthly reports of the Indian Mission, Lhasa. Copies of some of these reports were endorsed to the office of the United Kingdom High Commissioner in New Delhi who mailed them to the Commonwealth Relations Office in Whitehall. The first such report extant relates to the month of October 1948. Originating with the "Indian Trade Agent, Gyantse and Officer in charge Indian Mission, Lhasa" it is datelined, Camp-Gyantse, Tibet, 05 November 1948. H E Richardson who held the charge and signed the report in question addressed it to the Political Officer in Sikkim, Gangtok, Sikkim. In a brief noting on the file, the Commonwealth Relations Office in London, to whom the report was endorsed, termed New Delhi's gesture as "most satisfactory."

The PRO reference for these reports is FO 371/84453, /76315 and /99659. And punctuated with not a few gaps, these are spread over the years 1948 through 1952.

Sadly, the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi who should, as custodians, have all these reports from 1947 (and earlier) through March 1959 have been singularly squeamish and, in fact, far from cooperative. And this not only in terms of what they hold but also in regard to what has been transferred to the National Archives of India where access is denied on one pretext or another. In the event, one has to fall back on the holdings of the PRO.

The records of the Government of India, preserved in the National Archives in New Delhi, have also been drawn upon. Those principally used are the Foreign and Political Department Proceedings, marked Secret-External, External A and, in some cases, External B. Sometimes it is possible to find the same proceedings at more than one place but, up to 1921, conveniently for the researcher, they are indexed together under various subject-heads viz., "Affairs of Tibet" etc. Among the most interesting, and revealing, are those containing, apart from official proceedings, the notes, marginal comments and official annotations.



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**Secondary sources***Recent Works*

Some works that have appeared in recent years deserve a word or two by way of introduction. More so in that these have been used extensively in reconstructing the narrative in the post-1959 decades when primary sources are hard to come by.

A major study that has set the pace for research in Tibetan polity is Melvyn C Goldstein's *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951* (Indian edition, 1993). Professor Goldstein's enviable assets in this undertaking were his disciplines of anthropology, a singular facility with the Tibetan language, ability to spot out a number of individuals and institutions who had firsthand knowledge of, and acquaintance with, men and events in this period. His stay in Lhasa to study lexicography was doubly rewarding in terms both of the subject matter of his specialization as well as a direct exposure to the Tibetan world about which he was writing. A number of new researches on Tibet's modern history which he no doubt avidly collected, proved to be invaluable in reconstructing his narrative.

A part of Goldstein's methodology is a liberal use of personal interviews with individual Tibetans, mostly officials. There is an impressive list of these, meticulously compiled, in his bibliography and indeed spread all over the text, oftentimes in extensive and detailed footnotes. Yet a point that needs to be stressed is the value of oral history qua history. For here one has to make due allowance for lapses in memory or vague recollections passing for an authentic record of events. It is also important not to underrate the human tendency to overrate the first person singular and view the self in retrospect as more important than the event in question may actually warrant.

Goldstein would also appear to be the first to have made liberal use of numerous volumes, nine of these to be exact, of the Cultural & Historical Materials Office relating to the culture and history of Tibet and published in Beijing between 1982 and 1986. These include inter alia an account of Huang Mu-sung's mission to Tibet (1934) by one of its members, a piece on the 17-point agreement (May 1951) by a member of the Tibetan delegation and an eyewitness account of Chinese military operations in Western Tibet in 1950.

Tom Grunfeld's *The Making of Modern Tibet*, now in its second edition (1996), concentrates, even as the name implies, on the 'modern' period with a detailed coverage of the twentieth century all the way from Curzon and the British invasion to the current, post-



1959, decades. His footnotes, culled at the end, bear witness to an impressive array of sources, for the most part, in English.

Ya Hanzhang, a social scientist, studied Tibetan language as a young, un-ordained lama in a Tibetan gompa in Gansu. Later he was to spend a little over ten years (1937-48) in the famous Drepung monastery, Tibet's largest, with a monk population of almost 10,000 at one time, and situated just outside of Lhasa. Subsequently, Hanzhang shaped himself into an expert on China's ethnic minorities and was to return to Tibet as part of the Chinese Communist Party hierarchy with the PLA advance guard (1951), occupying important positions in the "liberated" land. Later still he was to be Director of the Institute of Nationality Studies in Beijing. In undertaking his biographies of Tibetan spiritual leaders, both the Dalai (1991) as well as the Panchen Lamas (1994), his objective was not merely to narrate the life stories of individual Lamas but also to "expound upon" the history of Tibet "in a biographical style."

In the course of his two large volumes, Ya Hanzhang spans almost 600 years of Tibet's history, all the way from the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) to the Chinese "liberation" in 1951. In doing so he has drawn heavily upon Tibetan, Chinese as well as foreign language (read English) sources. A difficulty that he often encountered- and which offered no easy solution- was a clash of dates with each of his sources, Chinese, Tibetan, Western, sticking to their respective calendars.

Alastair Lamb, a meticulous historian whose monumental work spans more than a quarter century, began with his *Britain and Chinese Central Asia: the Road to Lhasa 1767-1905* (1960)- later (1986) revised as *British India and Tibet, 1760-1910-* and continued with his two volumes on *The McMahon Line* (1966). And has brought the narrative to the end of British rule with his large and impressive tome, *Tibet, China and India, 1914-1950* (1989). His work rests for most part on an exhaustive scrutiny of British archival sources in the Public Record Office and the India Office Library & Records in London.

Tsering Shakya's *The Dragon in the Land of Snows* (1999) concerns itself almost exclusively with the post-1947 years, the latter half of the twentieth century. A journalist, broadcaster, researcher and now an author, rolled into one he provides a comprehensive and reasonably balanced and objective analysis of near-contemporary events. His use of English language sources, especially archival, housed in the PRO in London is impressive; he has also drawn heavily on Tibetan language sources.

Warren Smith has a rich background in international law, which he combines with first-hand knowledge and understanding of both Chinese and Tibetan history. He has ransacked literally mounds of Chinese material (in English translation) to construct a narrative of considerable value. His *Tibetan Nation* (1996) while not specific to the relations between the Lamas as such provides a detailed narrative, which may be studied with great profit. An impressive tome, it is particularly helpful in situating major political developments relating to Tibet during the past hundred odd years.

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